

Oen Tiong Hauw). This section was immediately followed by the discussion on political participation in Medan and Surabaya. The ‘broader scene’ is not directly relevant to political participation nor ‘democratization’; it does not contribute to her major arguments.

There are two factual errors in the book: On page 9 the author notes that in the 1920s and 1930s no Indonesian political parties, except the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Communist Party of Indonesia, or PKI), accepted ethnic Chinese as members. In fact, a left-wing party, Gerindo, opened its membership to Peranakan Chinese in 1939. Also, on page 90, the author notes that the requirement for being president of Indonesia in the old 1945 constitution was being *pribumi* (meaning “indigenous”, a new term used since Suharto’s New Order era). In fact, the term used was *asli* (meaning “indigenous”, a term used prior to the New Order era), not *pribumi*.

Despite the shortcomings of the book, the author should be congratulated for writing on a difficult and challenging topic. It helps us understand Chinese businesspeople and politics in the two Indonesian cities of Medan and Surabaya.

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DOI: 10.1355/sj35-1i

*Love, Money and Obligation: Transnational Marriage in a Northeastern Thai Village*. By Patcharin Lapanun. Singapore: NUS Press, 2019. ix+198 pp.

Transnational marriage is a growing sub-field of migration studies, and Patcharin’s monograph is a significant contribution to it. Its most important innovative trait is that it does not—as most studies in the sub-field do—look just into the dyadic relationship between a Thai woman and a foreign (*farang*) man, but it broadens the perspective by investigating the complexities provoked by such marriages in

the women's relations with their natal families and communities. Unusual for such studies, it also dwells upon the impact of such marriages on the processes of social transformation in the villages of contemporary Northeastern Thailand (Isan) under the impact of globalization.

The book is based on a study of about 150 women married to foreigners; close to eighty per cent of them live abroad, predominantly in European countries; about twenty per cent live in the village. However, even those living abroad often visit the village with their husbands. The couples are marked by a big age difference: the women are generally considerably younger than their foreign husbands, but many were previously married to Thai men, and had children, who are often taken care of by the foreign husbands.

Patcharin strikes out against what she sees as a simplistic interpretation of Thai-foreigner marriages in terms of a 'love and money' dichotomy, common in the literature, but she does not deny the importance of these factors; rather, she attenuates their sharpness by pointing out the importance of such motives as trust, mutual care, personal and economic security and fulfilment of filial obligations, which influence the women's decisions to search for and marry foreign men. The women claim that they could not expect such benefits from Thai men, whom they generally portray as irresponsible husbands.

The path taken in the quest for foreign husbands often leads through work in girlie bars and prostitution in major Thai tourist centres, such as Pattaya, which she portrays as a place of "opportunity and hope" (pp. 96–103), in contrast to the often negative images of the resort town in the literature. Patcharin takes a surprisingly refreshing stance towards transnational prostitution, rejecting the moralistic view of victimhood and presenting it as a mobility channel towards a better life for the women, their children and natal family: it provides access to potential foreign husbands. The author, in particular, points out the importance to the women of being able to fulfil their filial obligations (*bun khun*) towards their parents and siblings, which is a cornerstone of Thai rural ethics,

with the financial resources obtained through their transnational marriages.

Patcharin pays considerable attention to those who were 'left behind' (the members of the women's family) and seeks to show that they were not just passive recipients of remittances from women married to foreigners, but rather play an active role in supporting the women's quest for a *farang* husband; in some cases mothers even encouraged their daughters to go to work in Pattaya for that purpose. But by the same token, parents lost their authority over the choice of their daughters' marriage partners.

Patcharin dwells upon the different impacts of transnational marriages on the economic and social transformation of Na Dokmai under the influence of the remittances of couples living abroad and the spending of those living (or visiting) the village. Foreign couples often build new and modern houses in the village. Women married to foreigners often make donations to community affairs and the improvement of the local infrastructure. The author goes as far as to suggest that the women married to foreigners constitute an emergent new social class (in Bourdieu's sense) in the dynamic process of change the village is undergoing.

Altogether this is a remarkable book. If I have any criticisms, these revolve on the somewhat smooth representation of the husband-wife relations in mixed couples; it overlooks the conflicts around money, and tensions caused by the double commitment of the wives to husbands and their natal family. Patcharin has talked to relatively few foreign husbands, and to none of a significant category: foreigners divorced or separated from Thai wives. The complaints of these men about the ways they were treated, and sometimes cheated, by Thai women should be taken into account in providing a more balanced picture of the dynamics of international marriages of Thai women and foreign men.

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