

Rosemarijn Hoefte and Peter Meel, eds. *Departing from Java: Javanese Labour, Migration and Diaspora*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2018. 300 pp., 16 maps, tables, figures, index

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This edited volume is the result of an international workshop held in Yogyakarta in 2013. It consists of an introduction and nine chapters on Javanese communities living in places outside Java: in Indonesia; the Asia Pacific; the Middle East; and Suriname. It is, as the editors claim in the introduction, the first systematic attempt to analyze the Javanese diaspora as a global phenomenon, spanning the colonial and postcolonial eras. Its major focus is how the Javanese constructed a home while being away from home. They faced marginalization, formed a new collective identity, but also maintained memories of the homeland, Java. Grounded in a *longue durée* history of Javanese migration harking back to precolonial mobilities and VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Dutch East India Company) slave trade and exile, the chapters of this book start from the late-nineteenth century and, therefore, look specifically at indentured labor in the wake of colonialism, post-1945 migration, and the contemporary formation of transnational diaspora communities.

The first two chapters are on diaspora within the borders of the Dutch East Indies and independent Indonesia, putting transmigration to Lampung and the Javanese in Southeast Sulawesi in the spotlight. The next four chapters deal with Asia Pacific dimensions, focusing on New Caledonia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan. Thereafter, two chapters on Saudi Arabia and Dubai follow, whereas the last chapter is on Suriname. In part the chapters are based on a critical assessment of literature and historical sources, in part on fieldwork and interviews. Among the themes that recur throughout these area-based chapters are the history of Javanese migration, politics of settlement or “transmigration,” economic and developmental drivers of migration patterns, interaction with local communities in host regions, labor conditions and labor activism, the complexities of ethnic and legal regimes, racial stereotyping, the reproduction of “Javanese-ness” as part of identity formation, the sense of belonging to the ancestral homeland, the maintenance of cultural markers within a plural context, Javanese forms of livelihood and mutual solidarity, and the important role of Javanese femininity. These themes are scrutinized up to the present, now that most Javanese migrants are female domestic workers and caregivers in large urban centers bordering the China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. The role of the Javanese in Suriname is special since there they have become part of fragmented national politics, whereas elsewhere they have remained excluded from positions of power and are still locked down in ethnicized, subordinate roles.

This volume offers a good and very readable combination of empirically rich historical and contemporary case studies, which, taken together, give an insightful overview of the issues relating to overseas Javanese, a topic that has long been underexposed in the academic literature. It serves as an excellent introduction to the

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broader theme of global Javanese diaspora. Although the collection deals with different localities, many of the issues discussed resurface several times throughout the chapters, showing the parallels and entanglements between the Javanese overseas communities and their homeland, histories, and contemporary experiences. Also, the categories of “Javanese” and “Indonesian” are problematized in productive ways. By framing the case studies within broader conceptual categories of diaspora, transnationality, identity, ethnicity, gender, and the like, the phenomenon of Javanese migration is connected to the much wider research on other Asian diaspora communities. As such, the reader gets a clear grasp of what is similar and what is specific to the migration experience of the Javanese with respect to other migrant-worker populations. What is also good about this collection of essays is that, in contrast to the coolie experience of colonial times, the chapters on the current experiences of Javanese domestic workers render the voices of those involved. As such, the researchers restore the agency of Javanese people who have been largely ignored—both in history and nowadays.