## NOTES

1. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (Verso Books, 2006).

2. Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester University Press, 2006).

3. Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Duke University Press, 2010).

4. Robert Cribb and Li Narangoa, "Orphans of Empire: Divided Peoples, Dilemmas of Identity, and Old Imperial Borders in East and Southeast Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 1 (2004): 165.

*He Who Is Made Lord: Empire, Class, and Race in Postwar Singapore*.
By Muhammad Suhail Mohamed Yazid. ISEAS, 2023. xii, 251 pp.
ISBN: 9789815104301.

Muhammad Suhail Mohamed Yazid's *He Who Is Made Lord,* is a comprehensive study of the office of Singapore's first and only Yang di-Pertuan Negara—translated by the author as "He who is Made Lord" (89). The office, which functionally was equivalent to those of a governor-general and a head of state, was held by Yusof bin Ishak, who would later become Singapore's first president. The book is a brilliant work of scholarship on modern Singapore's and Malaya's (later, Malaysia's) political culture and history. Not only is it superbly researched, it is also well written and highly readable, which makes it accessible to a general as well as an academic audience. The book begins in 1956, when Singapore representatives started their talks with Britain on Singapore's constitution, and it ends in 1963, when Singapore was on the cusp of merging with the Federation of Malaya, along with British North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak to form Malaysia. This period was, according to the author, an important political crossroad in terms of Singapore's political future (7). Although Yusof Ishak is a widely known historical and political figure in Singapore, with his portrait imprinted on the country's currency, his role and contributions to Singapore's political history and nation-building have not been widely studied.

The 251-page book is organized into five chapters structured along three key themes—empire, class, and race—with an epilogue at the end serving as a conclusion. The book is organized, written, and structured in a way that makes it easy to grasp, with each chapter flowing seamlessly into the next. Each chapter can be read on its own because the main points are captured and contextualized well in each chapter. The research findings are communicated clearly without the use of jargon, which ensures clarity. There are no noticeable grammatical mistakes, and reading the book is enjoyable, as the author writes in an engaging way that captivates readers. The author conveniently provides a list of abbreviations at the start of the book, enabling readers to easily keep abreast of them when used in the book.

Although the book also examines the life of Yusof Ishak, its main focus is on the political, historical, and cultural significance of the office of Singapore's Yang di-Pertuan Negara. His personal life is examined, but this is mostly done in the context of the office. The book, however, is more than just a study of the office of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara and its significance to Singapore. It explores multiple themes in

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Singapore's political and cultural history. The book uncovers the roots of Singapore's and to a significant extent Malaysia's political culture and history by charting the nation-building and nationalist developments of the two regions as well as their decolonization efforts from the colonial period to independence and by explaining the Yang di-Pertuan Negara's significance in these developments. Muhammad Suhail demonstrates that the historical and political developments of Singapore and Malay(si)a are closely linked and need to be studied in relation to each other.

The book also provides a rich evaluation of British imperialism and Singapore's place within the political order of the British Empire during the twentieth century. The author analyses the efforts of nations such as Singapore to decolonize from British rule, prepare for independence, and build a new nation in the new postcolonial order of nation-states and the Commonwealth of Nations. While the office of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara was significant for nation-building in Singapore and Malay(si)a, the author highlights that the office represented the continued British colonial attempt to maintain the status quo after World War II by reinforcing the imperial hierarchy of races and nations. On top of this all, Muhammad Suhail argues that the office of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara was a "contested site" and used by both sides to serve both the colonial and political agendas of local Singaporean figures. "He who is Made Lord" was both a British colonial and an anticolonial nationalist symbol. To Singaporean nationalist figures, the office was seen as a national symbol toward self-rule within the British Empire and, ultimately, independence. Within the context of nation-building, the endorsement of a local Malay figure such as Yusof Ishak as the Yang di-Pertuan Negara by Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was done to advance Singapore's merger with Malaya by promoting trust and a gesture of goodwill with the Malay state. The appointment of the officeholder should not only appease the Malay community but also appeal to the large Chinese voter base in Singapore. Muhamad Suhail argues that for the British Empire, however, "He who is Made Lord" was a representative of the Queen and signified continued imperial political dominance over Singapore.

The significance of the office of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara to Malay political culture and history is also analyzed in this book, with the author highlighting the positioning of the office in the context of Malay *Kerajaan* (rulership or kingship). According to Muhammad Suhail, the title "He who is Made Lord" was rooted in this Malay political culture (90). The author suggests that the office was also an initiative to reconnect Singapore to the Malay political world of the *Kerajaan*, another initiative that could bring the island toward closer merger with Malaya—a constitutional monarchy where the *Kerajaan* remained significant. Yusof Ishak was often invited and featured in Malay royal events in Malaya, demonstrating their acceptance. The development of the office of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara is thereby analyzed through multiple political, cultural, and historical developments in Singapore, Malaysia, and the broader British Empire. As such, the book is more than just an account of Singapore's national history and will appeal to a wide readership.

The quality of the author's research can be seen in the way the author draws his findings from the analysis of an excellent array of primary sources, which includes, among others, archival materials from Britain and Singapore, such as the Colonial Office records, newspapers, and the personal recollections of key figures.

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The illuminative use of these primary sources ensures that the book provides fresh insights into the significance of the office of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara, the region's history, and British imperialism. The author's solid grasp of the important works on British colonialism and nation-building is another significant advantage, which enables him to situate his analysis within the broader international developments of imperialism, decolonization, and nationalism. He demonstrates that Singapore's political development during the period of its transition to independence cannot be sufficiently navigated without considering the broader developments of imperialism and empire.

*He Who Is Made Lord* is, hence, one of the crucial recent studies to have emerged on Singapore and Malaysia that also provides critical insights on imperialism and decolonization. It should be essential reading for those studying the history and political developments of these two nations during the global age of decolonization and nation-building. Given the quality of the scholarship and its readability, Muhammad Suhail has successfully turned a seemingly boring study on the significance of a state office into something captivating, rich, and insightful. *He Who Is Made Lord* will be a valuable resource not only for those who are interested in Yusof Ishak and the office of the Yang di-Pertuan Negara. The book would also appeal to those who are interested in Singapore's and Malaysia's politics and history from the dawn of the British Empire to the emergence of the two nations as postcolonial states.

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## GLOBAL ASIAS

*Therapy, Spirituality, and East Asian Imaginaries*. Edited by Ioannis Gaitanidis, Luis Fernando Bernardi Junqueira, Avery Morrow, and Sangyun Han. Routledge, 2025. 302 pp. ISBN: 9789048559015.

In his novel *American Gods* (2001), Neil Gaiman weaves a romantic metaphor for the pervasive tension between tradition and modernity in a flowing, globalized world. When we turn the spotlight of this narrative onto complex historical topics like medicine, we encounter the same keywords: shifting beliefs, old versus new systems, conflict, and transformation. The edited volume reviewed here, *Therapy, Spirituality, and East Asian Imaginaries*, presents a scholarly, medical version of this battle between Old and New Gods.

This book is the outcome of the first international conference of the East Asian Network for the Academic Study of Esotericism in 2021. It focuses on East Asian therapies and spirituality since the 1970s, examined through transborder, transcultural, and transepistemological lenses. The introduction presents its core argument as follows: "The therapeutic cultures associated with East Asia blossomed in an already intertwined world" (13). Guided by this main idea, the authors illustrate how healing knowledge and techniques labeled as "East Asian" circulate within a



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