The volume *Global Labor Migration: New Directions* provides a field-defining intervention for scholars working at the intersection of migration studies and labor history approached through a global and transnational lens. At a time of transition, with the global history approach questioned by its own proponents and labor history gaining more traction after years at the margins, this volume combines both fields with the best practices in interdisciplinary migration studies to open new research horizons.

The book is the outcome of forums held by the Global Labor Migration Network at the University of Maryland and the International Institute for Social History (Amsterdam). It includes a comprehensive introduction by the editors of the volume, sixteen chapters divided into four sections (“Colonial Authority and the Transimperial,” “Gender and Sexualities,” “National and Transnational Regulations,” “Global Governance”) and a foreword. Historians, legal scholars, ethnographers, economists, and sociologists contributed to a volume whose multidisciplinary nature is matched only by its scholarly ambition.

The advantage of having such an exceptional range of scholars, working on a wide spectrum of geographical areas and chronologies, is that it allows this work to move in different directions. This essay collection features micro- and macrohistories; regional case studies, fine-grained, interview-based analyses, and global investigations based on financial data; and legal philosophy used alongside traditional archives of international organizations. With its multitude of approaches, it allows the reader to grapple with conceptual problems that would be hard to tackle in a single-authored monograph or in an article. This review will touch on two of them: the notion of “labor” and its historical and historiographical development; and the geographies and scales of labor organization, oppression, and resistance.
Through the variety of perspectives offered, the volume consolidates innovative and sophisticated interpretations of several key concepts. One of them is “labor.” The rigid category of the “wage worker,” long an organizing principle of labor historiography, is abandoned to explore labor in all of its aspects. A worker is anyone who works, in any context, be it a traditional workplace or at home, selling their skills, their time, or their bodies, paid or unpaid, free or unfree. The volume presents an ample selection of case studies that adopt such a malleable concept of labor. In chapter 5, Jessica L. Pliley uses the example of a sex worker moving across the US-Canada border to shed light on the construction of an international deportation infrastructure in the United States. In chapter 2, Justin F. Jackson explores the unifying power of anti-Chinese worker sentiment among the US Army and the Filipino society in US-controlled Philippines. Indentured workers are the protagonists of chapter 1, a fascinating analysis of the clash for workforce between British and Dutch imperial authorities in Asia at the turn of the twentieth century. Innovative notions of labor are used to offer insight on the contemporary migrant crisis. Katie Bales (chapter 12) deploys the idea of “unfree labor” to break down the social and economic impact of migrant detention centers across the world. Her emphasis on social reproduction theory attests to the need to incorporate innovative social history approaches in the study of contemporary political problems. Yael Schacher (chapter 9) puts into historical perspective the contemporary problem of asylum seekers looking for working opportunities in their receiving countries. Penelope Ciancanelli, (chapter 6), starting from the premise that “money goes everywhere, but people cannot” (p. 117), integrates the impact of migrants’ remittances in the study of global migration.

Three of the four sections of the book include geo/political categories in their title (transimperial, national and transnational, and global). Indeed, this is a reflection of the fact that much of the volume is devoted to questions such as: Who controls labor? What agency do migrant workers have? What is the role of political, racial, gender, and economic structures in affecting the lives of workers? The different geographical scales adopted in Global Labor Migration present the reader with a variety of answers to these questions. Radhika Natarajan’s microhistory of an Asian community in 1970s London (chapter 7) uses a gender lens to explore the long legacy of the British Empire on post-1945 Britain. The “transimperial” is the focus for both Jorge L. Giovannetti Torres and Felipe Barradas Correia Castro Bastos (chapters 3 and 4). While Torres traces the transimperial origins of what came to be known as “Windrush generation,” Bastos centers his focus on the migrant workforce transiting across several empires as a crucial component of the infamous “Mueda Massacre” perpetrated by the Portuguese in 1960 Mozambique. Several chapters zoom out further, offering a variety of ways to explore the consolidation of global labor infrastructures. Rutvica Andrijasevic, Ngai Pun, and Devi Sacchetto (chapter 11) shed light on the multiple geographies of corporate capitalism. Focusing on the link between “local labor regimes” and “transnational production,” their chapter on global corporation Foxconn argues for the need to focus on “new labor subjectivities” shaped by the interaction of the global and the local (pp. 208-209). The local impact of global corporate capitalism is also the subject of Jenny Chan’s essay (chapter 8), a survey-based analysis of the working conditions of delivery workers in contemporary China. For Helen Sampson (chapter 12), the global focus comes from the category of workers her essay analyzes: international seafarers. Eileen Boris (chapter 13) brings in institutional history by focusing on the International Labor Organization’s attempts to legislate on labor work. The three final chapters of the book poke holes in the spreading tenet among the echelons of global capitalist developmentalism, for whom “migration is no longer treated as a symptom of underdevelopment; rather, it is seen as a stepping
stone to prosperity” (p. 291). In the words of Matt Withers and Nicola Pipers, who analyze the impact of this principle in Asia, “the resurgent optimism surrounding migration and development obfuscates harsh and enduring realities of employment within corridors of low-wage temporary labor migration that are commonplace throughout Asia and the Global South more broadly” (p. 298).

*Global Labor Migration* is a mighty accomplishment from a collective of scholars who show us how to innovate the study of migrant labor across national, regional, and imperial borders. Its multiple perspectives invite readers to immerse themselves in the complicated, contradictory, and problematic nature of global capitalism and its impact on the migrant working class. With its innovative methodologies and genuinely non-Western-centric approach, this book is a must-read for scholars interested in migration studies, labor, and global capitalism.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at [https://networks.h-net.org/h-migration](https://networks.h-net.org/h-migration)

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