

Christianity has universal claims and a temporal notion of a “certain finality”. He argues that, driven “by the need to know and understand the governed”, missionaries and anthropologists identified and classified religions of each ethnic group and, therefore, “the particular came to be masqueraded as the universal”. Thus, Thomas downplays the role of indigenous movements in the formation of a Christian cosmology of communities in the Northeast.

Taken together, the essays in *Landscape, Culture, and Belonging* are an important contribution to the scholarship of Northeast India. They should be essential reading for graduate students and scholars alike and stimulate a wide readership in the study of the formation of modern south Asia.

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ASO, MICHITAKE. *Rubber and the Making of Vietnam. An Ecological History, 1897–1975. [Flows, Migrations, and Exchanges.]* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill (NC) 2018. xvii, 405 pp. Ill. Maps. \$90.00. (Paper: \$32.95; E-book: \$23.99.)

By the end of the nineteenth century, capitalism and colonialism had established new series of complicated interactions influenced by the advances of the industrial revolution and the consolidation of Western Europe as the centre of the global economy. Nowhere were these new interactions more prevalent than in Southeast Asia. Here, economies had long been defined by their level of international trade, particularly the export of spices and dyes to the Asian regional market and increasingly to the global market through trade with Western Europe. The advent of direct European colonial intervention in Southeast Asia from the middle of the nineteenth century saw a metropolitan encouragement to expand these export economies with a vigorous focus on raw materials to be used as inputs for Western industry. This focus led to the cultivation of large amounts of previously unused land in order to maximize the output of these raw materials. The scope of this newly cultivated land fundamentally altered the landscapes of Southeast Asia, while profit seeking mechanisms designed to encourage labour participation in these raw materials export sectors had profound effects on the indigenous population. Aso's book is an attempt to tease out the extent to which these changes affected Southeast Asian economies and their subsequent development by viewing the political and economic development of Vietnam through the lens of one of its primary export commodities: rubber.

Aso perceives of Indochinese rubber plantations as both a commodity frontier and a battleground. This focal point facilitates a gripping narrative of the pervasive nature of French colonialism in Indochina. The text is largely chronological, taking the reader from the introduction of *Hevea brasiliensis* by Alexandre Yersin at the end of the nineteenth century to the early statecraft of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1975. However, the simplicity in its structure creates room for a broad analytical scope using rubber cultivation

as its lynchpin. The attention dedicated to contraction and treatment of malaria details a fascinating aspect of the effects of rubber plantations in the colonial era. Rates of malarial infection rose in correlation with the planting of new rubber plantations in Indochina as the corresponding deforestation interrupted breeding patterns of the *Anopheles* mosquito. Severe endemics occurred in rubber cultivation communities across the early twentieth century and the shadow of the disease hangs heavy over Aso's plantations. The attempts of colonial authorities to manage the disease are wrapped in the language and structures of the rubber plantations. While "virgin populations" were readily studied and allowed to develop malaria in order to better understand its effects, it is the plantations themselves where preventative medicine is distributed. Remedies and assistance for the indigenous populace largely came at the behest of plantation owners and management such as Michelin, fearful of collapsing a labour market and reluctant to hire immigrant labour from Java or China. The establishment of hospitals is also linked to the growing population resulting from an entrenchment of large agro-industrial practices. As such, rubber plantations themselves became a frontier for disease treatment as well as healthcare expansion. A direct lineage is seen from colonial and metropolitan to postcolonial institutions managing disease and healthcare. Aso confidently states that "the sciences of European empire planted the seeds of developmentalism". Rubber plantations as they related to health were weaponized in propaganda distributed by the nationalist movement to criticize colonial government. This led to a large propaganda campaign by the French government during World War II highlighting the healthiness of the plantations. Throughout the entire period both colonial and nationalist governments argued that increased production would lead to increased material wealth of Vietnam and in turn collapse arguments for revolution.

The necessary mechanisms for maintaining a full-bodied workforce provide the backdrop for Aso's assertion of rubber plantations as a battleground. The regularization of labour relations occurs earliest on plantations at the behest of planters who could not hold onto their workforce, which readily fled from a plantation if working conditions remained poor. In response, the colonial labour inspectorate was expected to hunt down "deserting" employees. Where willing employees could not be found in the more densely populated areas of the north, coercion was used by the state to answer the demands of the plantations. Rubber plantations were also significant sites of labour organization and Aso sees here the roots of National Liberation Front membership in south Vietnam during the second Indochina war. This conception of the plantations as a battleground continues into the post-colonial period of the narrative, as a central aspect of the strategies of both the Viet Minh and the French colonial forces. Destruction or control of the plantations became a particular source of conflict for the Viet Minh as they struggled to both disable the colonial economy and form the foundation of its postcolonial successor. While many of Michelin's plantations were militarized by the French colonial government, compromise was reached in many areas too remote for full militarization and flows of rubber were allowed in return for a title given to the Viet Minh.

In a sense, "ecological history" is a misnomer given to a text that is at varying points a history of science, politics, culture, military organization, and economics. The interactions between humanity and the environment subject to analysis here are restricted to those between three actors; humanity, the Vietnamese landscape only insofar as it pertains to rubber production, and the mosquito. Aso's "ecological history" has a strained relationship with flora and fauna beyond this. A late reference within the text to the problematic nature of tigers for plantations sheds light on the fact that there is much more to be desired on the effects of this changing economic and political landscape on its indigenous plant and animal

life. Environmental effects at large are only briefly treated as they emerge in the historical narrative alongside the growing environmental consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s. Aso's narrative also suffers from a top down perspective, and, while operating within the colonial period, mostly addresses his history through the activities of colonial officials. Whenever it is possible Aso does incorporate indigenous voices as discovered in archival records and through oral and autobiographical histories. However, the volume is largely structured around a series of "great men", mostly scientists or scholars such as Alexandre Yersin, Henry Morin, Pierre Gourrou, and Paul Mus, but also politicians such as Ngô Đình Diệm. These figures and their contributions, successful or otherwise, dominate Aso's narrative. His familiarity with their lives and work is far reaching and frequently used to illustrate fluctuating attitudes to Vietnamese rubber plantations, the indigenous population, and the French colonial project. In a sense, these characters are a means to an end, singularly towering figures through which to portray the changing landscape of Vietnam. However, an overreliance on these men distracts from the wider sociological changes taking place on a less individualistic level.

In spite of some of these flaws, Aso's text is a welcome contribution to the literature that provides a unique viewpoint on the modern history of Vietnam. Aso's multilingual scholarship opens archival and Vietnamese language materials inaccessible to some readers. The author's interviews conducted with former plantation workers are a valuable resource and an admirable addition to the source material. An excellent case is made to show that if the plantation economy was of an almost singular focus to the French colonial authorities during their tenure as the governors of Vietnam, it was of hardly less focus to those who would supplant them. Though less genuinely ecological than its title would suggest, *Rubber and the Making of Vietnam* is a worthwhile effort to unite sometimes disparate strands of history under a single unifying theme. Plantation agriculture for export was the dominant mode of production for an array of Southeast Asian economies for the majority of the modern period. This volume never loses sight of that dominance and is earnest in its efforts to tease out its ramifications.

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TOSHKOV, ALEX. *Agrarianism as Modernity in 20th-Century Europe. The Golden Age of the Peasantry.* Bloomsbury Academic, London 2019. viii, 231 pp. \$103.50. (E-book: \$82.80.)

During the Cold War, peasant parties and the corresponding "ideology" of agrarianism were largely forgotten by historians and political scientists in the East *and* West. Communist historians considered peasant parties leftist traitors to the Marxist-Leninist cause, akin to the *narodniki* and Social Revolutionaries. To Anglo-Saxon historians, the peasant leaders had failed to turn their parties into viable alternatives to communist dictatorship, both in the interwar period and in the immediate postwar years. With the end of the Cold War came