

**Globalisation: Perak's Rise, Relative Decline, And Regeneration**  
By HRH Sultan Nazrin Shah, Oxford University Press, 2024, pp. 566  
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Cast in a long history of how globalization has connected the world from all corners, this book narrates how the state of Perak in Malaysia has experienced globalization over the centuries. It explains how the state grew rapidly on the back of first tin mining and subsequently rubber cultivation to become Malaya's richest state at independence in 1957. Backed by detailed data and rigorous research, author Sultan Nazrin Shah explains the meteoric economic rise of Perak, while also addressing social developments. Presenting his research in four parts, the author undertakes a robust analysis, covering how the economics of the state grew rapidly, then subsequently faced a decline before showing strong signs of regeneration, as well as discussing the social impact these developments brought.

Following the introduction, which gives a succinct summary of the book, part 1 introduces the people, the natural geography and habitat, and the emergence of British colonialism amidst the royal state that was founded earlier. Part 2 explains the pillars of prosperity that drove Perak to Malaysia's economic frontier. Focusing on the period from 1850 until 1957, part 2 discusses the dramatic rise in tin mining and subsequently rubber production. Unlike earlier radical works that explain British encroachment into tin mining as driven by capitalist domination to displace Chinese tin mining, the author offers a convincing argument that exhaustion of tin ore drove tin mining to deeper grounds, making the introduction of dredging inevitable, a point I make in *Foreign Capital and Industrialization in Malaysia* (1995). The rich historical evidence allows Sultan Nazrin Shah to capture the rise in living standards in the state from 1900–1940.

Part 3 discusses the decline of tin mining and rubber cultivation and with that the economic decline of Perak. While rubber was facing volatile fluctuations, as well as a fall in prices, the chapter addresses the expansion in oil palm cultivation. As economic growth stagnated following Malaya's independence in 1957, out-migration began to rise, which was exacerbated by little federal funding towards its infrastructure. Out-migration from Perak accelerated from 1971 to 1990, affirming Sultan Nazrin Shah's argument that the New Economic Policy (NEP) of

1971 acted as a push factor to raise out-migration. Part 3 also examines state allocations through the corridor development plan of the North Corridor Economic Region (NCER), but notes not only that the economic gains remain marginal but also that the evidence is not convincing enough to suggest that these gains came from the NCER. Importantly, the evidence shows that Perak has continued a comparative decline. Services and manufacturing have become the two pillars of economic growth in the state, while tin mining and rubber cultivation have become inconsequential. Still, while the evidence shows that Perak's share of GDP per capita against Malaysia's fell from 81.1 percent in 2000 to 63.4 percent in 2010, it has since risen to 72.4 percent in 2020, and this rise appears positive as the state has been deindustrializing more slowly than Malaysia as a whole. However, part 3 also notes that Perak has faced slower structural transformation than Selangor and Penang over the period from 1970 to 2020.

In addition, part 3 deals with poverty, income distribution, demographic change, and urbanization, which is interesting as it is the first time that these topics are treated rigorously at the level of Perak state. While richer households are predominantly urban, all Perak household incomes in general have risen. However, the state's median household income was only above that of Kedah and Kelantan. Interestingly, the evidence shows that Indians rather than Malays are the ones lagging behind on equalized income growth. While the concern in Perak has been out-migration owing to a lack of new job creation, there are positive signs, as out-migration in the state has fallen gradually, from -4.1 percent in 1975–1980 to -3.8 percent in 1986–1991, -2.6 percent in 1995–2000, -1.6 percent in 2005–2020, and -1.1 percent in 2014–2020. Another positive development is the sharp decline in mortality rates for those under 5 years.

Sultan Nazrin Shah presents his vision for Perak state in part 4. The five instruments of regeneration articulated in the final part of the book—namely, stimulating investment to catalyze sustainable development, nurturing small and medium enterprises, generating new sources of revenue, synergizing the NCER's Strategic Development Plan 2021–2025, and promoting synergies with high income Selangor—are well thought out and drawn from the use of detailed evidence and profound research. Sultan Nazrin Shah succinctly advances five drivers to achieve the regeneration Perak requires, i.e., improving the efficiency and transparency of institutions, upgrading human capital and employability, investing in global gateways, leveraging and enhancing the state's remarkable natural and historical resources, and seeking greater state-level autonomy on revenue and decision-making powers.

This pioneering book has not only unearthed new knowledge on the state of Perak, it has also elegantly narrated the integration of the state into the global economy. Unlike many other works on Malaysia, which tend to be esoteric with a narrow disciplinary focus, Sultan Nazrin Shah deploys a rich multidisciplinary analytical lens to offer a coherent and cogent account of how a state has undergone developments as it has integrated with the forces of globalization. The book also deals crisply with booms and busts, and political interventions and wars, and in the process the author narrates eloquently not just the lives of the elites, but also of the masses that make up Perak state.

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