sustainability. Đa Bác Tày village did not score too well against others in terms of sustainability. However, the authors reminded readers that had this comparison been made against pure swiddening systems, it would achieve higher ranking. This is because composite swidden agriculture, like most pure swiddening systems in Vietnam, has to contend with the serious deterioration of conditions for optimal systemic regeneration as a result of increasing population pressure and decreasing land area for swiddening.

I do not think anyone could contest that this is perhaps the most detailed and massive study of composite swidden agriculture over an extended period in the Southeast Asian Massif. Initial research began in 1992 and continued well into recent years even after the project’s mainframe was concluded. It is also one of the most impressive international research endeavours to date. The different skills, both technical and cultural, brought to the table are evident. For example, linguistic affinity allowed the Thai scholars in the team to engage with the local Tày people of the field site and extract out local terminologies for the different types of land found in the village. The fact that a project with such strong foreign involvement could begin in the early 1990s, when research conditions in uplands Vietnam were extremely restrictive, attests to the most remarkable industry and patience of the team leaders. For a massive project such as this to stretch out over so many years is definitely no mean feat and kudos must be given to the project leaders.

I strongly recommend anyone teaching agrarian studies to adopt this book as a solid case study text to accompany any state-of-the-art human ecology of agriculture textbook. However, there are three issues I wish this book, or a follow-up work, would address. First, I would like to see an extended cultural ethnography about Đa Bác Tày village accompanying this book. Second, I wish the editors had explained if there were any conceptual and theoretical shifts, or none, during the extended operation of the project for more than ten years. Third, while it was impressive how coherently the editors put together and presented all of these previously published papers or submitted project reports, I wish the editors had asked the authors to refashion their contributions to allow for a more cohesive collection. This would have made this book much more impressive than it already is.

National University of Singapore, Singapore


Just when one might think that Philippine labour migration studies have been over-researched, here comes a new book that is both well researched

The author addresses the question of why and how Filipinos have become “the most globalized workforce on the planet” (141) by using a combination of methods: institutional ethnography, interviews, discourse analyses, participant observation, and archival research. She does this by examining how the Philippine state has emerged as a “labour brokerage state” since the Spanish and American colonial regimes (chapter 1). The rest of the chapters focus on the neo-colonial continuation and expansion of this brokerage role that mobilized migrants for export (chapter 2), reconfigured citizenship of migrants as “new national heroes” (chapter 3), and regulated their repatriation and remittances (chapter 5) in ways shaped by class and gendered identities, particularly of Filipina domestic workers and entertainers (chapter 4). The conclusion brings the discussion to a full circle by examining how the state negotiates and facilitates the Filipino labour mobility by performing critical roles in capital flows and other forms of “globalization from above,” as well as managing transnational protests and other forms of “globalization from below” (144). She highlights transnational migrant activism, particularly Migrante International’s counter-discourse arguing for the full citizenship and respect for migrants’ dignity on the job, in contrast to “middle-class activists who campaign for employment bans on domestic work because it is ‘shameful’” (151).

Rodriguez’ analytical frame contributes to new knowledge about international labour migration in three ways. First, while almost every study on Philippine labour migration mentions the significant role of the Philippine state, Rodriguez brings the academic discourse to a new level by examining the dynamics of labour brokerage in the context of “neo-liberal governmentality.” She demonstrates how a case study of the Philippine state—now hailed as a “model” of “migration management” (141)—can provide key insights into “understanding future trends in international migration under … neo-liberal globalization” (144) and “examining emergent forms of labor brokerage in other developing countries” (145), such as Pakistan, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. International labour brokerage as a “technology of government” has a “quintessentially neo-liberal” (xix) character in that it requires Philippine citizens to shoulder the costs of economic restructuring by paying more for their education, health and other privatized goods using their earnings abroad, while the state uses their remittance to service foreign debts, fund development projects, and withdraw from public investments and social service provision.

Second, Rodriguez makes the case for how state-led labour brokerage
shapes the reconfiguration of “migrant citizenship,” distinguishing between “migrant citizenship” seen from the perspective of the broker Philippine state, as opposed to how migrant citizenship and political engagement is transforming citizenship in host countries such as Canada. This state-promoted migrant citizenship “deftly masks” the citizenship entitlements of Filipino migrant workers and is a “reactive measure” intended to placate “migrants’ fears about being vulnerable as foreign workers abroad” (xx). Chapters 4, 5 and 6 document how the Philippine state facilitates outward migration (for example through required Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars, and Showcase Previews) while encouraging inward homeland linkages by (re)constructing gendered, nationalist (read heroism) and religious (read Catholic-Christian values) discourses, systematizing and regulating their remittances and “rights” and in some cases, reincorporating permanently settled Filipinos into the national development initiatives by reforming Philippine citizenship laws.

Third, she demonstrates the institutional, policy and programmatic practices and shifts taking place in the Philippines’ overseas migration bureaucracy. This provides the rationale for why the author states in the introduction that the book “is fundamentally about the quotidian institutional and discursive practices of the state” (xv). She demonstrates how these moves by a “peripheral state” (74) belong to the “counter-geography of globalization” of labour that is connected to, and constitutive of, but not central to the workings of globalization (xv). The institutional and discursive practices discussed in chapters 2 and 3 range from formal and informal forms of negotiation (for example, bilateral labour agreements) to diplomatic pressure politics; training, marketing and branding Filipino workers; immigration intelligence, particularly through documentary processing (such as passports, visas, training certifications, labour authorization checks and monitoring); and facilitating remittance operations to make them comply to restrictions imposed by both the Philippine state and the states of host countries.

Rodriguez’ book makes a compelling argument for the dynamics of a labour brokerage state, which could be complemented by parallel ethnographic studies on labour recruiter states, such as Canada, the United States and the petro-rich countries of the Middle East. While Rodriquez claims that what is unique about her work is the application of “ethnographic methods to a study of the state” (161), her study actually follows a strong tradition of scholarship using ethnographic studies of the state, from James Scott’s Seeing Like a State (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) to research reports from the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism. What is unique in her study is her institutional ethnography that takes seriously the “relations of ruling” and regimes of disciplining in ways that uncover the dialectics of the upward flow of migrant power and the downward reach of state power, linked to the globalizing power of neo-liberal
institutions and practices. In doing so, this book provides another excellent addition to the growing field of Philippine transnational migration studies that should be read by Asianists, sociologists, geographers, political scientists and migration scholars.

The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada LEONORA C. ANGELES


Over the last few decades there has been considerable discussion and debate amongst academics regarding the nature of “community” and associated issues in mainland Southeast Asia. Yet concepts such as “community development” and “community-based natural resource management” have been popularized, and are frequently uncritically bandyed around. The authors of this book, and particularly its editor, are bent on problematizing the term. As Walker writes at the beginning of the first chapter,

“We challenge the widely held view that community is a traditional social form that is undermined by modernity…. We explore the active creation of ‘modern community’ in contexts of economic and political transformation. Our aim is to liberate community from its stereotypical association with traditional village solidarity and to demonstrate that communal sentiments of belonging retain their salience in the modern world of occupational mobility, globalised consumerism and national development” (1).

After Walker leads off with a provocative and characteristically, for him, hard-hitting introductory chapter, Craig Reynolds usefully traces the origins of the term community in Thailand. However, after showing great promise, the chapter suddenly fizzles out, leaving the reader feeling that much more could have been written on this extremely interesting topic. For example, it would have been great if he had mentioned the rise of the concept of community amongst non-governmental organizations in Thailand, and the historical link between NGOs and Maoist ideas that can be traced to the rise of the Communist Party of Thailand. Also, explaining that the term “chum chon” in Thai has, until quite recently, been rejected in Laos as being a “Thai term,” inappropriate for usage in Laos, even when expressed as “xoum xon” (the Lao version). Instead, the Lao government has promoted the term “xao ban,” or “villagers,” raising interesting questions about the politics of community there.

James Haughton contributes a well-constructed critique of the idea that Thai communities are inherently opposed to modernity. Nicholas Farrelly