

shaped by ties of Bengali ethnicity and shared culture, are the topic of chapter 9, which is a useful contribution to the ethnography of South Asian Americans. A short conclusion reflects on why Durga is the most popular deity for Bengalis and why her festival outshines all others.

As McDermott acknowledges, her book does not cover every aspect of the pujas. In various places, too, space constraints perhaps forced her to omit material, and in others her arguments seem rather weak. One example pertains to the pujas' modern history. It is important that control over the festivals was once confined to elite families, but after *sarbajanin* pujas developed it expanded "to the shared, more democratic, and more politicised patronage of the middle class" (149), and today's "modern forms of competition ... stand squarely upon those derived from the eighteenth-century zamindars" (150). But very little is said about who makes up local puja committees and who is excluded, and about how their membership has altered over time, particularly when (presumably) local fundraising increasingly gave way to business sponsorship, following economic liberalization. Nor does McDermott define what she means by "middle class," either before or after liberalization. Hence the social characteristics of the rival puja committees and the middle-class communities they purportedly represent remain unclear. A second example concerns the discussion of sacrifice. Plainly, Bengali sacrifice has distinctive features. In theorizing the ritual within its comparative context, however, McDermott is curiously hesitant about insisting that animals are surrogates for the ideal human victim throughout Hinduism, if not universally; that the opposition between blood sacrifice and non-violent, vegetarian worship is also pan-Hindu, as is the buffalo's special status as a victim, notably in royal Durga pujas; and, crucially, that devotion can indeed go together with sacrifice, whatever its vegetarian opponents may assert.

But the weaknesses in this book are vastly outweighed by its strengths. McDermott's pioneering study is a scholarly achievement that is impressive, enlightening and enjoyable to read.

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ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY: Essays and Reflections by Singapore's Negotiators. *Edited by C.L. Lim, Margaret Liang.* Singapore; Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific, 2011. xxvi, 316 pp. (Tables.) US\$88.00, cloth. ISBN 978-981-4324-63-2.

Free markets do not arise spontaneously and when it comes to international trade, moves towards free trade—or trade liberalization—have come only as a result of complex and long-running processes of negotiation. *Economic Diplomacy* offers a great deal of information about these processes as they have

unfolded both bilaterally and at the multilateral level, and offers particular insight into the role played by trade-dependent Singapore in the evolution of the international rules and institutions governing trade and international commerce. The book is divided into two parts. The first deals with the mainstay of the international trading system, the multilateral trade regime brought into being and maintained through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The second part covers what it calls “free trade agreements,” bilateral and minilateral preferential trade agreements, which have proliferated over the last decade.

No doubt because of the critical importance of international trade to Singapore, the country has invested heavily in economic diplomacy in both multilateral and bilateral arenas. The Singaporean contributors to this book, most of whom have had direct experience of trade negotiations or economic diplomacy more generally, are well-placed to offer both personal and scholarly accounts of how the rules governing international trade have been constructed and how they have changed over time. As noted in the preface, the book is the product of collaboration among “Singapore’s practitioners, practitioner-scholars and scholar-practitioners.” A great deal of the book’s value comes from this particular positioning of its contributing authors, whose expertise allows them to convey a wealth of detail to those interested in the international trade system in general and Singapore’s economic diplomacy in particular. Different chapters strike a different balance between these two subject areas. Chak Mun’s chapter on the WTO institutional reforms, for example, provides a detailed account of institutional change in the multilateral trade regime but it does not provide any particular country perspective, at least not in any obvious way. Similarly, Peter Govindasamy discusses the multilateral regime’s rules on the domestic regulation of services with great expertise but does not bring an explicitly Singaporean perspective to this discussion, despite his own involvement in services negotiations.

The chapters take on particular thematic issues or subjects, such as informal negotiating or ginger groups in the WTO (by seasoned trade diplomat-turned-scholar, Barry Desker), intellectual property, dispute settlement, the US-Singapore Free Trade Agreement and the progress of trade liberalization among the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries. Given that the scholarly output on the WTO and the international trade agreements is already vast, it is the chapters that give insight into Singapore’s role or perspectives that make the most original contributions. Former negotiator and legal scholar Margaret Liang gives a highly informative account of anti-dumping negotiations in the Uruguay Round, offering both first-hand anecdotes on the dynamics of the negotiations and an abundance of documentary evidence describing the evolution of negotiating texts and positions. Although the role played by Singapore and particular Singaporean

diplomats surfaces in some of the chapters on the WTO, the second half of the book is necessarily more Singapore-specific, as it deals primarily with the preferential trade agreements that Singapore has entered into since 2002, a period when WTO members failed to reach agreement on the long-running Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations.

Given the professional training and experience of the contributing authors, it is not surprising that the predominant perspective that emerges from the book is legalistic. This also reflects the nature of the international trade regime, with its heavy emphasis on detailed rules and legalized dispute-resolution procedures. While the regulator's perspective surfaces, particularly in chapters on services regulation and the US-Singapore trade agreement, political and economic debates are for the most part submerged. The highly contentious nature of many of the issues dealt with under both multilateral and bilateral trade agreements is of course noted by many contributors, as they describe sometimes protracted disputes, but the substance of these disputes and their underlying political and economic drivers mostly recede into background. Occasionally, tantalizing personal reflections or assessments are offered, apparently as asides, but more often the authors maintain a distance from the actual controversies associated with the agreements and institutions they describe. Even the personalized "reflections" by senior Singaporean diplomats such as Tommy Koh and K. Kesavapany maintain a great deal of reserve in this respect. This may be the way that Singapore's trade negotiators look at the world, or it may reflect the high degree of discretion instilled into them through their professional lives. Either way, the chapters that do offer more explicit consideration of underlying political and distributional conflicts, such as Geoffrey Yu's nuanced account of trade-related intellectual property rules, are particularly valuable for those seeking a Singaporean view on these conflicts.

While occasionally frustrating due to the discretion of some contributors, the book nonetheless is well worthwhile for readers with an interest in Singapore's trade diplomacy. It provides a valuable set of accounts that shed light on both the multilateral processes that govern the WTO and the dynamics of bilateral bargaining in preferential trade agreements.

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BRITISH POLICY AND THE CHINESE IN SINGAPORE, 1939 TO 1955: The Public Service Career Of Tan Chin Tuan. By Lee Su Yin.
Singapore: Talisman Publishing, 2011. xxiv, 176 pp. (Tables, figures.) S\$28.00, paper. ISBN 978-981-08-6667-9

Tan Chin Tuan (1908-2005), public servant, community leader, banker and intermediary between colonial and Chinese interests, is the subject of this slim volume which examines Sino-British relations at a pivotal time in