Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915. *By Eric Tagliacozzo.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. xiv + 437 pp. Illustrations, tables, bibliography, notes, index. Cloth, $50.00. ISBN: 0-300-08968-6.

Reviewed by Priscilla Roberts

By its very nature, smuggling as a form of economic activity is difficult to document, if only because available information is generally focused upon smuggling enterprises that failed. Eric Tagliacozzo's ambitious new study seeks not simply to document and illuminate the nature of smuggling and the range of responses on the often indistinct or undetermined borders or frontiers between what would become Dutch Indonesia and British Malaya in the fifty years from 1865, but also to relate this range of activities to the growth of state power, the imposition and definition of colonial rule, and the resistance and challenges both processes provoked. Tagliacozzo's work draws heavily on a wide range of Indonesian, Dutch, Singaporean, and British archival materials, including legal and marine records, diplomatic and administrative correspondence, and newspapers, while the spirit of Joseph Conrad, to whose tales the author repeatedly refers, pervades the book. This is a model study, a distinguished addition to existing literature on imperialism, state formation, and the spatial construction, definition, and nature of frontiers. Far more than a simple account of smuggling, it crosses the boundaries of anthropology and diplomatic, political, social, economic, and imperial history.

Tagliacozzo sets smuggling in the broader context of the extension of imperial authority and control. In his words, "By the middle decades of the nineteenth century Europeans were trying to change the underlying structure of politics and trade in the archipelago in ways that had never been attempted before. This was happening not only on the Anglo-Dutch frontier in the island world, but also on the mainland in various other parts of Southeast Asia as well" (p. 120). The definition of colonial boundaries in turn provoked smuggling on an "unparalleled scale" (p. 363). In the fifty years covered by Tagliacozzo's elegantly written and presented study, the Dutch extended their rule in some form over most of present-day Indonesia, while the British assumed control of Singapore, Malaya, and Brunei. Before 1865, a British adventurer had already established the personal principality of Sarawak on the Indonesian island of Borneo. Extension of colonial rule was a piecemeal, though inexorable, process, which in many cases left local rulers in place but under the suzerainty of the colonial overlord. As state power increased, a wide range of goods was declared contraband, and trade in them was either forbidden or subject to government duties and monopolies. The patchwork of overlapping, and sometimes unclear, jurisdictions gave

many opportunities for smuggling, as legal and physical barriers often impeded the seizure of contraband goods or facilitated their transport. So, too, did the nature of this area of Southeast Asia, a region of numerous islands, large and small, territory often heavily forested and mountainous, with long coastlines and numerous interconnecting rivers.

Since smuggling was a far greater problem for the Dutch than the British, Tagliacozzo concentrates upon the territories under their control. In the half-century after 1865, European knowledge of the land and its inhabitants increased dramatically through extensive surveying and mapping efforts and anthropological surveys. Over time, military, naval, and police forces, though always inadequate, grew in size, while better training, equipment, food, and medical care enhanced their effectiveness. Lighthouses and larger and more powerful patrol boats made the interception of smuggled goods and the exercise of imperial authority somewhat easier. Even so, uneasy colonial overlords felt their position to be precarious. Throughout the Netherlands East Indies, low-level violence, including piracy, attacks on colonial officials and others, riots, brawls, and unrest, was endemic. One of Tagliacozzo's most interesting findings is the degree to which Dutch officials were perennially concerned by the presence of growing numbers of "foreign Asians" in the Netherlands East Indies, including Chinese, Japanese, and Arabs, all of whom were in various ways perceived as threats to their colonial position. The growth of Islam and pan-Islamic sentiment, especially among those locals who undertook the Hajj pilgrimage, was considered equally problematic. By the late nineteenth century, the Dutch subjected Asian Christians, whom they had initially treated as they did westerners, to the harsher criminal law practices to which non-Christian indigenous Asian people under their colonial rule were generally subjected.

Particularly intriguing was the role of the Chinese, who feature prominently in the book in several capacities. Coming to Southeast Asia in large numbers, in many cases they worked as indentured coolies in wretched conditions in tin mining and other enterprises, while others were merchants and sailors. In various ways, their presence challenged efforts by colonial rulers to establish control and stability. Chinese tin miners rioted repeatedly in protest against their abysmal working and living standards, about which the post-1911 Chinese government formally protested to the Netherlands administration. The clan organizations and secret societies established by the Chinese also fought each other on occasion and were customers for drugs, counterfeit money, and arms. Chinese businessmen and sailors were often heavily involved in smuggling and sometimes supplied all kinds of contraband, including people, many of them from China. Information on the ramifications of Chinese participation is scattered throughout the

book, which makes one wish the treatment of this topic was consolidated in one place, where the author might discuss the Chinese community's overall impact on the region.

Tagliacozzo highlights aspects of smuggling that in some way presented a challenge to the colonial authorities, rather than more mundane facets that were primarily a challenge to their capacity to raise revenue. He concentrates on the traffic in narcotic drugs, which represented a colonial monopoly, and in people, counterfeit currency, and arms. Narcotics smuggling even the colonial authorities admitted was lucrative; by 1915 only a small percentage of consignments were being intercepted, a situation that still obtains today. Over the fifty years he surveys, counterfeit currency was gradually brought under control. Trafficking in people, including slaves, women and children for prostitution, and laborers, was checked but promptly assumed protean forms that were exceedingly difficult to police, a situation compounded by the fact that the conditions of state-employed laborers, whether they were sanctioned Chinese or other indentured workers, were hardly better than those imposed by slavery. Despite British cooperation in the eradication of illegal arms trafficking, given grudgingly and required according to the terms of Britain's nineteenth-century commitment to free-trade ideological principles, the trade in illicit armaments flourished throughout the period, fueling the long-running Acehnese rebellion that began in 1873 and other less protracted episodes of revolt. Only the onset of World War I reoriented the international arms trade, at least temporarily shifting it out of the region. A wide range of often less controversial commodities, tea and spices, for example, likewise covertly crossed Southeast Asian borders as part of the quest to avoid duties whose justification many otherwise law-abiding individuals frequently failed to acknowledge, an outlook that many respectable international travelers today often display. While the arm of the state gradually became more effective in interdicting contraband activities, smugglers often displayed great ingenuity in exploiting legal loopholes, as well as superior local knowledge, to evade arrest and punishment. Indeed, Tagliacozzo suggests that the convolutions surrounding the case of one small ship, the *Kim Ban An*, seized by the Dutch for smuggling pepper from Aceh in 1873, was among the factors that led to the 1910 Declaration of London governing the seizure of contraband on merchant ships.

One of the more fascinating revelations of Tagliacozzo's study is the multinational character of the smuggling enterprise, in itself an admission of either the dubious legitimacy of the colonial state's strictures or the profitability of the undertaking. In an early manifestation of globalization, individuals of virtually every western and Asian nationality participated, often collaboratively, in the smuggling trade, while both indigenous and expatriate colonial

administrative officials, police, and military personnel were often susceptible to bribery and, in some cases, even initiated smuggling activities.

For many, smuggling was primarily a profit-making enterprise. For those who resented colonial rule, however, smuggling often became a form of protest; its profits were used to finance resistance, while weapons and counterfeit currency alike enhanced rebels' fighting capabilities. After Dutch officials in the 1870s embargoed sales of pepper, rebel Aceh's major cash crop, "Dutch commodores of the blockade marveled at how Acehnese chiefs treated the smuggling of pepper almost as a game . . . and a chief's status went up commensurably in the success of the voyages" (p. 329). While admitting that very few smugglers left written or oral testimony as to their motives, Tagliacozzo views smuggling not simply in entrepreneurial economic terms, but as one means whereby local peoples could challenge colonial hegemonies and the massive extension of state power without running the risks of full-scale, and probably futile, armed resistance. One of the few limitations of his decidedly stimulating book is that he did not carry this thesis further forward in time in order to explore the possible links between smuggling and the growth of nationalist movements in maritime Southeast Asia.

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