Ulbe Bosma, *The Making of a Periphery: How Island Southeast Asia became a Mass Exporter of Labor*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019, xii + 294 pp. ISBN: 9780231188524, price: USD 65.00 (paperback), 9780231547901, USD 64.99 (e-book).

What has made Island Southeast Asia, once a prosperous region in the world, into a source of unskilled workers? Was the 'peripheralization' of this region solely the product of the history of European colonialism? The author of the book under review, Ulbe Bosma, a reputable economic historian, invites the reader to discuss these thought-provoking questions by delving into current debates on relevant socio-economic theories and documents from various colonial archives, all in a compact 306 pages. The result is a noteworthy example of a comparative global history that is highly relevant in today's context.

Bosma observes that a critical juncture of Island Southeast Asia's economic divergence occurred in the nineteenth century. He highlights the detrimental effects of plantations on the population of this region. With the support of colonial regimes, plantations were able to use up local resources, including lands and laborers, to produce specialized commodity products for the world market. Bosma further proposes to look into the "specific demographic and social conditions" that make plantations able to thrive, namely high demographic growth and a long history of patron-client relationships. These are the foundations of the plantation's success story.

Bosma's careful and systematic explanation will help the reader follow every line of his arguments. He daringly scrutinizes his own ideas and the framework of this book in the introduction and conclusion. The rest of the chapters, from 1 through 6, are based on period-specific and thematic discussions to further explain his positions.

In Chapter 1, Bosma explains the role of the *pax imperialis* to control the spread of smallpox at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Bosma argues that the effective containment of the disease contributed considerably to the increase of population, especially in Java and the Philippines. In light of the current global pandemic it is interesting to note that colonial health policy to prevent the spread of disease included a collaboration between government and the civil society. And the participation of local spiritual authorities was crucial to the smallpox vaccination campaign in this region.

In Chapter 2, Bosma shifts to the subject of slavery. He portrays how the massive flows of unskilled labor from Island Southeast Asia is rooted in the violent history of slavery, slave raiding, and piracy. Slaves were part of the societies in this region long before colonial times. The Europeans also participated in this business. Later, due to the idea of European moral supremacy, the colo-

BIJDRAGEN TOT DE TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

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nial regimes abolished slavery by the second half of the nineteenth century. From this time onward, slavery was “reshaped” and “strengthened” in labor recruitment for plantations and industries (p. 55). The character of servile and patron-client relationships that were once reinforced by slavery survived and dictated labor control.

In Chapter 3, Bosma explains the process that made colonial Java and the northern Philippines suitable for plantation economies. He demonstrates a reasonable correlation between a landless labor society due to high population growth and the patron-client mechanism of labor recruitment in the plantation businesses of Java and the northern Philippines. The end of the so-called Cultivation System (1830–1870) in Java moved the profits from the government to private planters. For Javanese labor, whether under the government or private planters, they were always trapped in the same cycle of capitalist undertaking.

Chapter 4 deals with the situations and characteristics of plantations in the regions outside Java and the northern Philippines. Chinese plantations and local smallholders continued to dominate land cultivation in these regions, albeit with the increasing presence of colonial authority. The plantations did not rely on the already limited supply of local labor. They used the networks and supplies of labor from outside their respective territorial boundaries. Often, as with the slave trade, abductions and debts were part of labor recruitment. Many of the Javanese pilgrims to Mecca also fell victim to this scheme, when their debts for the holy journey turned them into indentured laborers in the plantations outside Java (p. 125).

In Chapter 5 and 6, Bosma discusses the long-term consequences of the plantation and labor history to the region's population. The volatile nature of commodity production brought the population's economic life to the mercy of the global market. When the economic crisis—that is, the Great Depression—hit this region, the population was struck hard. This situation has not changed significantly during the age of emerging economies of independent Southeast Asia. Human trafficking for labor recruitment and inhumane working conditions continue to exist to this day. Indonesia and the Philippines also remain a source of unskilled labor, as they were in the colonial period.

Bosma's analysis of the historical processes of peripheralization is an important contribution to studies on Southeast Asia's socio-economic history. In his conclusion, he recognizes that patron-client networks with all their positive and negative sides are more trusted for labor recruitments than any other alternatives these days (p. 184). That being said, without government protection, laborers are being left in the hands of fate. Bosma puts hope in the emergence of civil society in this region, with the power to turn the tide of history.

This book delivers on its promise to show what a comparative history can do to reveal the similarities and differences of a specific situation in a wide-scope area or region. Several notes are worth mentioning here. Firstly, this book might have been able to explore further the extent of the colonial system in this region as a contributor to the processes of peripheralization, rather than an inheritor from precolonial rulers of extractive powers followed by a century of missed opportunities in the plantation societies being examined. Secondly, data for all the chapters are mostly related to Indonesia and the Philippines. West Malaysia and Singapore—the former territories of British Malaya—are discussed far less frequently. There is no mention of Brunei, which, together with Malaysia and Singapore, would make an interesting comparison to the experiences of Indonesia and the Philippines in the context of plantations and mining. As for future studies, Bosma provides inspiration to access the wealth of data that underlaid this book. Some readers may give special attention to the appendix (Methodological Notes) and read Bosma's IISH online database, as presented at the end of this book.

Scholars and practitioners in the field of history, international relations, agrarian and labor studies will find this book very useful. The research done for this book should inspire others to follow.

Ghamal Satya Mohammad

Murdoch University, Perth, WA, Australia

g.s.mohammad@murdoch.edu.au; ghamalsatya@gmail.com