Rosemarijn Hoeffte and Peter Meel (eds), *Departing from Java: Javanese Labour, Migration and Diaspora*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press [NIAS Studies in Asian Topics 66], 2018, xiii + 288 pp. ISBN: 9788776942458, price: GBP 65.00 (hardcover); 9788776942465, GBP 22.50 (paperback).

Departing from Java: Javanese Labour, Migration and Diaspora is the first edited volume to systematically investigate the various locations, historical contexts, and present-day situations of ethnically Javanese populations living outside of Java. The book brings together nine country- or region-specific chapters along with an introduction by Rosemarijn Hoeffte and Peter Meel that sketches a narrative of the distinct phases and unifying themes of the large-scale migration of Javanese people to other places, ranging from within Indonesia to the Caribbean, since the nineteenth century. Together, the chapters raise questions about migration, diaspora, labor, gender, and power, with the most successful essays providing mixed-methodology, historically situated ethnographic snapshots of individual and collective experiences of Javanese migrants and Javanese migration. Useful for readers interested in comparative consideration of issues in labor migration or diaspora studies, the volume's primary contribution lies in its provision of diverse ethnographic and historical material that attests to the complexities and problematics of schematizing the movements of a group of people over time and geographic location, as motivation, historical context, and the very notions of culture and ethnic identity shift and transform.

The idea of a 'Javanese diaspora' is a living one, manifest, for example, in an active international community brought together through social media, tourism, and, in recent years, a biennial congress. In April 2017, representatives of Javanese communities in Singapore, Malaysia, Suriname, Mexico, New Caledonia, the Netherlands, Sulawesi, and Sumatra gathered in Yogyakarta for a week of lectures, workshops, field trips, film screenings, and performances of gamelan music and shadow puppet theatre. This event, the third instantiation of the *Ngumpulke Balung Pisah Wong Jawa* (Javanese Diaspora Network Event), was organized by an international committee of individuals involved in local Javanese diasporic communities in their respective regions, with much of the planning conducted over the internet (see www.facebook.com/groups/JavaneseDiasporaEvent). Simultaneously, as Hoeffte and Meel describe, the Indonesian government has put effort in recent years into developing an official national diaspora policy, albeit one that does not acknowledge separate diasporas of its various ethnic groups such as the Javanese. The diaspora policy of the Indonesian nation-state, modeled after that of India and China, focuses on the development of a global network that will bring the flows of interna-

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tional capital to the 'big Indonesian family' (p. 17). In recent decades, migrant laborers in Southeast and East Asia and the Arabian Peninsula—mostly workers in minimum-wage industries such as construction, fishing, and domestic work—have been critical in directing remittances home to Indonesian banks.

Departing from Java highlights, through location-specific snapshots and mixed ethnographic and historical methodologies, such tensions that arise in the formulation of a broad concept of 'Javanese diaspora': do the outlines of its form trace the movements of identity, culture, or capital? This has shifted over the course of distinct historical stages and varying geographic trajectories of migration. Chapters 1 and 2 cover Javanese relocation within Indonesia (to South Sumatra and Southeast Sulawesi, respectively), a government-led effort that aimed to reduce poverty and overpopulation in Java under the Dutch colonial administration and, later, Soeharto's New Order regime. Chapter 3 addresses the indentured labor migration to New Caledonia from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Chapters 4 through 6 are devoted to Southeast and East Asia. Javanese migration to Malaysia (Chapter 4) is characterized by two distinct phases, one in the nineteenth century and one since the 1970s, with divergent attitudes towards the migrants; once seen as essentially Malay and therefore as the ideal foreign workers, laborers from Java are now categorized as one segment of an overwhelming influx of unwelcome 'guests' to be expelled. In Hong Kong and Singapore (Chapter 5) and Taiwan (Chapter 6), recently migrated Javanese workers navigate their positions and possibilities for agency within their host societies, where they typically occupy jobs at the lowest end of the wage spectrum. Chapters on the Arabian Peninsula (Chapter 7) and specifically Saudi Arabia (Chapter 8) focus on the experiences of women and their modes of survival and agency in low-wage jobs characterized by exploitation and abuse. Finally, Chapter 9 turns back in time to a more deeply rooted diaspora, namely that of Javanese Surinamers, focusing on modes of unofficial and official political participation over the course of 125-plus years of Javanese presence in the Caribbean former Dutch colony.

Moving outwards from Java to the Indonesian archipelago and beyond, and through time from the late nineteenth century (earlier relocations of Javanese to South Africa and Sri Lanka are mentioned only briefly in the book's introduction) to the present, the primary theme that holds together these various narratives of diaspora and migration is that of labor, particularly the persistent fuzziness between free and forced labor that has characterized the experiences of Javanese migrant workers. For example, in twenty-first century Malaysia, instances of workers who are punished as criminals for overstaying visas or fleeing abusive employers (see Chapter 4) echo the penal codes that deemed neglect of duty a criminal offense in nineteenth century indentured labor

regimes in Indonesia and Suriname. Hoeffte and Meel's introduction aptly highlights this theme, connecting these histories as well to present-day widespread exploitation of female migrant domestic workers in the Arabian Peninsula.

Another theme runs implicitly through the chapters in a much more interesting way than Hoeffte and Meel identify: namely, the idea of culture and whether or not certain migrant/diasporic populations are seen to have it. Hoeffte and Meel write that migrant workers 'generally ... experience both cultural loss and cultural gain' (p. 18), an anodyne statement too general to be useful. Other scholars have traced how the meaning of 'Javanese culture' transformed, often strategically, in the contexts of Dutch colonialism, Indonesian independence, and the cultural politics of the New Order (see, for example, Gouda 1995; Pemberton 1994). This is true, too, in the context of historical and ongoing Javanese migration. The chapters on New Caledonia (Chapter 3) and Suriname (Chapter 9)—which could have been logically placed side-by-side in the volume, since they describe contemporaneous migrations and have elsewhere been discussed in a comparative framework (Allen 2015)—when read together, suggest correctly that the descendants of nineteenth century Javanese migrant laborers have, over time, been incorporated as minority populations of ethnically plural societies, where their diasporic cultural practices such as music, dance, theatre, and martial arts are valued as representations of a celebrated diversity. This contrasts with more recent labor migrations to East Asia and the Arabian Peninsula, where Javanese workers are seen as temporary 'guests', foreign forms of exploitable labor. There, individual participation in practices that provide connections to the homeland is either kept secret (as in the case of communal Javanese feasts in Saudi Arabia, Chapter 8) or, more rarely, mobilized as a form of resistance (for example, music and dance in the context of protests in Taipei, Chapter 6). In their various attentions—or inattentions—to the entanglements of culture, labor, gender, power, and the position of migrants (and their descendants) in the host country, the ethnographic and historical details of the chapters point to comparative observations and thematic through-lines that are at times potentially much richer than what is suggested in the introduction of the volume, where structural schematizations and comparisons are the focus.

In conclusion, *Departing from Java* both attends to an under-documented phenomenon—the history of Javanese migration and diaspora since the nineteenth century—and provides substantive ethnographic and historical data for wider comparative considerations of migration and diaspora, particularly in the framework of labor, gender, and power. This is especially important for attempts to understand present-day low-wage labor migrations in a global historical context, which, as some of the more outstanding chapters in the volume

point out, is failed by currently available theoretical frameworks such as that of liberal feminism (see Rachel Silvey's notable chapter on West Javanese female domestic workers in Saudi Arabia and Dubai, Chapter 7). Presently, Javanese migrant low-wage laborers, some undocumented, attempt to find or create necessary modes of survival and agency within twenty-first century labor regimes that are set up to exploit inherent vulnerabilities. Simultaneously, planning for the fourth *Ngumpulke Balung Pisah Wong Jawa*, to be held in June 2019 in Surakarta, is gaining momentum towards a weeklong celebration of Javanese ethnicity, identity, and culture that has become established as a permanent presence in pocket communities from the Indonesian archipelago to Asia, Europe, and the Americas. 'Departing from Java' is, as the title of this volume aptly phrases it, an active verb, an ongoing process of global movement and the construction and negotiation of its terms and meanings in the present.

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