



**Hewison Kevin, Ken Young.** *Transnational Migration and Work in Asia*. London: Routledge, 2009. 238 S. ISBN 978-0-415-36889-6; ISBN 978-0-415-54678-2.



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## **K. Hewison u.a. (Hrsg.): Transnational Migration and Work in Asia**

The field of transnational international Labour Migration in Asia has undergone significant changes in recent years. As research interests on migrant workers in Asia have expanded, there has been an increase in publications on the subject, yielding new perspectives on a range of issues. The book under review comprises diverse contributions by scholars in Australia, Hong Kong and Thailand in an informative and interdisciplinary volume. It is a collection of case studies originally published in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia* in 2001, 2004 and 2005. The authors draw on various frames, including human geography, labour studies and sociology, to map and document changes in the contexts and consequences of migration; growth of women's migration; governance gaps in labour migration; and the role of regulatory frameworks and institutions in Asia. The essays offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex processes associated with international labour migration and work in Asia.

The book is organized into three parts/sections and includes a short introduction by the editors. This introduction clarifies the selective focus on semi-skilled and less-skilled workers and the editors point to the compar-

ative analyses and shared perspectives of the contributors on general trends in sub-regional contexts. Following this, the first section, 'Part 1: Globalization and Migration' includes two chapters that provide the broader and theoretical contexts of labour migration in the Asia-Pacific. Ken Young places the framework in the context of contemporary globalisation and examines the connection between the increase in labour migration flows and the role of state policies in migration flows. He also analyses the differences in working conditions and circumstances of Filipina and Indonesian women domestic workers in Hong Kong and Taiwan and comments on the cultural and social institutions that underscore their migration patterns. In chapter 3 Adrian Vickers charts the rise of international migration in Indonesia against the backdrop of urbanization processes and displacement that have promoted population mobility within the region. He also offers perceptive insights into the motivations and risks involved in migration processes.

The book's second section, 'Part 2: Migrant Workers, Trafficking and the State', comprises case studies that provide a demographic and socioeconomic profile

of migrant populations in various Asian countries. The studies, which examine a range of contemporary migration experiences from the perspective of historical connections and economic and social linkages, also connect the migration journeys to structural and ideological processes. In Chapter 4, Maniemai Thongyou and Dusadee Ayuwat discuss the importance of transnational social ties among Laotian migrant workers in Thailand. These social networks facilitate border crossings, enable the new migrants to find employment and accommodation and assist with remittance transfers. In Chapter 5 Anne Loveband examines the migration experiences of Indonesian domestic workers in Taiwan. Her study on the stereotyping and exploitation of Indonesian domestic workers and their lower status vis-à-vis Filipina domestic workers has been corroborated by studies on Indonesian domestic workers in Malaysia and Singapore (See, for example, Kaur 2007 and 2012). Loveband also examines the implications of this stereotyping on the Indonesian domestic workers' labour conditions.

Kevin Hewison in Chapter 7 examines the labour conditions and experiences of Thai domestic workers in Hong Kong and notes their vulnerability despite the fact that they appear to be satisfied with their labour conditions. The next Chapter by Stephen Frost deals with male Nepali construction workers in Hong Kong. These workers are citizens by virtue of their colonial background and they work alongside Chinese construction workers in Hong Kong. Interestingly, Nepali migrant workers in Malaysia are recruited specifically as security guards (the colonial connection) and dislike working in the hot sun as ordinary labourers. However, their general labour conditions and work experiences resonate with those of migrant domestic workers since their employment opportunities are constrained by their poverty. Next, Robyn Emerton and Carole Peterson's comparative study of Filipina domestic workers and nightclub hostesses in Hong Kong (Chapter 8), examines how the latter group live under restrictive conditions and have to confront sexual exploitation. Alex Choi's chapter in this section explores migrant women's work in Macau following the state's increasing reliance on cheap migrant workers for the export-oriented manufacturing sector after Macau switched to low-cost manufacturing production in the 1980s. Chinese domestic workers were also permitted entry for employment by the state. Presently, Filipina, Indonesian and Vietnamese domestic workers are recruited for domestic work in the state. Migrant workers from Mainland China are cur-

rently employed in the hospitality sector (especially casinos). The domestic work sector is now dominated by Filipina, Indonesian and Vietnamese women. In Chapter 10, Dennis Arnold and Kevin Hewison examine the role of contract Burmese labour in the garment and textile factories in the border town of Mae Sot in Thailand. While this was related to Thailand's policy of constructive engagement with Burma, Thailand also benefited from the relocation of Thai factories to the border town. The authors also discuss the difficulties faced by non-state actors in ensuring a better deal for the workers.

The final section, Part 3: Policy-making and Migrant Labour comprises two chapters that focus on the impact of migration, policy and advocacy for the workers and the reintegration of migrant workers. Both studies are on migrant workers from the Philippines and the authors examine migrant labour policies and programmes in the different Asian countries. In Chapter 11, Kathleen Weekly discusses the Philippines Government's programs that have been designed to facilitate the reintegration of Overseas Filipino Workers. The programs centre on remittances, savings and investment by migrant workers. Weekly concludes that there is little evidence of success. Rochelle Ball and Nicola Piper (Chapter 12) recommend a rights-based approach to international labour migration governance. They examine the influence and impact of civil society or non-state actors on migration governance, with a focus on the Philippine-Japan connection and the Philippines state-led efforts to ensure workers' welfare. They conclude that success has been limited.

*Transnational Migration and Work in Asia* deals with international labour migration and includes empirical research through various case studies of important migrant-destination and migrant-sending countries. The editors have aimed at placing labour migration flows in the wider context of history, gender and cultural landscapes. The significant strands of states, labour brokerage and employers provide a valuable contribution to the field. The case studies are well researched, though Malaysia and Singapore as destination states are not represented in the book. But as the editors explain, most of the essays were originally published in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Overall, the book is useful for understanding international labour migration in Asia and should be useful for scholars working on migration and governance issues. It also makes it possible for this research area to embrace new contributions and include connections within and beyond Asia.

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