

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.

Niti Pawakapan

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand 10330; email: npawakapan@hotmail.com.

DOI: 10.1355/sj28-2n

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

in Southeast Asia” (p. 1). This contribution is well received and, arguably, much needed.

The volume comprises an introduction and eight substantive chapters, collectively covering the breadth of the Southeast Asian region from the Philippines, Cambodia, the Thai-Lao border, Indonesia, the Chinese-Vietnamese border, the Indonesian-East Malaysian border to the Myanmar-Thai border. While Singapore is a notable absence from a volume whose goal is exhaustive treatment of mainland and maritime Southeast Asia, Indonesia is perhaps overrepresented in the chapters. The volume nonetheless provides good coverage of the region. As notable as its geographical breadth is the methodological reach of the volume. One of the recurring problems with the construction of knowledge about all aspects of human trafficking and anti-trafficking is a lack of deep, ethnographic insight on the part of researchers. Yet all but one of the chapters (that on the Philippines) in this book draw on deep ethnographic engagement with state and non-state actors involved in anti-trafficking work.

Thematically, the chapters give depth to three crucial — and interrelated — insights that could advance knowledge about anti-trafficking in the region (and indeed elsewhere). First is the suggestion that anti-trafficking organizations are often driven by motives and agendas that do not reflect a primary concern for the human rights of trafficked persons themselves. Although many others have made this argument, some of the contributors to this volume illustrate this point particularly well. Zhang Juan’s chapter suggests that, although borders are often important sites of anti-trafficking work, on the Chinese-Vietnamese border at Lao Cai economic interests militate against the regulation of possible trafficking-related activities. Nicholas Farrelly’s chapter on Burmese migrants in Thailand also highlights the “strategic disinterest” (p. 141) in human trafficking on the part of the Myanmar government, as remittances and bribes flow in the wake of outmigration. Michele Ford’s and Lenore Lyons’s chapter makes a similar argument about ulterior motives for undertaking anti-trafficking work. They reframe

the work of NGOs active on Indonesia's periphery as activity driven in part by funding and the organizations' other concerns as much as by any actual evidence of the need for heightened anti-trafficking interventions.

The second thematic convergence or insight in the volume is evident in the focus of many of the chapters on borders and maps. As a geographer, I found my interest piqued in particular by Zhang Juan's and Michael Eilenberg's chapters. In different ways, these chapters demonstrate the manner in which bordering processes on the part of states and anti-trafficking activities intersect to produce spaces in ways that reinforce, subvert or reconfigure international borders. Because borders can be intensely significant sites for anti-trafficking efforts (through the surveillance of the movement of people), they merit exceptional attention in any critical review of anti-trafficking efforts. At the same time, one shortcoming of the volume is the lack of engagement with internal borders and intra-state bordering processes as they relate to anti-trafficking efforts. In some of the countries under consideration in the volume — particularly the Philippines and Indonesia — internal bordering processes must surely have analytical importance equal to that of the international borders that are the main focus of the chapters.

Sverre Molland's chapter on the Thai-Lao border also illustrates the theme of spatiality in anti-trafficking. It documents the ways in which governments and international organizations produce trafficking-intensive spaces (labelled "hotspots"), which then in turn become the object of anti-trafficking interventions. Importantly, Molland argues that this designation can occur without any clear evidence either that trafficking is a significant problem in the sites in question or that it conforms to the characteristics of those sites. He is thus led to conclude that, "anti-trafficking programs are defined by their own discursive logic" (p. 70).

The final and perhaps most novel and significant insight of the volume lies in the implicit adoption of a post-structuralist view of the state on the part of many of the contributors. Analysing the state through this lens enables authors to disaggregate the actions,

interests and motivations of various differently situated actors operating within the anti-trafficking framework of the state, in a range of roles and on a range of scales. Anti-trafficking policy thus emerges not as a cohesive and consistent production, but as a fragmented and malleable object underwriting various, sometimes contradictory and inconsistent, actions. Wayne Palmer's chapter on Indonesian bureaucrats charged with anti-trafficking work illustrates this important theme most explicitly. Palmer rightly points out that state officials use discretion in their anti-trafficking work: "Lawmakers have the power to introduce a definition of trafficking into the state's legal framework for the purpose of identifying a crime, but bureaucrats decide the parameters of cases for which the definition is employed" (p. 161).

Other arguments articulated in the volume — such as the focus of anti-trafficking on prostitution and the sex industry (in Larissa Sandy's chapter on Cambodia) and on women's (lack of) agency under anti-trafficking policies (in Jorge Tigno's chapter on the Philippines) — are perhaps not so novel, but they are nonetheless well taken. The suggestion that non-trafficked persons (labour migrants) are sometimes the objects of anti-trafficking interventions (Ford's and Lyons's chapter on Indonesia and Farrelley's chapter on the Myanmar-Thai border) also perhaps overstates a theme that is becoming well established in critical scholarship on anti-trafficking. But it is also a theme that bears reiterating.

The most significant weakness of this volume, in my view, is its failure to engage more explicitly with policy imperatives. If, as the volume suggests, anti-trafficking policy and practice have considerable shortcomings that compromise their effectiveness, then how these are to be addressed remains a critical question. Any volume that so robustly critiques policy ought surely to also attempt to provide some insight into this question. In failing to do so, the volume undercuts its aspiration to engage with anti-trafficking efforts in ways that may support their improvement or, indeed, their possible abandonment. Despite this shortcoming, the volume provides a sorely needed corrective to critiques of anti-trafficking activity that are not

well grounded geographically or methodologically. As one of the original participants in the workshop that led to the volume, I find it satisfying to see its final realization in print.

Sallie Yea

National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, 1 Nanyang Walk,
Singapore 637616; email: sallie.yea@nie.edu.sg.