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Subjects and Sojourners: A History of Indochinese in France. By Charles Keith. University of California Press, 2024. xiv+385 pp.

Charles Keith's *Subjects and Sojourners* is an ambitious and meticulously researched intervention into the intertwined histories of Indochina and France during the colonial era. Focusing on the experiences of approximately 200,000 Indochinese who travelled to and sojourned in France between the 1850s and the 1950s, Keith achieves two significant objectives in this work. First, he provides detailed insights into the mechanisms and significance of the circulation of Indochinese colonial subjects between Indochina and France during the colonial period. Second, he persuasively argues that moving beyond the binary of metropole and colony as antitheses offers a more productive framework for understanding the history of both the French empire and nation formation in the former colonies.

The structure of the book reflects the journey of an Indochinese individual in the colonial era. Chapter 1 explores the motivations for departure from Indochina, followed by chapter 2, which examines the steamship voyage to France. Chapters 3 through 8 document the varied experiences of Indochinese people as visitors, workers, students, residents and political activists in the metropole. Chapter 9 then considers the impact of returning sojourners on local society, culture and politics in Indochina. The coda addresses those whose sojourn became permanent settlement, giving rise to the Indochinese diasporic communities in France.

Keith's extensive and detailed accounts are grounded in impressive and meticulous research involving both French and Vietnamese sources. Particularly noteworthy is his introduction and utilization of materials from the archives of the Service de Liaison avec les Originaires des Territoires Français d'Outre-Mer (SLOTFORM)—the French agency responsible for surveilling colonial subjects in the metropole—especially the previously unexplored section XV. Furthermore, this book is the first comprehensive academic work to assemble such a breadth of Vietnamese-language documents—including materials from three of Vietnam's four National Archives

centres, travelogues, memoirs, newspapers and literary works—related to travel and sojourning in the colonial era. Beyond the sheer quantity and range of primary sources, Keith's ability to process, categorize and weave the materials into highly readable narratives that speak to larger historiographical questions is particularly commendable.

In the book, Keith seeks to “respatialize area studies” (p. 8) and write a “Vietnamese history of France” (p. 9). However, fully appreciating this approach requires considerable prior knowledge of both French and Indochinese history between the 1850s and 1950s. While Keith's focus on “the articulations between individuals, identities and the contingencies of colonial power” (p. 12) offers the reader a novel-like immersion into specific experiences, more historical background or contextual explanation would help readers less familiar with the specific settings understand the significance of these vignettes within the book's analytical framework. For example, the 1919 strike in chapter 5 is presented as an important moment of political awakening for Indochinese workers stranded in France after the First World War, yet the lack of detail about the event itself may leave readers unfamiliar with the period wanting more context.

Keith introduces the compelling notion that Indochinese sojourners facilitated the “extension” of colonial society into the metropole. But this concept of “extension” would have benefited from sharper definition. While Keith offers some concrete examples, such as the publication of censored materials in colonial presses in the metropole (thus “extending” colonial presses into the metropole) (p. 112) and the metropole offering professional opportunities unavailable in the colonies (thereby “extending” career pathways for Indochinese) (p. 140), the broader analytical distinctiveness of “extension” remains somewhat ambiguous in the book as a whole. Greater clarity on how “extension” offers fresh conceptual insight—beyond simply mapping colonial dynamics onto the metropole—would further enrich Keith's argument.

Finally, drawing from my own recent experiences with travel-related bureaucracy, I see a missed opportunity in Keith's work to engage with the administrative dimension of sojourning—specifically, processes such as identity verification and the issuance of travel

documents. Examining these administrative and legal aspects would not only further substantiate the central theme of “extension” but also situate Keith’s study within broader scholarly conversations about how colonial subjects complicated and redefined concepts of citizenship across the empire.

Overall, the book makes a significant contribution to the historiography of the French empire—and more broadly, of empires—by bridging the often-separated fields of Indochinese experiences in France and French colonial practices in Indochina. Keith’s research is especially valuable for scholars interested in the transnational dimensions of nation-building, reminding us that such processes cannot be fully understood within isolated national frameworks but must also be situated within the broader terrain of imperial interactions. Although the book would benefit from greater contextualization for readers less familiar with the period, sharper conceptual clarity regarding the notion of “extension” and more attention to the administrative aspects of mobility, it nonetheless provides an exceptionally rich foundation for future research. For its archival breadth, methodological innovation and conceptual provocations, *Subjects and Sojourners* will serve as an essential resource for scholars interested in the histories of sojourning and cross-border mobility and their impacts on empire- and nation-building in both colonial and postcolonial contexts.

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Traditional Musical Instruments of Malaysia: Forms, Materials, Function. By Patricia Matusky. University Malaya Press, 2023. 168 pp.

It is rare to find well-researched and comprehensive resources on Malaysian traditional music such as the book under review. Matusky’s