

BOOK REVIEW

EILEEN BORIS, HEIDI GOTTFRIED, JULIE GREENE, and JOO-CHEONG THAM. [Studies of World Migrations.] University of Illinois Press, Urbana (IL) [etc.] 2023. xii, 343 pp. \$125.00. (Paper: \$32; E-book: \$19.95.)

Currently, labour migration is at the core of debates on the political future of the Western welfare state. What observers in the Global North have long assessed sceptically is now perceived as a chance to solve a problem many societies in the world are facing, in view of the ageing of large parts of the global population. Yet, while many contemporaries acknowledge the global dimension of labour migration, they continue to tackle the issue within a national framework that tends to blend out the inherently global patterns of migrant routes and connections and how they have shaped contemporary perceptions, patterns, and inequalities.

The book under review sets out to fill this gap by addressing the regional and disciplinary limitations of much of the literature on the issue. To this end, it “forges multidisciplinary, transregional perspectives on global labor migration” (p. 2) and directs the reader’s attention to particular connections, intersecting migration regimes, as well as to attempts to regulate labour migration on national, transnational, and global scales. The book brings together sixteen short case studies that attempt to shed light on different world regions, though with a clear focus on East Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America, and span a period starting in the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. What holds them together is the attempt to understand the emergence of particular migration patterns at the intersection of different economic systems, of the historical dynamics of political (including imperial and colonial) change, of global governance regimes, and of different categories of discrimination. Moreover, the volume brings the migrants into focus, their attempts to circumnavigate, resist, or struggle against political regulations, and their living and working conditions on the ground. This approach takes up current discussions in migration research that aim at decentering state and institutional perspectives by giving migrants a voice. Thus, the volume follows an ambitious agenda that aims to do no less than question established narratives on labour migration by applying transregional, intersectional, and critical perspectives in a *longue durée* that transcend the national and state-centred approaches that have long prevailed.

The volume is organized in four thematic sections. The first, on “Colonial Authority and the Transimperial”, emphasizes the significance of imperial migration regimes and policies. The chapters start from the observation that migration management formed part of imperial competition, with labour migrants and routes crossing imperial spheres of influence. Taking Chinese labour migration at the intersection of the Dutch and British empires in Southeast Asia as a case study, Bastiaan Nugteren shows, for instance, how British migration control was situated in a highly competitive labour

market and resulted from British attempts to gain the upper hand in the exploitation of Chinese labour. Justin F. Jackson shifts attention to the entanglement of US–Chinese exclusion policies and US imperialism in Cuba and the Philippines, showing how US military governance construed racist exclusion and imperial expansion in a contingent and, at times, contradictory manner. Taking Cuba and the Dominican Republic as a starting point, Jorge L. Giovannetti-Torres brings the immediate prehistory of the so-called Windrush generation to the fore by exploring how the reference to British colonial history in the Caribbean omits its uncompromising migration policies between the 1920s and 1940s, which consisted of facilitating intra-Caribbean migration to other imperial territories, denying the laborers' wish for repatriation and fostering racial discrimination – a policy that ultimately resulted in migrants leaving for Great Britain since the late 1940s. Felipe Barradas Correia Castro Bastos completes this section by arguing that anticolonialism in Mozambique developed in between the poles of the labour-intensive sisal industry in British Tanganyika (including social and racial discrimination of Mozambique workers) and harsh Portuguese imperial rule in Mozambique.

The second section also expands our perspective on the social and political constraints of global labor migration by stressing the importance of gender and sexuality as core categories of the unequal reproduction of labor in border-crossing constellations. The aim of this section is to advance the “gender turn in global labor studies” (p. 7). Jessica R. Pliley deals with the intersection of border and deportation regimes at the US–Canadian border in the interwar years, showing how the moral charging of sex trafficking led to making the labor aspect of sex trade invisible. Instead of acknowledging female sex workers from Canada as labour migrants, they were either moralized or racialized as “white” victims of “black” traffickers. Penelope Ciancanelli provides an innovative glance at attempts by global financial institutions to profit from the global increase in remittances. She juxtaposes the largely unregulated flow of money to the ever-stricter regulation of the movement of bodies and shows what this disproportionate relationship means for informal household reproduction, especially in the Global South. Radhika Natarajan investigates the consequences of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act on gender relationships in Pakistani families that migrated to Great Britain. She argues that the politics of decolonization largely contributed to constructing traditional gender relations in these families. For the law privileged male workers, and, conversely, British women activists sought to press workers' wives towards traditional roles of mother and housewife in order to “protect” them from the strains of migration. Finally, Jenny Chan focuses on the relationship between migrant labour and masculinity. Taking couriers from rural China in the express delivery sector in Beijing as a case study, she shows how the precarious and highly work-intensive status of the mainly male and not officially employed couriers affects the migrant family households and contributes to producing less visible but dependent forms of homework.

Sections Three and Four deal with the regulation of labour migration on a national, transnational, and global scale. Regarding migrant perspectives, Section Three elaborates on the consequences of state regulations for labour migrants. It does so by investigating competing and, at times, contradictory state policies when it came to categorizing mobile people, issuing work permits, and determining the intersection between different groups of migrants. This is shown, for instance, in Yael Schacher's

chapter, which analyses litigation over work authorization for asylum seekers in the US since the 1970s, or by Katie Bales, who suggests we should understand the work of immigration detainees as “unfree” labor instead of “voluntary”, as it is normally categorized. As Schacher does, she suggests emphasizing the close entanglements between immigration and labour migration regimes and understanding how both reinforce each other. Andrijasevic, Pun, and Sacchetto take an innovative stance on multinational corporations. Taking Foxconn as example, they analyse the regulation of labour within the transnational reach of Foxconn, which results in a globalized and globally restrained organization of production that also entails the regulation of labor mobility, primarily according to the needs of Foxconn. Helen Sampson adds to that the deficits of international efforts to regulate the labour market for seafarers due to the highly international, mobile, and national legislation-transcending nature of the shipping industry.

Section Four investigates attempts to install global migration management. These articles conceive of the International Labour Organization (ILO), other international organizations, and of intergovernmental agreements like the Global Compact for Migration as more or less successful attempts to regulate the movement of people by means of introducing categories, standards, or treaties, yet without being able to grasp the complexity of labour migration or to develop convincing schemes. On the contrary, the chapters in this section show the degree to which these attempts resulted in contradictory, gendered, and segregated rules. Eileen Boris demonstrates this for the ILO; Charlie Fanning elaborates on the institutional shortcomings of international labour policies in the postwar era by analysing how these policies were trapped in competing Cold War, decolonization, and developmentalist discourses. Judy Fudges carries this perspective forward by investigating the contradictions of recent intergovernmental attempts to find some sort of global migration agreement, attempts that ultimately fail to adequately integrate different policy imperatives and human rights standards. Finally, Matt Withers and Nicola Piper show the limits of these attempts when it comes to ratification or compliance with international norms at the national level, taking wage discrimination in South–South migrations in Asia as their case study.

In sum, the volume presents innovative perspectives on global labour migration that offer fresh insights in several regards. The chapters reflect on the long-term consequences of past labour regimes and how they impact present-day regulations and perceptions (including colonial constellations). They investigate the complex and, at times, contradictory entanglement of national, transnational, and global regulations, and they integrate the perspective and reactions of the working people. Hence, the volume opens up a complex panorama of actors, institutions, regimes, transregional connections, and practices (from categorizing to evading detention) that do not necessarily contribute to a clear-cut analytical ordering of global labour migration. But, and this makes the volume so important, it invites us to adjust our knowledge production to the messy practices on the ground and to develop new epistemological tools and starting points to adequately investigate and understand the inextricable complexities of global labour migration. In that sense, this volume should become required reading.

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