timing matters. Writes Kim: 'Such variations complicate conventional understandings of colonial opium policies as following metropolitan regimes that medicalized drug control or as a response to religious actors and transnational activists who altered the moral conscience of the world' (p. 4). And by approaching colonial bureaucracy from a background in political science and sociology, Kim builds what historians should view as a novel (and convincing) argument about how change over time happens: through the construction and solving of official 'problems' by local administrators.

PETER THILLY
The University of Mississippi

Southeast Asia

Living standards in Southeast Asia: Changes over the long twentieth century, 1900–2015
By ANNE BOOTH
Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. Pp. 317. Tables, Bibliography, Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463422000625

Did Southeast Asian societies prosper during the 'long twentieth century' (1900–2015)? Were Southeast Asian societies impoverished under colonial regimes? Did poverty persist after independence into the present? Did all boats rise with tidal waves of growth? Did growth alone solve poverty? Did government interventions help the poor—and if so, which interventions? And most centrally—how can we answer any of these queries with certainty? These are the questions that Anne Booth addresses in *Living standards in Southeast Asia: Changes over the long twentieth century, 1900–2015*. For scholars whose fields concern economic history, Southeast Asian societies, poverty and inequality, and economics this book and several of its key points need to be an essential part of one's domain knowledge.

In *Living standards*, Booth's focus is as much on understanding *what* we know about livelihoods, poverty, and prosperity in Southeast Asia, as it is on explaining *why* Southeast Asia has prospered or remained poor. Too often, scholars jump to the second question—that is, explaining *why* economic conditions are what they are—before carefully demonstrating *what* sort of conditions in fact prevail. In this book, Booth analyses at length the available data and types of measurement used to be able to say with any certainty what prevailing living standards are in particular societies at particular times as well as comparatively across societies. Chapters 3 and 5, for example, are fully devoted to discussion and analysis of various measures of living standards, poverty, and inequality in colonial and post-colonial Southeast Asia.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine the development of exported-oriented colonial economies and measures for evaluating their impact on indigenous living standards. For the late colonial period covering the first four decades of the twentieth century, Booth considers a range of monetary and non-monetary measures. The former, in

terms of wages and household incomes, are in most cases unreliable or unavailable. Instead (or in addition), Booth examines the availability of food and cotton clothing along with measures of health, education, literacy, and women's economic opportunities to capture a more complete picture of living standards. She also provides a careful analysis of government policies on taxation and expenditure. The overall conclusion that Booth draws is that arguments for an impoverishment of Southeast Asian societies due to colonialism are overstated. As colonial governments (and the modernising Thai state) became more directly responsible for governing Southeast Asian societies, export-oriented economies and social spending on welfare and education generally improved living standards, at least up until the economic depression of the 1930s. That said, the region was playing catch up from large gaps with the colonial metropoles that had developed since the nineteenth century.

In chapter 4, Booth details the international debates around 'redistribution with growth' and the responses of newly independent Southeast Asian nations to the challenges of managing post-colonial economies. And in chapter 5, she returns to a detailed examination of measures used in assessing post-colonial living standards in the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and Burma. The latter chapter focuses mainly on the problems with available data and measurements of living standards. The overall picture, with many caveats and exceptions which Booth meticulously details, is one of poor economic performance. This poor performance of new post-colonial national economies (more the why rather than the what question) is attributed to poor national policies such as import substitution (see Greg Felker, 'The political economy of Southeast Asia', in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, ed. Mark Beeson, 2017).

The global Great Depression of the 1930s receives somewhat cursory treatment, perhaps because Booth's overall argument is that its impact was transitory and most if not all economies were recovering by the end of the decade. The Japanese occupation of the region in the early 1940s appears to have had a more substantially adverse impact on livelihoods. It does seem reasonable to argue, as Booth at least implies, that if the region had continued a post-depression recovery without the shock of Japanese occupation, the improvements in living standards seen through much of the region in the 1910s and 1920s might well have continued their positive trajectory, with the early 1930s being an ultimately insignificant downturn. On the other hand, historical events were such that the region experienced two major economic crises in the span of barely more than a decade. Arguably, these events had not only purely economic impacts but political ones as well, such as the widespread questioning of capitalism and support for communist and 'command-and-control' economics in the post-war years—and thus influenced the adoption of policies that turned out to be disastrous in the long-run such as the 'Burmese Way to Socialism'.

Booth arguably underplays two issues. The first is the difficulty of transitioning colonially oriented economies to national ones operating in a new international, global economy. The full costs of such a transition, beyond the adoption of import substitution and various poverty-reduction policies, deserve more attention. The second is the lack of post-war economic support that Southeast Asia received as compared to the former colonial metropoles or East Asian economies that came to be seen as 'miracles' in the second half of the twentieth century. The United States sent more

than $7 billion in recovery aid to the former European colonial powers after the Second World War. By contrast, former Southeast Asian colonies and Thailand received $312 million with another $802 million going to the Philippines. Japan, Korea, and Taiwan also received substantially more post-war aid than Southeast Asia (US Bureau of the Census, *Statistical abstract of the United States: 1954,* pp. 899–902; https://www.marshallfoundation.org/library/documents/marshall-plan-payments-millions-european-economic-cooperation-countries/). Whether and to what extent these factors contributed to Southeast Asia's relatively poor economic performance and poor living standards in the mid-twentieth century are beyond the scope of this review. But they seem reasonable factors to include in an analysis of Southeast Asia's twentieth century economic history.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century, respectively. The story of these decades has been the rapidity or slowness of growth across different countries and questions of the relationship of growth to inequality. By the mid-1990s, a general consensus had been reached that rapid economic growth had been a key to poverty reduction in many nations. But the importance of redistributive policies and concerns about growing economic inequality remained live issues. When growth collapsed in the wake of the 1997/1998 Asian Financial Crisis, analysts debated whether this might hit urban high- and middle-income earners more, thus reducing inequality, but the evidence seems inconclusive.

By the mid-2000s, Southeast Asian economies had generally returned to high growth, export-oriented policies with modest and somewhat ad hoc attempts at redistribution. Between 2005 and 2015, most nations experienced growth and poverty reduction with little effect on inequality—which either fell or rose only modestly. An important exception was Indonesia, where inequality rose sharply in the post-New Order period. As is the case throughout the book, Booth pays detailed attention to the various measures of incomes, livelihood standards, and poverty. She is especially critical of monetary measures and points instead toward more inclusive metrics such as Human Development Rankings.

The penultimate chapter 8 provides a review and critique of various poverty reduction policies. These policies range from agrarian land reform and resettlement to employment through labor-intensive public works, protectionism and price controls, cash transfers, population policies, and decentralisation (that is, focusing efforts on community rather than national projects). For a range of reasons that Booth details, most of these anti-poverty programmes have not been very effective. In high-growth economies, opportunities for off-farm employment have done much more to reduce poverty than agrarian reform or public works employment. Protectionist policies aimed at supporting local agriculture have generally been harmful to poorer citizens by driving up food prices. More positive results have come from allowing import competition while providing cash transfers to poorer farmers. The demographic transition to smaller families has also been a boon in poverty reduction, with the Philippines being a particular outlier where population growth has outstripped economic growth. While it is only possible to gloss Booth's detailed and complex arguments here, the discussion in chapter 8 is an important one for considering how poverty can be reduced and livelihoods improved through policy interventions.

Living standards is a book for experts. It is a paragon of careful, cautious, fully caveated scholarship, which experts rightfully admire; and which undergraduate students, policymakers, and general audiences typically cannot abide. Booth never jumps to conclusions. She tiptoes, very carefully. The introductory chapter, for example, lays out the questions of the book in painstaking detail but provides few clues and little foreshadowing of what the answers will be. Very little in the book is ever summarised. The final chapter 'What have we learned?' lays out with clarity the main conclusions that Booth comes to through her analysis. But it remains an extended and detailed discussion. The book requires careful, slow reading to fully take in Booth's vital arguments. For all that, it is a landmark analysis of the living standards across Southeast Asia over the twentieth century. If there is still good social science—and economic history—being done throughout the twenty-first century and beyond, *Living standards* will be a cornerstone of such work.

ERIC C. THOMPSON
National University of Singapore

Indonesia

Constraining elites in Russia and Indonesia: Political participation and regime survival
By DANIELLE N. LUSSIER
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. 313. Notes, Bibliography, Index.
doi:10.1017/S0022463422000546

Transitions to democracy tell us little about subsequent trajectories or political change and by no means guarantee the institutionalisation of democratic politics. In *Constraining elites in Russia and Indonesia: Political participation and regime survival*, Danielle N. Lussier sets out to demonstrate that democracy can survive only when citizens are able to place meaningful limits on political elites' power. In comparing post-Soeharto Indonesia and post-Soviet Russia, the book addresses two outliers in democratisation theory. In the literature, Indonesia has been characterised as an instance of democratic consolidation and post-Soviet Russia as a case of democratic failure. Taking an 'agent-centric' approach (p. 28), Lussier argues that distinctive patterns of political participation in Russia and Indonesia explain their deviations from global democratisation trends.

Constraining elites in Russia and Indonesia is an artfully conceived, skilfully conducted, and nuanced comparative analysis of this tale of two nations. The analysis of Russia and Indonesia consists of an overview of each country's contemporary political histories, focusing on the periods of democratic transition and post-transition, as well as a cross-national and multilevel analysis of subnational developments. Distinguishing citizens' elite-constraining behaviour from elite-enabling behaviour, the analysis seeks to illustrate this distinction and its referents in the two countries. Specifically, Lussier defines elite-constraining political