



Cities in Motion: Urban Life and Cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia, 1920–1940 (Asian Connections)

By *Su Lin Lewis*

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In the 1920s and 1930s, the port cities of Southeast Asia were staging grounds for diverse groups of ordinary citizens to experiment with modernity, as a rising Japan and the growth of American capitalism challenged the predominance of European empires after the First World War. Both migrants and locals played a pivotal role in shaping civic culture. Moving away from a nationalist reading of the period, Su Lin Lewis explores layers of cross-cultural interaction in various spheres: the urban built environment, civic associations, print media, education, and popular culture. While the book focuses on Penang, Rangoon, and Bangkok - three cities born amidst British expansion in the region - it explores connected experiences across Asia and in Asian intellectual enclaves in Europe. Cosmopolitan sensibilities were severely tested in the era of post-colonial nationalism, but are undergoing a resurgence in Southeast Asia's civil society and creative class today.

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Review

'Lewis excels at shedding light on the globalization of middle-class urban life and habits. Since this was indeed a 'process' that accelerated after World War I, it makes perfect sense that the book as a whole concentrates on the 1920s and '30s.' Michael Goebel, Global Urban History (www.globalurbanhistory.com)

About the Author

Dr Su Lin Lewis is currently Lecturer in Modern Global History at the University of Bristol. She has taught at the University of Birmingham, the University of California, Berkeley, and at Birkbeck College, University of London. She was a Past and Present Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute of Historical Research in London and received her PhD in History from the University of Cambridge in 2010. Dr Lewis has also worked on and managed community-driven development projects for the World Bank and for the International Organization for Migration in Southeast Asia, where she developed an interest in the history of civil society and social movements in the region.

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