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**The Riau Islands: Setting Sail.** *Francis E. Hutchinson and Siwage Dharma Negara (eds)*. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore, 2021, pp. xxviii + 466. ISBN 978-9-814-95105-0 (pbk).

This edited book is the third volume in the series examining the SIJORI (Singapore-Johor-Riau Islands) sub region and reports on research commissioned by the ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute on cross border regions in South East Asia. It is a highly detailed and comprehensive edited collection specifically on the Riau Islands, and as such, fills a very useful gap in the region’s literature. The different contributions are all of a high standard, which sadly cannot always be said for all edited books. In this, and considering the range of invited contributors, the editors should be congratulated. That said, it is often quite tricky and sometimes a little invidious to review an edited collection like this and reviewers risk highlighting certain chapters rather than covering all contributions equally, so this review will stick to broad themes.

The book is carefully structured and has a clear and incisive editors’ introduction by Hutchinson and Negara. It gives a concise overview of the Riau Islands province and the key themes running through the edited collection. The volume is then logically divided into three main sections focussing on economics, politics and social and environmental issues before a final chapter by the editors that summarizes main themes and looks forward. The volume is well illustrated by copious, detailed maps and rich supporting data throughout. This is a real strength and it will be much appreciated by both researchers and university academics using this resource for teaching as it really brings out the visual and spatial aspects of the islands’ economic, political and social narratives.

The complexity and historical specificities of the Riau Islands are threads running through many different chapters, as are the challenges and tensions of decentralization, different interest groups, and differential access to political and economic power. The paradox of the Riau Islands being marginal to the Indonesian state in one sense, yet also at the same time being hugely significant due to their proximity to Singapore and Malaysia is carefully unpicked by many contributors. The economic and political

sections are perhaps the strongest, as are chapters discussing the social issues and ethnicity issues facing the mix of Malay, Bugis, Javanese, Batak and Chinese inhabitants.

For this reviewer, however, the main missed opportunity is an insufficient focus on the environmental impacts of recent human-led change including deforestation, mangrove destruction, flooding, coastal and soil erosion, and significant marine and terrestrial pollution. Batam island exemplifies some of this, seeing the impacts of rapid urbanization, industrialization and the growth of informal and squatter settlements. Although these problems are specifically discussed in one very useful chapter, and mentioned briefly in several others, given the increasing importance of sustainability and the broader context of the growing climate and environmental emergencies, this arguably needed much more discussion.

To take one aspect, given the growing role of tourism in the Riau Islands' economies, consideration of the potential sustainability of official plans to grow tourism especially in Natuna, Tambelan and other more remote islands could be problematized further for potential environmental and other impacts. For example, unlike Bintan—with its short ferry crossing to Singapore—aircraft may be the only practical way for tourists to access these remoter islands. Given increasing demand for more environmentally sustainable travel and tourism, is tourism development even practicable on such islands? If highly exclusive, luxury tourism is being considered (as many ASEAN governments are now explicitly targeting) for these remoter islands, there are considerable potential costs. The environmental costs of tourism to small fragile island ecosystems are well documented, but there are other important socio-economic costs too. Small island tourism typically results in poor economic linkages to the islands' economies, and very high economic leakages for the upmarket construction and fittings, and highest quality food and beverages expected by luxury tourism. It can also be difficult for local island people to develop or own tourism businesses due to high capital costs or their lacking education and necessary skills. Similarly, more could have been discussed on the environmental impacts of the electronics and shipbuilding/ship repair industries, especially waste disposal and other forms of resultant pollution.

More broadly, throughout the book, despite noting significant governance issues including corruption, mismanagement, land disputes, duplication and wasting limited financial resources due to overlapping layers of governance, overall criticism is very mild and somewhat muted. Whilst appreciating the institutional context of some contributors, this reviewer would have liked to have seen a little more critical approach overall in many chapters in the volume.

In addition, although the publication date was 2021, it is recognized that the research was carried out and chapters written before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. In light of the shock to the global and regional economies, and the halting of international tourism etc, it would be interesting to update some of the findings. In particular, it would be fascinating to consider more recent moves to shorter and more resilient supply chains, the impacts of commodity and component shortages and more 'onshoring' of production to older manufacturing countries, and how all this might impact on the islands' development trajectories especially for manufacturing.

Different chapters in each section have specific foci, but there is some repetition of material in the introductions to several chapters. If readers examine more than one chapter at a time, it can feel a bit repetitious: perhaps this is something that could have been picked up by the editors. Some chapters read more like papers prepared for a journal audience who have less background knowledge and who each require a

lengthy introduction to the islands. This is a minor criticism however, in a volume that generally is of a very high standard.

Overall, this is an extremely useful, and highly detailed source. It will be an invaluable reference for undergraduate final year dissertations, Masters and PhD students studying tourism planning or international development, as well as for academics and consultants working on development issues in Indonesia, Singapore and the wider region.

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### **Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula.**

*Laleh Khalili.* Verso, London and New York, 2020, pp. xvi + 352. ISBN 978-1-786-63481-8 (hbk).

In 1974, at the moment when the oil related boom was in full swing, Fred Halliday (1974: 17) opened a landmark account of politics in the Arabian peninsula, with an account of the region's 'uneven and combined development':

Arabia underwent a striking transformation in the two decades after 1950. From being an area of extreme economic backwardness and marginal importance to the world economy, it became the scene of intense development and acquired enormous strategic importance for world capitalism.

That strategic importance has multiplied since. Scholarly attention has tended to focus on the attendant urbanization, particularly in spectacular forms associated with Gulf cities (Molotch & Ponzini, 2019)— and financialization (Buckley & Hanieh, 2013). The more mundane, but no less significant developments in Arabian ports and shipping infrastructure are less often scrutinized.

The great contribution of Laleh Khalili's book places these maritime infrastructures centre-stage. Whilst historicizing the development of Arabia and the Gulf and stressing their transnational connections (notably of migrant workers, from Asia and elsewhere) has become the focus of a growing literature, Khalili's focus on ports and allied infrastructure is welcome. Her argument is that we need to move from thinking of these infrastructures as adjuncts to global capitalism. Instead they are its fabric. Ninety per cent of goods travel by ship. Capital, labour, law, spaces and technologies are all engineered around enabling this. Moreover, ports around the Arabian peninsula are some of the world's fastest growing and largest and on routes that connect Africa, Asia, Europe and North America.

Laleh Khalili's account begins with histories of 'route-making', focused on the making of colonial shipping networks. However, the first chapter quickly moves to the present, to brokers, futures markets and price-setting mechanisms for shipping. This sets the stage for accounts of the colonial and contemporary 'harbor-making' (Chapter 2) and the intersections of juridical, corporate and sovereign power, culminating in a study of free ports/zones (of which the United Arab Emirates has 41). Chapter 4 focuses on roads and railways, mostly focused on imperial conquest and control. There