

BOOK REVIEW

**Sriprapha Petcharamesree and Mark P. Capaldi (eds.).
Migration in Southeast Asia: IMISCOE Regional Reader.
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Southeast Asia is garnering increasing attention from migration scholars around the world. This is partly because migration in the region has become ever more dynamic, as Malaysia and Thailand have established themselves as major countries of destination alongside Singapore while Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines are among the world's most important countries of origin. The *Migration in Southeast Asia: IMISCOE Regional Reader*, edited by Sriprapha Petcharamesree and Mark P. Capaldi, is therefore a very welcome new resource. It brings together a group of scholars with extensive experience researching migration in the region. In 12 chapters, the researchers manage to cover a range of types of migration, subfields of migration policy and areas of migrants' rights, often with a historical perspective on the matter at hand.

The volume's aim is "to examine the topic of migration from a range of concepts and new perspectives" (p. ix). Before delving into details, in an introductory chapter, Capaldi connects a birds-eye discussion of current trends in migration in Southeast Asia to theories of migration and discusses the challenges migrants faced during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as policy responses to migration. The remainder of the book is then organised along three main themes: the delineation of membership and non-membership in (imagined) national communities through citizenship law; the effects of non-membership on access to rights; and issues around forced migration.

Petcharamesree opens the first section with a chapter on citizenship policies (Chapter 2). What emerges from this chapter is the important role that ethnicity plays in these policies. A distinct, but related, issue is lack of birth registration (Chapter 3, also by Petcharamesree). In many countries in Southeast Asia, birth registration is contingent upon the parents' legal status and documentation, jeopardising many children's access to registration at birth. How well migrants are received in their country of destination also depends on the geopolitical environment, as Bongkot Napaumporn demonstrates in her contribution on stateless Vietnamese in Thailand (Chapter 4). She argues that historically, Thailand has been very open to immigrants such as refugees from Vietnam, granting them permanent residence and allowing for citizenship acquisition of their children on the basis of *ius soli*. After World War II, however, Thailand started opting for a much more restrictive approach citing security concerns related to an alleged communist threat. Only from the late 1980s onwards did the country address the statelessness of Vietnamese immigrants again.

The use of citizenship law to regulate marriage migration from Vietnam to South Korea is the topic of the contribution by Susan Kneebone (Chapter 5). Kneebone's chapter illustrates a friction between the construction of marriage migrants as providers of reproductive labour and their aspiration to migrate for economic reasons, e.g., to support their families at home. In response to this friction, Korean citizenship law has been used to privilege "real" marriage migration over economic migration. In 1997, granting of citizenship to foreign wives was made subject to a requirement of prior residence and conditional upon sponsorship by the husband. Furthermore, the women had to give up their preexisting citizenship and lost the Korean citizenship in the event of a divorce. This created a stark dependency of foreign wives on their husbands, often resulting in cases of abuse. The situation was only partially addressed when Vietnam allowed individuals to reacquire renounced citizenship, and Korea introduced access to dual citizenship for foreign wives, provided they were married or caring for a minor child born to a marriage with a Korean man.

Anderson V. Villa and Amorisa Wiratri's chapter on persons of Indonesian descent (PIDs) in the Southern Philippines (Chapter 6) provides a segue into the second section of the book. They mobilise Takeyuki Tsuda's concept of local citizenship, by which non-citizens are granted rights on a local level despite exclusionary policies at the national level. Studying individuals in two locations, they show that PIDs indeed do largely have access to primary education and health services, as well as emergency aid

during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, most are excluded from the regular conditional cash transfer programme in the Philippines, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps).

Kicking off Section II on membership goods, Sharuna Verghis compares migrant workers' access to healthcare in Malaysia and Thailand. Verghis' contribution highlights the strikingly different approaches of these two countries, whose policies with regard to migrants' rights are surprisingly rarely compared. In Thailand, most documented migrant workers contribute to the general Social Security Scheme like Thai citizens, while migrants who lack documentation can access a separate scheme. Contrarily, in Malaysia, there is a separate health insurance scheme for migrant workers, which however often falls short because non-citizens pay higher (unsubsidised) rates at public hospitals. Undocumented migrants face severe barriers to accessing healthcare. As different as these countries of destination are in terms of healthcare for migrants, as similar was their reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, as is shown by Amparita D. Sta. Maria in Chapter 8. She demonstrates that in all cases covered—Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore—immigrants have been excluded from equitable access to health and social protection during the pandemic. Although the three countries offered COVID-19 testing for migrants and provided free vaccinations for everyone, migrants in all three countries lacked reliable access to benefits that could have mitigated the impact of income loss after being laid off. Chapter 9 stands out in this section as a more conceptual piece and is centred around how independent child migration is framed in public discourse and the scientific literature. Capaldi and Alessia Altamura argue that mainstream approaches to independent child migration have unduly focused on child migrants' vulnerabilities and their susceptibility to being abused and exploited. The authors assert not wanting to downplay the dangers that independent child migrants can be in. Nevertheless, they emphasise that these children exhibit agency and develop resilience strategies to cope with hardship.

Policies towards forced migrants in Southeast Asia focus on containment and surveillance rather than migrants' rights and protections, as the third and final section of the book shows. Historically, as Tri Nuke Pudjiastuti and Steven C. M. Wong point out in Chapter 12, Southeast Asian countries have been reluctant to host refugees permanently, both in the case of the Vietnamese boat people and in the case of refugees from Myanmar. In both instances, only temporary shelter with subsequent resettlement to third countries was agreed upon. In Chapter 10, Avyanthi

Azis focusses on the latter case, looking in depth at the region's reaction to the 2015 Andaman Sea Crisis. At the time, after long hesitation, Indonesia and Malaysia agreed to temporarily host refugees for later resettlement. Azis starts off from the observation that in Indonesia, refugees later "escaped" from shelters provided, which may seem counterintuitive—after all, the shelters are supposed to provide protection. To understand this phenomenon, she fruitfully makes use of Walters' concept of the "humanitarian border" arguing that assistance to refugees goes hand in hand with securitisation, a focus on surveillance and restriction of movement. The fact that refugees fled from Indonesian accommodations demonstrates the limits of this policy in the face of refugees' aspirations who often wish to move on to Malaysia, where a sizable community of refugees from Myanmar is already present.

A focus on securitisation is also reflected in the fact that anti-trafficking legislation is the immigration policy field in which Southeast Asian states are most active. Pudjiastuti and Wong report that in addition to regional efforts such as the Bali Process and the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, all ASEAN member states have adopted national anti-trafficking legislation. Yet, as Joseph Lelliott and Rebecca Miller detail in their contribution, human trafficking and smuggling are still widespread across Southeast Asia. They argue that two factors account for this. First, the fact that regular migration channels are often costly and difficult to access drives the market for smuggling and trafficking. Second, corruption is a crucial, yet often overlooked, facilitator of human trafficking and smuggling. Consequently, they suggest three remedies to smuggling and trafficking in Southeast Asia: the creation of accessible regular migration routes; the prevention of corruption; and the protection of migrants from abuse and exploitation.

The past and present of migration in Southeast Asia is highly complex, and so are the ever-changing policies towards migrants. In the face of this complexity, the *Migration in Southeast Asia: IMISCOE Regional Reader* offers valuable insights into the lives of people on the move in the region. Three strong results stand out. Firstly, Chapter 4 by Napaumporn and Chapter 5 by Kneebone advance our understanding of how citizenship law can create relationships of dependency and vulnerability to abuse. Secondly, the second section of the book, along with Chapter 6, succeeds in the painstaking task of clearly delineating which benefits and services particular groups of migrants have access to in selected countries of destination. These contributions accomplish two things. On the one hand, they are a valuable

resource for those studying migrants' rights in the region. On the other hand, they point to a persistent pattern across the countries under study. Migrants, particularly migrant workers, are included in contributory social protection schemes at best, while they generally do not have access to non-contributory cash transfers. In addition, destination countries' reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic were not guided by a concern for the rights and well-being of migrants, but rather by public health rationales. The third contribution of the book is the examination of the region's reluctance to accept the permanent residence of forced migrants. As the third section shows, the focus is on anti-trafficking legislation, which is however marred by corruption and burdensome regular migration channels. With regard to refugees, "humanitarian borders" are established, where (limited) humanitarian aid is coupled with an aim to control and surveil, as Azis brilliantly illustrates in her contribution.

It is commendable that the volume also attempts to offer new findings on citizenship in Southeast Asia, a topic on which there is a dearth of scholarship (Berenschot et al. 2017). Unfortunately, in doing so it sometimes conflates citizenship policies, statelessness, nation-building, and exclusion of migrants—related but separate issues. It is correctly pointed out that there is a comparatively large population of stateless people in Southeast Asia. But then, the discussion of the causes of statelessness leaves out crucial points that are established in the existing literature. For instance, it is known that while some of Malaysia's citizenship acquisition policies look generous on paper, the process entails a high degree of administrative discretion and lacks transparency, so that a large share of citizenship applications are rejected (Low 2017). Furthermore, the book depicts citizenship policies as a way of creating imagined communities (Anderson 1983) which separate insiders from outsiders. However, the volume discusses very little in the way of actual nation-building in Southeast Asia through measures such as those described by Anderson (e.g., censuses or museums). Therefore, it also does not become clear who gets included and why.

Limitations aside, readers of *Migration in Southeast Asia* will find that the book covers a surprising range of facets of migration in the region and will surely serve as a useful resource for scholars.

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