

seek to frame labor history in a global comparative perspective. That said, Suryomenggolo's greatest achievement is to put labor back into Indonesia's history, thus explaining what is missing from Lawang Sewu. As seen on the various popular television shows where adventurers look for ghosts in Semarang's famous haunted house, Suryomenggolo indicates that Indonesian historiography is due for an exorcism.

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An Atlas of Trafficking in Southeast Asia: The Illegal Trade in Arms, Drugs, People, Counterfeit Goods and Natural Resources in Mainland Southeast Asia

PIERRE-ARNAUD CHOUVY, ed.

London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013, x+214p.

In the context of regional integration, Mainland Southeast Asia is subject to considerable economic activity and cross border trade. An intimately related question concerns extra-legal cross-border activities, such as the trade in drugs, wildlife, contraband, and people. The scholarly attention to these topics is rather large both within Southeast Asia and beyond. However, few attempts have been made in bringing together these different forms of “trafficking,” both conceptually and empirically. This is what *An Atlas of Trafficking in Southeast Asia* attempts to do. As editor Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy makes clear in the introduction, the aim is not merely to juxtapose these different forms of trade, but to “provide a regional and systemic understanding of the variety of smuggling and trafficking activities” (p. 3) as well as illuminating synergies between them.

The book brings together several authors with considerable expertise within the region. The various chapters cover diverse topics such as the trafficking in drugs, arms, logging, wildlife, counterfeit goods, and humans. These different forms of trade are supplemented by several colorful maps which visualize trafficking routes and patterns in Mainland Southeast Asia. One of the key claims the book is making is that there is considerable overlap between these trade routes and that they have significant historical trajectories. For example, as argued by David Capie, one cannot appreciate the arms trade in Mainland Southeast Asia without considering the post-conflict situation in several of the countries. Similarly, the contemporaneous drugs trade can only be understood in

light of previous drug economies which were often blessed and even actively encouraged by Western powers.

The book is rich in detail and one of its main strengths is its illumination of the various connections between these different economies. In Burma, a country which is subject to considerable inter-ethnic tension, semiautonomous armed groups depend on drug production; similarly drug reduction policies in Thailand are directly related to out-migration, prostitution, and human trafficking in Northern Thailand.

All the chapters consider policy implications. It would have been interesting if the policy implications of regulation and prohibition had been analyzed more explicitly in a comparative framework. For example, Vanda Felbab-Brown's discussion of the certification of logging (p. 134) raises extremely interesting questions in terms of how this relates to its labor-equivalent (i.e. current certification of labor recruitment firms in the context of legalizing labor migration between Thailand and several of its neighbors).

The conceptual framework, which is outlined in the introduction, relies on Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham's influential book *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things* (2005), where a key conceptual heuristic is the interrelation between the (il)legal and (il)licit. A key concern of Schendel and Abraham's work is to critically interrogate the inherent state-ism which is commonplace in much analysis of trafficking and smuggling. For this reason one must avoid treating concepts, such as "illegality," as self-evident. Although *An Atlas of Trafficking* is often similarly critical of such concepts, it commonly slips precisely into "seeing like a state" (Scott 1998) in the way it maps trafficking practices in Mainland Southeast Asia. For example in the context of human trafficking, it argues that it is necessary to examine trafficking routes and key border sites. But this is to echo the state's vision of trafficking which privileges state-borders over the work conditions of migrant laborers. The danger here is ironically (yet fortunately) illuminated by David Feingold in his chapter on human trafficking. It is the fixation with border control in the combat against trafficking, Feingold argues, that is precisely one of the reasons why mobility which is often licit, yet technically illegal, has become more dangerous for young migrants in the region. The state-bias resurfaces throughout the book (many of the chapters consider policy interventions that are largely discussed along these lines), and concepts, such as "illegality" and "the state" are often presented as self-evident.

This conceptual problem is not helped by a rather unclear exposition of "trafficking" and "smuggling." Smuggling is simply defined as "the importation and/or exportation of legal goods contrary to the law . . ." (p. 5); conversely, trafficking constitutes "trade in goods that are illegal per se—that is, a trade therefore illegal by definition" (p. 5). Again, human trafficking exemplifies how this is highly problematic. It is now well-established that human trafficking often starts off as voluntary, but it is later on in the recruitment process (often at the workplace) where questions of non-consensual labor emerge. At what point, then, does human trafficking become "illegal?"

Conversely, does that mean that smuggled people can—in a rather oxymoronic fashion—be thought of as “legal goods”? And what about the large body of research that shows how exploitative labor and trafficking may involve perfectly legal recruitment chains that involve the use of passports and working permits? Part of the problem here is that human trafficking discourse blurs the distinction between person and things (Kopytoff 1986). In other words, trafficking in persons intertwines notions of commodification with questions of *labor*. This in turn raises complex questions regarding markets and the role of the state that could have been more clearly elaborated in the book. The result is that the task of mapping trafficking carries a somewhat equivocal tone throughout many of the chapters.

The book is rather uneven in terms of methodological considerations. There is a puzzling double argument unfolding. Throughout, criticism of the dubious reliability of data reported on by government, aid organizations, and media is provided. Yet, several of the authors tend to rely precisely on this body of source material to advance their points. The methodological problems with such as “dustbag” approach (Anderson 2008) are fairly well known. The accompanying maps are given no methodological explanation, making it impossible for readers to assess their validity. Indeed, I was somewhat struck by the numerous unsubstantiated claims made in many of the chapters. For example, in the chapter on arms trafficking we are told:

There are also sophisticated local and transnational criminal networks that are involved in a range of illicit activities, including drug trafficking, the illegal movement of people, money laundering, counterfeiting and extortion. (p. 92)

The claim may be plausible. But given that the book examines a topic that is widely understood to be clandestine and highly politicized, it is surprising that the volume, which aims to provide a systematic overview of routes, trends, and synergies, does not substantiate these sorts of claims more strongly. No doubt, studying extra-legal trade is very difficult, but evidently there are several academics who have gone well beyond newspapers and secondary literature on this topic (Nordstrom 2007; Zhang and Chin 2002; Scheper-Hughes 2000).

Many of the chapters are on their own terms useful and insightful, such as Bertil Lintner’s discussion of local practices of corruption in Thailand in the context of counterfeit goods and contraband. However, the tremendously fascinating and important comparative study which this book has initiated ought to be elaborated further with a clearer conceptual and methodical consideration, so a more lucid explanatory accounts can come to light.

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Consoling Ghosts: Stories of Medicine and Mourning from Southeast Asians in Exile

JEAN M. LANGFORD

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013, vii + 263p.

Consoling Ghosts focuses on how Southeast Asians in the United States—Khmer from Cambodia, and Hmong, Kmhmu, and Lao from Laos; all refugee emigrants from US wars in the region—engage with death, ghosts, spirits, and souls. Jean Langford's study was initiated when the research unit of a hospital in the United States hired her to interview Southeast Asian emigrants about their ideas concerning death. The idea was that each ethnic group had its unique ideas about death, spirits, and such and that the hospital stood to benefit from knowing the key to each culture. The reader does not learn the details of that initial research (location, duration, or results). Instead, the book is a rich exploration that draws on Langford's change in focus. She found no particular value in the quest for ethnically specific cultures, and shifted to her own study of how people manage the ethics of life and death.

The Southeast Asian materials come from interviews—aided by translators fluent in the four Southeast Asian languages—and the ethnographic literature on the region. These are framed by people's engagement with hospital and hospice care, particularly the repeated frustrations generated by the expert management of death that precludes Southeast Asian engagements with the dying person, the dead body, and the soul of the dead. The material is interspersed with western theory (Sigmund Freud on the uncanny, Michel Foucault on biopolitics, Giorgio Agamben on thanatopolitics, and so on) and Jean Langford's own experiences of death and loss. The book's