

found work in the destination country enables them to fulfil their obligations as son, daughter, parent or sibling. Therefore, rather than weakening village ties, temporary labour migration may solidify and strengthen them. Nevertheless, transnational relationships also face limitations and stresses, in such forms as emotional distress, overdependence and unreasonable expectations. This discussion may be confusing to readers, as McKay does not sufficiently address the seeming inconsistencies in her evidence.

The final chapters of the book provide an interesting contrast to the first half as they delve into the struggles of readjustment, in a new host country as well as upon returning home. The plot thus takes an interesting turn as it highlights issues of family demands on and expectations of migrants, and considers the broader and more structural issues of temporary immigration and entitlement to state welfare. In her concluding remarks, the author demonstrates a high level of self-reflexivity in explaining the limitations of her research design and methodology, giving readers an opportunity to review the claims of her study.

This in-depth and well-written narrative provides a rare glimpse into the lives of individuals shaped by globalization and migration. It also raises critical questions about the concept of a virtual village in which migrants' lives are enmeshed. It is especially recommended for readers interested in anthropology and cultural studies.

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Thailand's Hidden Workforce: Burmese Migrant Women Factory Workers. By Ruth Pearson and Kyoko Kusakabe. London and New York: Zed Books, 2012. 205 pp.

The book focuses on Burmese migrant women who work in Thailand's garment factories. It is based on research conducted between 2006 and

2010 in three locations — Mae Sot and Sangkhlaburi (Three Pagodas Pass), both of which are located near the Thailand-Myanmar border, and Samut Prakan, near Bangkok. It addresses various dimensions of these women's lives, including leaving their homes in Myanmar for Thailand, searching for jobs, coping with bad working conditions and low wages, struggling in a new environment, raising families, trying to create their own communities, wrestling to pay debts, and others. It makes clear their need to cope with anxiety, hardship, dangers and all kinds of insecurity. They may face harassment, assault, and even murder — sometimes with government officials as the perpetrators.

None of this may sound unfamiliar to readers acquainted with other research on the broad topic of woman migrant workers. This book is, however, particularly rich in information from the field. We hear the voices of Burmese women — of several ethnic groups, and of different age groups and backgrounds — telling their life stories. We learn that, notwithstanding all the difficulties and uncertainties, these women have tried to make the best of their lives. We are told that some women have earned degrees from Burmese universities, some used to work in garment factories in Yangon and can sew with skill (p. 59), some have met friends who came from the same village and who have given them help and made their lives easier (p. 64), some have “managed to establish our own community” (p. 92), some could save money but made themselves look poor so that the local Thais “will feel pity for me” (p. 98). We even find out that some workers in Mae Sot were “sent by the factory management to the other side of the river [in Burmese territory] for ‘an afternoon’s shopping’ following a tip-off from the Mae Sot police”. The unregistered migrant workers could therefore escape arrest (p. 16). It is quite possible, I guess, that the warning came from some officials, who might have some special relationships with the factory management.

We also learn from this book, perhaps even more importantly, that not only are these women individuals with their own goals and dreams, but also that each of the three research sites is unique. Sangkhlaburi,

for example, is a free trade zone (as well as a militarized zone), where workers are not pressured “to register officially”. Although the nominal wages there are lower, workers “could actually earn more there than in Mae Sot, where they would be subject to high levels of deduction [from wages]” (pp. 94–95). In my view, most places in Thailand where Burmese migrant workers work and live are distinctive in their social milieux and in the experiences that migrants are likely to have.

I formerly conducted a research in Ranong, a port in southern Thailand. It is only thirty minutes away from Myanmar’s Kawthaung by a ferry and has been an active centre in the border trade for decades. A few years ago it was estimated that the Burmese workers made up to half of its population, a figure that is perhaps even higher today. Most Burmese worked in the fishing industry, but many of them made their livings at other sorts of jobs, including self-employment. There were small eating houses, karaoke bars, grocery shops, and other small businesses, all run by Burmese. There were a few small childcare centres, in which all employees and children were Burmese. Because of the number of Burmese in Ranong, it was no surprise to hear many local Thais express the view that, without the Burmese, local businesses might be in trouble and they might not be able to make a living. The Burmese were both workers and customers or consumers. Most passengers using the local motorcycle taxis and *songthaew* (private buses), for example, were Burmese. Many small local businesses also survived because of their Burmese customers. My point is the relationships between the Burmese workers and the local Thais in Ranong were reciprocal, complex and dynamic.

Pearson’s and Kusakabe’s book is well researched, full of fascinating information, well presented and readable. Yet, because it covers three research sites and many issues, we do not learn much about the distinctive features of each location. I am aware that this might be an anthropologist’s preference. But, for example, we are told little about the lives of the new communities that these women build, even as we learn that they have tried to find

friends and build such communities (pp. 101–5). Other important issues are also mentioned only briefly, such as remittances, and relationships between the women whose spouses are living with them in Thailand and their husbands or between the women and their children. And we know almost nothing about their relationships with local Thais.

It is fair, however, to say that every work of research has its limitations and that crucial issues will always require further study. And I recommend that anyone with an interest in the study of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand read this book. It will certainly provide him or her with a range of exciting baseline information.

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Labour Migration and Human Trafficking in Southeast Asia: Critical Perspectives. Edited by Michele Ford, Lenore Lyons and Willem van Schendel. London and New York: Routledge, 2012. 173 pp.

Whilst many academic voices have called attention to the flawed architecture of global anti-trafficking efforts, to date most of these voices have trained their critical comment on the United States and Western Europe. Southeast Asia is also what we might call an “anti-trafficking intensive region”, where a myriad of state, third-sector, and international interventions are aimed at reducing the crime of human trafficking. It is on these interventions and on their moral, political and ideological underpinnings that this book focuses. As its Introduction states, “This book contributes to the growing critique of the anti-trafficking agenda by exploring the ways the UN Trafficking Protocol has been taken up by policymakers, non-government organizations (NGOs) and international agencies