development discourse. True, by exploring the meanings of the "indigenous" and related concepts in early modern Europe, light is shed on what we now mean by "indigenous," while the argument (174) that contemporary usage is more likely a reaction against British imperial use of the term "native" is perfectly plausible. But the assertion that the ubiquity of the "local" is relatively modern is more difficult to justify. Indeed, the author effectively concedes the point. In its various manifestations, and with degrees of emphasis, it rather evokes a universal pattern of human thought, evident in diverse worldviews ethnographically reported.

———Roy Ellen, University of Kent at Canterbury

Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

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Like globalization, neoliberalism tends to evoke images of declining states and governments, powerless before the onslaught of the global market. In this new book, however, Aihwa Ong combines insights from Foucault and Agamben to argue that East/Southeast Asian as well as other governments are using a neoliberal form of the sovereign exception to articulate themselves with the market-centered logic of the contemporary world. The neoliberal order described by Ong is one suffused at all levels by the logic of the exception, and one in which conflicting neoliberalisms clash and merge. She develops these insights through a series of ten case studies on topics ranging from Chinese state policies, to U.S. outsourcing of high-tech jobs, to Singapore's privileging of high-skill foreigners over native-born citizens.

Ong finds her best example in the Chinese state's repeated acts, since the 1970s, of sovereign exception to the state socialist norm—its creation of special economic zones (SEZs) where the market determines wages and the labor and citizenship protections of the rest of China do not apply. Hong Kong and Macao, on the other hand, are more "positive" political zones of exception to the repressive norm of the rest of the country. Both are part of a strategy for greater national power and regional integration under Chinese leadership.

Ong sees a neoliberal biopolitics at play across the world, forming new kinds of subjects who are different from previous capitalist subjectivities such as Weber's Protestant ethic and Singapore's once-celebrated "Asian values." It is no longer enough to be rational and disciplined; one must also be flexible, knowledge-rich, creative, and cosmopolitan. Those who do not fit this model increasingly form the underside of the system, as rights that once came with formal citizenship are de-linked from it and attached to skills that are valued in the global market. Flexible entrepreneurs and professionals move capital

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and skills across latitudes and borders, and exercise disciplinary control on workers living in states of exception to labor norms.

More optimistically than Agamben, Ong argues that rather than a single opposition between citizenship and bare life there are multiple overlapping ethical and political systems that include and exclude in different ways. NGOs can find a way to include people through one when they are excluded through another. At the same time, Ong is more pessimistic than Hardt and Negri in that she sees the flexibility and mobility of the new world order as primarily a weapon of capital against labor, not as an opportunity for a "multitude" to oppose Empire.

There are times when Ong seems to stretch the concept of the exception beyond recognition, as when she discusses Malaysia's "exception of moderate Islam" (p. 51) while also stating, in a seeming contradiction, that Malay village Islam has historically been flexible. Though Ong's analysis of particular exceptions and departures is often brilliant and suggestive, she does not convincingly show that ruptures and shifts are unique to the neoliberal era. And while Ong's engagement with specific aspects of Agamben's theories is evident, it is less certain that the overarching thesis of "neoliberalism as exception" works as a clear theoretical statement.

However, she compensates for this by the richness of the individual essays, and it is this subtleness and wealth of insight—particularly her illustrations of neoliberal citizenship, subjectivity, and state strategy—rather than theoretical unity, that constitute the strength of the book. Furthermore, Ong's openness to ambiguous political possibilities, and to both optimism and pessimism, make this book a durable source of insights and tools for understanding the peculiar times we live in.

———Federico Helfgott, University of Michigan

Myron Echenberg, *Plague Ports: The Global Urban Impact of Bubonic Plague, 1894–1901*. New York: New York University Press, 2007.

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Of all the modern epidemics, bubonic plague was considered mysterious longer than most other contagious diseases, and therefore more terrifying. Plague's victims died within days or hours of falling ill, writhing in pain and fever; governments spun into panic or denial; harsh measures were taken against stricken neighborhoods, including quarantine, placement of the ill in camps, and the burning of possessions. The course and eventual retreat of plague (and its uneven impact, depending on local environment) was not, as Echenberg painstakingly explains in this excellent book, simply due to the advancement of medical thought and practices, but rather to a combination of factors that included socioeconomic structures, political decisions, and local ecosystems. Until an

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