Caroline Pluss and Chan Kwok-bun (eds.)

Made up of 13 chapters, this edited volume is an important contribution to transnationalism that chooses to focus on the state of the play of transnationalism in Asia. The empirical coverage of Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Koreans in Singapore, Singaporeans in Australia and New York, and the Pacific island of Ogasawara provide a wealth of materials and issues that can be explored further by other writers. The volume is useful both as a reference book, as well as a textbook for an advanced course on transnationalism.

The introduction sets the theoretical framework for the remaining chapters. Intersectionality is the running theme throughout the book. Liminality, which was once popular among cultural anthropologists, seems to have resurfaced in the concept of intersectionality. Sociologists used such terms as mélange, hybridity, multi-locality, bi-cultural, cosmopolitan, glocal, transient and so on to describe the living experience of the migrants overseas or transnational communities whose lived experiences have been marked by a sense of fluidity, a lack of fixity and multiplicity. Intersectionality, as a concept, joins the family of metaphors and concepts. The cases studied in this volume are served well by the lens of intersectionality, which examines “the antecedents, processes, and consequences of reciprocal, two-way loop-back influence of multiple forces and realities, be they class, race, skin-color, physicality, national origin, religion, gender, family and marriage, or tradition that affect and infect each other to produce positive and negative effects ...” (Pluss and Chan, 2012:10); the Filipina women in Hong Kong face “negative intersectionality” (p. 11), while positive intersectionality is when the cultural capital of an ethnic or gender group can be used to one’s advantage. The categories of positive and negative are commonsensical and they make sense up to a point; however, the realities of a globalised, complex society defeat such simple, binary classifications. As such, there is a great deal of room for improving the concept of intersectionality.

Partly autobiographical, the chapter by Chan Kwok-bun provides some interesting clues to expanding the notion of hybridity insofar as it applies to returnees to the "home" country. Kelly’s chapter on the Philippine village provides a masterful use of the concept intersectionality as he applies the concept to examine how the overlap of cultural, social and economic capital has made class such a complicated concept (p. 53). By disassembling the concept of class (class as position, class as process, class as performance, class as politics), Kelly, drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu and Erik Olin Wright, makes an important con-
ceptual breakthrough which helps him unravel the new developments of class in a Philippines village caught in the vortex of global migration.

Some of the chapters deal with subjects that are not well known, for example, Singaporeans as a transnational community. Lim in Chapter 6 and Pluss in Chapter 7 provide interesting discussions of Singaporeans as a migrant community. Lim’s chapter suffers from the overdetermination of theoretical underpinnings as indicated in the use of Giddens’ “ontological security”. Singapore in the public imaginary is a migration destination country; however, Singapore is also a migration origin country. From Lim’s chapter, we learn that 4,000 Singaporeans migrate to Australia, Canada, UK and the USA every year (p. 103) and that Western Australia is home to 20,000 Singaporeans (p. 107). For the emigration of Singaporeans, the all-powerful Singapore state becomes an unconscious tool. The title of Lim’s chapter “The Role of the State in Transnational Migrant Identity Formation: A “Uniquely Singapore” Experience?” may be somewhat misleading, since it may imply a conscious role of the state in paving the way for emigration. This is, on the contrary, a classic example of unintended consequence. While “hectic pace of life, consumer life style, and a rigid progression through life-stages offered by Singapore (society)” (p. 106) may prompt some Singaporeans to leave their homeland, yet while overseas, Singapore’s English education, exposure to global, metropolitan culture prepare them well for adjustment to the Western lifestyle, as shown by Pluss in Chapter 7. Singaporeans remain nostalgic about their homeland as one respondent said, “You can take a Singaporean out of Singapore, but you can’t take Singapore out of the Singaporean” (p. 118). The theme of nostalgia returns in the chapter by Jirattikorn on Shan migrants from Burma in Chiang Mai, Thailand. In an insightful analysis, the author examined how the ethnic Shans create public spheres in Chiang Mai in the form of radio airwaves, Buddhist temples and festivals. Although the radio airwaves was an extension of the Thai state with its own agenda of constructing a pliable Shan identity, it is the slippage, the unintended consequences—if you will—that played a role in shaping and retaining Shan identity.

While some Singaporeans are using the exit option to go to greener pastures, there are Korean mothers who bring their kids to Singapore to benefit from its educational institutions and to expose their kids to a global culture. In the process, a transnational Korean motherhood is being formed with ramifications for the Korean families.

In the only historical intervention in a volume that mainly dealt with contemporary issues, Chapman provided a deep, historically-grounded analysis of the construction and reconstruction of the identity of the inhabitants of the Ogasawara islands. These Pacific islands over 2,000 kilometres away were