TRANSFORMING ASIA

Edited by Lan Anh Hoang and Cheryll Alipio

Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia

Amsterdam University Press

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Transforming Asia

Asia is often viewed through a fog of superlatives: the most populous countries, lowest fertility rates, fastest growing economies, greatest number of billionaires, most avid consumers, and greatest threat to the world's environment. This recounting of superlatives obscures Asia's sheer diversity, uneven experience, and mixed inheritance.

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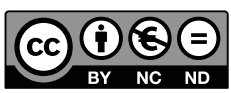
Cover illustration: An itinerant flower vendor in Hanoi
Photograph by Lê Minh Tuấn

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden
Typesetting: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6372 310 7
E-ISBN 978 90 4854 315 1 (pdf)
DOI 10.5117/9789463723107
NUR 740



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Acknowledgements

The idea for this edited volume began with a double panel at the 10th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) conference in Chiangmai, Thailand, 20–23 July 2017. The original conference panel comprised only six papers: Cheryll Alipio, Sylvia Ang, Cassie DeFillipo, Lan Anh Hoang, Esther Horat, and Juan Zhang. However, with the enthusiastic response the panel generated, we were encouraged to develop the collection of papers into an edited volume. We put out a call for additional papers and received superb proposals from Roy Huijsmans, Supriya Singh, and Catherine Gomes and Jonathan Tan. Editing a collection of essays written by scholars from around the world is no easy undertaking but we have enjoyed a smooth journey with our dedicated authors and the excellent editorial team at Amsterdam University Press.

It has been a pleasure to work with editors Saskia Gieling and Shannon Cunningham, whose knowledge and professionalism have made the whole process as painless as possible. We would like to thank the *Transforming Asia* book series editor, Jonathan Rigg, for his guidance and support. We are grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and insightful feedback and to Brooke Dunnell for her assistance with proofreading and formatting. We acknowledge the generous financial support of the School of Social and Political Sciences and Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne, Australia for the preparation of the manuscript and production of the book.

Introduction

1. Money and Moralities

Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Insights

Cheryll Alipio and Lan Anh Hoang

Abstract
The editorial introduction begins with a contextualization of how neoliberal policies, along with global capitalism, vary and are experienced differently in the settings described in the volume. In presenting nine chapters of case studies from across South and Southeast Asia, the introduction develops a framework for the conceptualization of contemporary Asia as an interconnected and transnational region in which money and morality have an ever-expanding role in people's everyday lives. Following a critical review of the international scholarship on money and moralities, the introduction discusses how the chapters speak to each of the volume's three sub-themes: 'Money and Moral Selfhood in the Market Economy', 'Social Currencies and the Morality of Gender', and 'The Social Life of Money in Asian Moral Economies'.

Keywords: money, morality, Asia, neoliberalism, globalization, capitalism

Neoliberalism's Promise of Freedom

Under the guise of neoliberalism, significant changes swept through Asia and around the globe following the end of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. After a series of currency devaluations spread across Southeast Asian and East Asian countries, resulting in stock market declines in the United States, Europe, and Russia, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and other entities intervened to stabilize the economies and governments most affected. The reforms imposed laid the groundwork for unprecedented economic and social transformation

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH01

throughout the region and the re-emergence of Asia as an important player in the global economy.

In East Asia, the capitalization of global value chains through high-tech industries has fuelled economic growth in China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. In Southeast Asia, Singapore's urban environment is dotted with constant construction as the country rises as a leading business and economic centre of multi-national companies (MNCs). In cities across the Philippines, mixed-use buildings, international call centres, and other labour outsourcing offices compete and contend with informal settlements and suburban developments alike. Likewise, in Vietnam, roads, factories, industrial parks, and Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are transforming rural land in order to support growing commercialization, while Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are emerging from the Golden Triangle frontier lands of Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar to bolster trade and investment opportunities. In South Asia, India has become a major exporter of information technology services, as has Bangladesh in terms of the garment and textile industry. In addition, microfinance institutions in South Asia and Central Asia, like Kazakhstan, are strongly embedded in these regions' economic development, although their ability to alleviate poverty is much contested.

In their efforts to address the structural weaknesses exposed by the crisis and to acknowledge the importance of the private sector in driving economic growth and remaining competitive in a global market, Asian governments turned towards neoliberalism. As Catherine Kingfisher and Jeff Maskovsky (2008, pp. 117–118) state, 'Where it appears, and under whatever guise, neoliberalism promises "freedom", defined almost exclusively in terms of the rights of individuals to participate in markets and of markets themselves to act unhindered by governmental regulation'. Asian governments selectively adopted neoliberal techniques, modifying their economic models and established governing practices with Anglo-American free-market principles to lower debt, liberalize trade, and increase foreign investment, while retaining traditional, local characteristics and unique cultural values (Steger and Roy, 2010, pp. 78–79).

These changes in employment, production, and governance, for example, have stimulated the economic growth for developing, emerging, and 'miracle' economies in Asia as well as other parts of the global South (Fagertun, 2017). Yet, in the resulting market logics of Asian countries, Aihwa Ong (2006, p. 5) points to the need to pay particular attention to 'exceptions', or what she describes as 'extraordinary departure[s] in policy that can be deployed to include as well as to exclude'. Christina Schwenkel and Ann

Marie Leshkowich (2012, p. 380) explain Ong's 'neoliberalism as exception' as involving two senses:

> [F]irst, where qualities of neoliberalism are perceived as new, unusual, or problematic, even as they may also be powerful, desirable, or ascendant; and second, where specific realms of life or types of people are explicitly excluded from neoliberal visions, either because they are deemed worthy of protection from market forces or because they are judged unworthy of exercising the techniques of self-management and self-discipline that are the hallmarks of a morally appropriate, neoliberal personhood.

Consequently, neoliberalism's promises of freedom are not only uneven, but also contingent, ambiguous, and unstable (Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008, p. 119), such that there remains unequal access to the marketplace regardless of political-economic restructuring and gains in literacy and higher education attainment rates across Asia.

Capitalist Contradictions in Contemporary Asia

With the intensification of neoliberal globalization and capitalism, its attendant effects on culture, society, politics, religious practices, and the environment have undoubtedly led to both new ways of life and new, fundamental moral questions about the circulation and accumulation of capital. For example, in the Philippines development policies have led to a 'remarkable shift in governance' in which the state's emphasis on facilitating overseas employment and enhancing protection of migrant workers has created a 'markedly improved economic situation in recent years' at the expense of labour migration continuing unabated (Asis, 2017). In the absence of sustainable development that could generate employment opportunities at home and so long as 'political-economic restructuring goes hand-in-hand with the imposition of rational and market-driven ideals and values which are extended to individual conduct', Filipinos – driven to uphold idealized Filipino traits of hard work (*sipag*) and perseverance (*tiyaga*) with entrepreneurial, neoliberal qualities of 'self-help', 'self-governance', and 'self-reliance' – wrestle with leaving behind families as they seek work abroad (Ortega, 2016, p. 13; see also Alipio's chapter in this volume).

In Vietnam, the neoliberal logic of a market economy, free trade, and privatization has infused its entrenched socialism, leading to 'the transfer of aspects of governance from state to private, corporate, or transnational

entities' as well as to the individual (Schwenkel and Leshkowich, 2012, p. 382). Despite the boom of commercial activity, poverty and income disparity persists amid high levels of corruption, causing many to join the informal sector throughout East, West, and Southeast Asia; and even in Russia (Davies, 2015; see also Hoang's and Horat's chapters in this volume). Like Vietnam and China, in Laos capitalism has mixed with socialism as the country moves towards modernity (see Huijsmans's chapter in this volume), bringing about the amendment of laws and regulations to attract both foreign investors and those from the Asian region. Yet, in doing so, many have remained marginalized as a complex form of governance and subjectification is produced through the adoption of neoliberal, Chinese values of self-actualizing and self-enterprising (Laungaramsri, 2015).

Similarly, Thailand continues to experience relative poverty, high employment in the informal sector, and the split of Thai society across class lines even with economic growth and the expansion of social security programmes as a result of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's model of development, called 'Thaksinomics' (see DeFillipo's chapter in this volume). This dual-track policy of pushing foreign investment, international trade, exports, and tourism while strengthening local businesses led to improvements in the domestic market in contrast to the more ambiguous nature of late King Bhumipol Adulyadej's approach of 'sufficiency economy', which argued that 'economics cannot be separated from ethics' and called for self-discipline through 'moderation, due consideration, and risk management […] to guard against external […] and internal shocks to the economic system' (Chambers, 2013, pp. 87–89).

Thailand's hint of a moral fibre tying together the largely Buddhist population with Thai nationalists and monarchists alike in an effort to end economic suffering (Chambers, 2013, p. 88) is seemingly the opposite to the case of Singapore. In this multiracial and multicultural country, Singapore has deregulated, liberalized, and privatized their economy, but has done so by way of engendering a hegemonic ideology of pragmatism in all spheres of life and propagating an idea of self-reliance and 'entrepreneurship of the self', such that social structures and the economy is virtually excluded in determining the outcome of one's existence (Liow, 2012, p. 3, 18; see Gomes and Tan's chapter in this volume). This particular neoliberal rationality and sense of responsibility extends to the implementation of policies regarding the management and 'upgrading' of foreign migrant labourers through the Work Pass system. This system separates the 'foreign talents' – those possessing high levels of education and expertise, who are identified by the People's Action Party as crucial for the 'advancement, growth, and

sustaining of the Singapore economy' – from the 'foreign workers' – those less skilled and educated and 'only allowed to come into Singapore to function as a means to an end', such as construction workers from South Asia, who build infrastructure, or foreign domestic workers from Southeast Asia, who provide household services to local Singaporeans and foreign talents (Liow, 2012, p. 14; see also Zhang's and Ang's chapters in this volume).

The widening of class differentiation and the transfer of responsibility from the state to the individual for one's own well-being is also seen in the local and regional effects of neoliberal transformation in India (Münster and Strümpell, 2014). Kalpana Wilson *et al.* (2018, pp. 1–2) argue that the privatization and liberalization, particularly of land, natural resources, and public services, has led to the 'state's accentuated punitive functions, the criminalisation of excluded and demonised populations, and the targeted mobilisation of moral panics' directed towards 'multiple "disposable" populations as part of the construction of an exclusionary vision of the modern nation'. At the same time, India's aggressive neoliberal growth strategy involves the use of gendered and patriarchal ideologies that emphasize 'altruism', 'entrepreneurship', 'security', and 'protection' to intensify and expand woman's labour (Wilson *et al.*, 2018, pp. 1–2; see also Singh's chapter in this volume).

With state intervention implicit in neoliberal globalization and with capitalist ideologies of market liberalization and the logic of capital accumulation subsuming countries across Asia, David Harvey (2014) moves beyond the usual tensions between class struggle, structural inequalities, and capital, and between productive forces and social relations, to instead observe the interactive and dynamic character of the inner contradictions of capital. One of the most consequential contradictions, Harvey (2014) suggests, is that between reality and appearance. Evoking Karl Marx's use of 'fetishism' to refer to 'the various masks, disguises and distortions of what is really going on around us', Harvey (2014, pp. 4–5) argues that 'we need to unmask what is truly happening underneath a welter of often mystifying surface appearances' to understand the root causes of the issues around neoliberal globalization.

A New Regime of Economy, Work, and Labour

We, subsequently, seek to 'interrogate the *experiential* contradictions' manifest in the neoliberal globalization of contemporary Asia, where contradictions appear 'both to include and to marginalize in unanticipated ways; [and] to produce desire and expectation on a global scale' (Comaroff

and Comaroff 2001, p. 8; emphasis added). In understanding neoliberal globalization, Anette Fagertun (2017, p. 312) states that it cannot only be seen as 'a system of finance but also as a large scale (power) system of unequal exchange imposed by dominant institutions which in turn produce state and empire formations; new capitalist spaces and conditions for class formation'. The volume, then, investigates the tendency of neoliberal globalization to produce an Asian region of increasing differences in wealth; heightened flows of people and value across space and time; gender and class conflicts; and moral narratives and panics (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001). In detailing these experiential contradictions through multiple fields of everyday social life, this volume opens up an empirically grounded, interdisciplinary discussion about contemporary Asia within these experiential, capitalist contradictions between money and morality.

As such, this volume explores case studies from Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, India, and the Philippines to illustrate how contemporary Asia is an interconnected and transnational region that is central to world events, such as the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, and crucial to the functioning of different countries worldwide. We conceptualize contemporary Asia as composed of diverse societies, communities, and nation-states that face distinct problems as they grapple with the economic and social forces of globalization, modernity, capitalism, and neoliberalism, while trying to maintain a sense of their national, cultural, and even religious identities. Yet, rather than attempting a comprehensive overview of Asia, we take a more fluid, fragmentary, and intentionally partial approach to the ways in which diverse actors – individuals, families, communities, states, and institutions – are transforming life in Asia and around the world. We, thereby, seek to examine what is at heart of the issues surrounding the circulation and accumulation of capital – that is, the multiple intersections of neoliberal governance techniques, moneyed practices, and moral ideas as they are variously experienced among different segments of the population in contemporary Asia and as they are framed within particular places, histories, cultures, and modes of power.

In doing so, we consider questions around underlying moral discourses, values, and judgements as part of the inner contradictions surrounding money and capital. Specifically, how have these matters of morality been rendered particularly complex by the rise of neoliberal globalization and a consumerist culture? With a renewed emphasis on money as both a fetish and an organizing principle of life, how do these moral discourses, values, and judgements offer insight into localized negotiations with money? How do lived experiences and cultural worldviews from Asia, in turn, complicate

the normative, neoliberal ideal that entrepreneurial beliefs, attitudes, and thinking structure lives, identities, subjectivities, and various relationships with global capitalism? In challenging the dominance of neoliberalism and the inevitability of capitalism, what new kinds of moral landscapes and moral selves arise in Asia?

In the case studies given by this volume we examine such questions in order 'to develop a more critical approach to the political and ethical stakes of neoliberalism' (Hoffman *et al.*, 2006, p. 10). Here, we move beyond paradigms that Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008, pp. 118–119) claim 'speak of neoliberalism as a thing that acts in the world' as 'a unitary external structural force [...] that bears down on states, civil society institutions, populations or individuals'. Our volume, instead, draws upon the actions, that individuals, families, communities, states, and institutions take to make sense of economic and social transformations arising from neoliberal globalization's wide reach across Asia. Doing so allows for agency, power, and resistance to reside in actors rather than enabling neoliberalism and its different articulations to be exceptional or 'perhaps more powerful and all-encompassing than it really is' (Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008: 119).

From this experiential embodiment of acting upon money and morality, a new regime of economy, work, and labour has emerged, resulting in the relocation of people, reorganization of social relations, regulation of money, and the reproduction of 'historically produced structures and cultural systems of meaning' (Fagertun, 2017, p. 312). Moreover, the wider range of job opportunities available has had an impact, especially on gendered roles and sexuality, which further exposes the contradictions and contestations of money and morality. As such, the critical approach advocated by Hoffman *et al.* (2006) allows for substantive insight into this regime in terms of the following: 1) New forms of moral selfhood in Asia's market economy, which place responsibility on individuals for their own well-being (introduced above); 2) New conjunctures and discourses of money as 'social currencies' that index gender and family relations; and 3) New fields of everyday life, within which money has an expanding role, as well as moral discourses and judgements, which are deeply embedded in a cultural matrix. In the next sections, we will detail the latter two features.

The Gendered Discourse of Money and Morality

As the case studies will illustrate, this new regime finds people variously working in offices, markets, casinos, churches, the sex industry, and the

global labour market of both undocumented and institutionalized labour migration. Through the transaction, trade, and exchange of money, remittances, goods, and commodities in and out of these workplaces, the case studies reveal the different capitalist contradictions and tensions in relationships between casual and potential romantic partners, familial kin, parents and children, co-ethnics, pastors and worshippers, and even the government and its citizens. While various forms of currencies are used to further the exchange of material goods in formal and informal avenues, the case studies highlight the significance of what David Graeber (2012, p. 412) refers to as 'social currencies', or the various types of monies, commodities, or items of value that have the potential to transform social relationships. As Graeber (2012, p. 412) suggests, these social currencies have the ability, for instance, to arrange alliances or sort affiliations, assemble followers or resolve conflicts, and make gifts or reward services. Consequently, the economic systems in which social currencies predominate are what Graeber (2012, p. 412) calls 'human economies'. In these economies, not only are people profoundly entangled and their social relationships greatly transformed within an economy (Fagertun, 2017, p. 312), but we also have the 'creation and mutual fashioning of human beings' (Graeber, 2012, p. 412).

Hence, the case studies in this volume examine the powerful discourses produced historically and reproduced culturally that simultaneously create and fashion, as well as value and devalue, certain types of individuals in these human economies. Mary Beth Mills (2017, p. 316) terms these discourses 'gendered morality tales', revealing the complex cultural, moral, and ideological work that goes into making visible, and meaningful, the stigmatization of 'autonomous, mobile and desiring' women and men, who sustain neoliberal models of economic development. For example, these are the so-called immoral or scandalous women and girls who attract social censure and blame, like the Sri Lankan '*juki* girl', whose 'employment outside the home leads to suspicions of sexual promiscuity' (see Lynch, 2007, pp. 107–108 in Mills, 2017, p. 316), or the young Japanese female 'parasite singles', whose 'selfish consumerism is blamed for dangerously delayed marriage rates and a looming crisis of national reproduction' (see White, 2002, p. 23 in Mills, 2017, p. 316). However, while Mills (2017, p. 316) primarily focuses her attention on the proliferation of 'localised images of feminine immorality in widely divergent parts of Asia', this volume considers the broader, more diverse representations of gendered morality tales that expose the tensions of class formation and inequality that are implicated in discourses of gender and value for both women and men (Fagertun, 2017, p. 312).

From Thai *kiks* ('casual sex partners'), who blur the boundaries between sex worker and girlfriend in Cassie DeFillipo's chapter, to mainland Chinese *nuan nans* ('warm men'), who eagerly attend to domestic work to win over future partners in Sylvia Ang's chapter, we see the tension between hegemonic notions of femininity of accomplished wives and mothers and hegemonic notions of masculinity of career men. Through the *nuan nans*, who engage in favourable duties, and through other migrants in Singapore in Juan Zhang's chapter, who embrace the new ethics of professionalism and self-responsibility in their 'sinful jobs' as casino workers, we see women and men who negotiate, or 'make exceptions', in order to obtain their desired class and citizenship status (Ong, 2008). For market traders in Vietnam in Esther Horat's chapter and for Vietnamese market traders in Russia in Lan Anh Hoang's chapter, notions of 'good' persons are intimately tied up, and yet still conflict, with Confucian values of community and governmental notions of citizenship and civility that constrain the establishment and nurturance of social relations both at home and at work.

Likewise, cultural values and moral imperatives are embedded in both transnational migrant and immobile families in the Philippines in Cheryll Alipio's chapter and in Indian transnational migrant families in Australia in Surpriya Singh's chapter, leading to constructions of filial children – 'good daughters' and 'good sons' – that govern the practice of receiving, saving, and sending remittances. While these cultural values and the morality of money are perpetuated through the social institution of the family, in Alipio's case study, they additionally emanate from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the state, and public media. In Catherine Gomes and Jonathan Tan's case study of megachurches in Singapore, values of capitalism can also be shaped by religion. Through a 'proliferation of new value forms and [the exchange of] new media', which – in contrast to Michele Gamburd's (2004) 'money that burns like oil' – Bill Maurer (2012, p. 480) sees as not being incited 'by "money" per se but by the "new oil" of data', institutionalized discourses can be used strategically and at a scalar level, spearheading the rise in prosperity and wealth of superstar pastors, like Joseph Prince, or leading to their fall like 'konvict' Kong Hee. Consequently, moral and immoral figures, such as those described above, and images of ideal persons, such as Roy Huijsmans's descriptions in his chapter of the representation of ethnic Lao women on *kip* banknotes, call attention to the ideologies influencing the individual, social, and structural transformations associated with money and capital.

In gathering together these case studies, this volume follows Mills's (2017) lead in critically assessing how gendered morality tales encode, narrate,

dramatize, and localize the twin demands of morality and money through everyday experiences within the social life of various institutions of national and transnational regimes. In so doing, it asks both how gender and class hierarchies are on the one hand maintained, and how people navigate systems of moral and monetary power on the other. In addressing, then, the social currency of these gendered morality tales, the case studies point to a moral dilemma that takes into account not only wisdom and knowledge of what is good and bad, but also what Mills (2017, p. 318, 326) describes as a 'wider discursive terrain of aspiration and risk', in which both women and men are positioned 'as desiring but disciplined subjects' constrained by global capital and 'the ongoing contradictions of Asia's neoliberal economies and hierarchical social orders'.

The Cultural Matrix of Money and Morality

In contemporary Asia, a desire or fixation on money is generally seen as incompatible with moral integrity – a perception that was earlier observed by Georg Simmel (2004 [1900]) and Marx (1978 [1972]), who treated money as a powerful force that had the potential to corrupt social relationships, rending our lives cold, distant, and impersonal (Helleiner, 2017, p. 145). Ironically, money has become crucial in societies when neoliberal policies hold the individual solely responsible for their own well-being and wholly accountable for their success or failure. As noted by Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch's (1996 [1989]) influential volume of essays, *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, the authors document money's cultural variability as a way to dispute money's universally homogenizing powers (Zelizer, 1998, p. 1376). Quoting Maurice Bloch (1994), Viviana Zelizer (1998, p. 1376) writes that the dominant 'economic mythology' of money is debunked through detailing the cultural distinctiveness of non-Western societies.

Here, instead of subverting social ties, money is incorporated into specific cultural matrixes in which people then 'create, define, affirm, represent, challenge, or [even] overturn their social ties' (Zelizer, 1998, pp. 1376–1378). Money, then, is 'not a neutral or meaningless social object' (Carruthers and Espeland, 1998, p. 1401). Rather, as Bruce C. Carruthers and Wendy Nelson Espeland (1998, p. 1401) argue, 'its meanings are consequential', such that people treat money depending on cultural context and 'on what it means – good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, right or wrong, dirty or clean'. While these meanings change over time, they show the social life of money in which the 'monetarization of economic life has led to the penetration of

money into many (but certainly not all) spheres of exchange' (Carruthers and Espeland, 1998, p. 1401).

In addition, Keith Hart (1986, pp. 638–639) notes that 'money is [...] an aspect of relations between persons and a thing detached from persons'. As part of this kind of fetishism, Hart points to 'money's simultaneous connection to social processes and its transactional anonymity', in which it is, at the same time, what Gamburd (2004, p. 169) explains as 'an impersonal medium of exchange, a store of wealth, a standard of value, a unit of account, and a means of deferred payments'. Arising through a collective imagination, money relies on mutual trust, reflecting the cultural matrix or what Gamburd (2004, p. 169) calls, a 'microcosm [of] the larger social world'. Like Georg Simmel's (2004 [1900]) view that money's form correlates with the form of society, Gamburd (2004, p. 169) also suggests that 'the symbolic and structural properties of money' have the ability to 'reveal complex cultural logics' as well as 'moral contexts' [that] affect how people think about money. In this vein, Graeber (2011, p. 89), like Parry and Bloch (1996 [1989]), states that, 'If we really want to understand the moral grounds of economic life, and by extension, human life, it seems to me that we must start instead with the very small things: the everyday details of social existence' (2011, p. 89).

This volume, subsequently, draws from Daromir Rudnyckyj's (2014) 'economy in practice', a conceptualization that seeks to illuminate the various everyday techniques through which individuals are made economic – and we would add, moral – subjects. As a result, the chapters in this volume actively reflect upon the actual moneyed and moral practices, debates, and struggles of people throughout contemporary Asia, which, together, overturn dominant economic mythologies of money and economism. By approaching the case studies through an economy in practice, we, therefore, seek to illuminate the various Asian cultural notions about the nature and morality of money that Gamburd (2004, p. 170) argues, '[Governs] proper and improper modes of exchange [that] shape actors' sense of themselves and the world around them' (Gamburd, 2004, p. 170).

Toward a Moral Economy in Contemporary Asia

In analysing two classic works of moral economy, Didier Fassin (2005, p. 365) notes that E.P. Thompson's historical study of the British poor refers to moral economy as a 'traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties in the community', which 'impinged very generally on eighteenth-century government' (Thompson, 1971, p. 79).

Similarly, in James Scott's study of Southeast Asian peasants and their risk behaviours, Fassin (2005, p. 365) finds that moral economy is defined as a 'notion of economic justice and [a] working definition of exploitation' (Scott, 1976, p. 3). These two important studies of moral economy, as Fassin (2005, p. 365) argues, give a specific economic meaning to the concept, yet they also 'open it to a broader sense: the economy of moral values and norms of a given group in a given moment'. With the rapidly changing economic and social landscape of contemporary Asia, the concept of 'moral economies', rather than 'affective' or 'intimate' economies as used respectively by Ann Anagnost (2013) and by Rhacel Salazar Parreñas *et al.* (2016), is thereby utilized in this volume as it provides a productive framework for tracking the everyday capitalist contradictions and their contestations in the realm of social norms and moral production, and in the new regime of economy, work, and labour.

While diverse in their geographic and thematic focus, the chapters in this volume share the same concerns around social meanings of money, capital, and wealth in moral economies of Asia. Drawing on case studies from Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, India, the Philippines, and Laos, they reveal nuanced insights into how the new mobilities and wealth created by neoliberal globalization transform people's ways of life, notions of personhood, and their meaning making of the world. In what follows, we discuss in detail the unique contributions of each study as well as the intellectual connections between the chapters. The chapters are organized into three thematic sections, namely: 'Money and Moral Selfhood in the Market Economy', 'Social Currencies and the Morality of Gender', and 'The Social Life of Money in Asian Moral Economies'.

Money and Moral Selfhood in the Market Economy

One of the hallmarks of modernity, Anthony Giddens (1991) remarks, is the deepening of reflexivity in our social life. That is, social practices are constantly examined and reformed in light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character. In her study of the 'special zone' of the casino in Singapore, Juan Zhang (Chapter Two) finds that casino work brings a good income and certain prestige, but it also places employees in a state where they constantly battle with their own moral codes and have to develop strategies to cope with internal conflicts. The exceptionality of the casinos shapes how employees, most of whom are transnational migrants from Southeast Asia, understand and perform their work through moral ambiguities. Her research offers interesting insights into

moral–economic implications of casino work on the self and the various ways employees have learned to cope with the so-called 'sinful work' involved in casino gambling and the quest for wealth. In rationalizing their work amid employment insecurity and family responsibility, employees suppress their emotions and instead draw upon neoliberal discourses of aspiration, material success, status, and flexibility, turning some of these values into new codes of professionalism, such as self-responsibility, self-regulation, and self-discipline, in order to compete and advance in the global economy.

To survive in the moral economy of the casino in Singapore, casino employees in Zhang's research fashion a flexible sense of self, suspend personal emotions in the workplace, and recode their moral values through a logic of 'making exception'. This moral flexibility is explored further by Lan Anh Hoang (Chapter Three) in her study of Vietnamese migrants in Moscow, Russia. Post-Soviet Russia, with a volatile economy, a restrictive (and heavily corrupt) migration regime, and disturbing levels of hostility toward foreign migrants, proves to be a particularly unwelcoming host society to an estimated 150,000 Vietnamese, most of whom are irregular migrants with no prospects for permanent settlement or naturalization. Hoang's ethnographic study sheds important light on how meanings and values of money change in a context where people's radius of trust is disrupted by their physical displacement and the routinization of uncertainty. In her case study of Vietnamese migrant traders in Moscow wholesale markets, the scrimping, scraping, and making of money is a rational, conscious strategy to cushion migrants against the uncertainty and precarity they face through their ghettoization in isolated ethnic enclaves, disenfranchization within Russian society, immobilization beyond the shadow economy, and subjection to a brutal market regime. Consequently, money emerges to hold social ties together. Yet, as Hoang argues, while this monetization of relationships enables traders to establish new ties and nurture existing ones, as well as restore a sense of certainty and security in people's lives, it can also work to replace trust, compassion, and empathy with impersonal, detached cost–benefit calculations. In other words, it is a double-edged sword that cuts both ways, often with significant consequences.

The neoliberal strategy of being entrepreneurial, changing oneself, making informed choices, and taking up opportunities in the market economy is also seen in Chapter Four by Esther Horat. Horat turns to Vietnam and the economic reform stemming from the Open-Door policies (*Đổi mới*) that allowed small-scale trade to become an increasingly popular and often important source of income, particularly for women. The standing of traders in Vietnam has been, and continues to be, particularly ambiguous,

as they were able to quickly seize the benefits of *Đổi mới*, albeit without embodying the state's ideas of modernity. Traders in the commune of Ninh Hiệp on the outskirts of Hanoi, where Horat conducted her ethnographic fieldwork, have been consistently vilified in media reports instead of being lauded for their booming clothing market and the remarkable prosperity that it generates. Caught in the contradiction between market culture and governmental notions of 'modernization' and 'civilization' are the women traders, whose use of money and moneyed activities are scrutinized as they are seen through their household and family care work as the principal agents of the civilizing mission. Drawing on Sheri Lynn Gibbings's (2016) framework of 'citizenship as ethics', Horat analyzes traders' performance of moral identities as a way of dealing with the paradoxical economic and political situation in which they find themselves. Her study, therefore, calls for greater attention to the gender discourses and practices that underpin notions of a 'good woman' and a 'good man', which is followed up by the authors in Part II of the volume.

Social Currencies and the Morality of Gender

In recent years, issues around gender and morality have attracted considerable scholarly attention amidst growing anxieties about the supposedly adverse impacts of the ethos of capitalist economies and a consumerist and materialist culture on society (Hoang, 2016; Hoang and Yeoh, 2015b; Leshkowich, 2011; Walker, 2006). Research shows that Asian girls and boys are socialized into different culturally accepted expectations regarding how they should behave from childhood (Alipio, 2013; Alipio, Lu, and Yeoh, 2015; Yeung and Alipio, 2013) and, as the following chapters show, women and men are subsequently subjected to different systems of moral values and judgement, which are neither static nor universal but historically, socially, and culturally constructed. How men and women grapple with the contradictions brought about by new economic regimes and negotiate a new sense of their moral worth is here addressed by Sylvia Ang, Cassie DeFillipo, and Supriya Singh. Economic development and the increased range and scale of mobilities that it produces, the authors point out, have provided men and women with unprecedented opportunities to achieve their ambitions and improve their lives whilst, at the same time, triggering important questions about their gendered selves and moral worth.

In Chapter Five, Sylvia Ang looks at Chinese migrant men in Singapore and how their masculinities transform with labour migration and their quest for marriage partners. Here, Chinese migrant men engage in flexible

subject-making to perform or 'fit' ideals of hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality to attract a wife. Focusing on higher-wage Chinese migrants, Ang shows that men experience displacement in their social imaginaries of Chinese masculinities through changes in the symbols of Chinese masculinity. While 'successful' masculinity is symbolized by a house and car in China, in Singapore it is symbolized by citizenship or Permanent Residency. Yet, in defining Chinese masculinity, all of these symbols are deeply connected to the role of breadwinners and providers. While they have attained a kind of 'cosmopolitan masculinity' in which, as Ang says, they are transnational, transcultural, and 'globalized', the symbols that show proof of their virility and ability as breadwinners and providers – that is, their money, economic success, and global mobility – are rendered inadequate and ineffective, and thus men are emasculated in the eyes of local Singaporean women who shun and marginalize them based on their nationality. Ang's study underscores the importance of adopting an intersectional approach to the analysis of gender and neoliberal subjectivities and, at the same time, highlights deeply entrenched ideologies about Chinese masculinity as intertwined with money and successful economic providership.

'Neoliberal flexibility' (Ong, 1999) is also a salient element in the gender performances of Thai men and women described in Cassie DeFillipo's study (Chapter Six). Using the sex industry as a lens into Thai culture, wherein the quest for money and upward mobility in a modernized world has reconfigured the lives of Thai men and women, DeFillipo relates intriguing stories about Thai women performing hegemonic femininities in a strategic way and, in so doing, actively perpetuating existing forms of hegemonic masculinity among Thai men. In Thai culture, the woman's body is treated as her 'natural resource' – an economic asset, like a 'rice paddy', which can be harvested when necessary or desired. Sex work is, therefore, one of the few means available for women of lower-income classes to access more money and a higher economic position. It is also an arena in which women can uphold gender roles through performing a more traditionally accepted form of femininity as the 'caretaker', while men can fulfil their masculine duties as 'provider' through financially supporting women. In order to accommodate emergent economic needs and turn new challenges posed by neoliberal globalization into opportunities, women and men are prepared to take on multiple versions of femininities and masculinities through selectivity, modification, and reflexivity (Gee, 2014). In what is characterized by Rudnyckyj (2014) as an 'economy in practice', the moral values embedded in gender performances become more ambiguous and fluid, enabling individuals to adapt, accommodate new needs, and justify their actions.

It is well established in migration studies that remittances are not merely economic activities, but complex and nuanced transnational processes that embody values and relations transcending national boundaries (Alipio, 2015; Hoang and Yeoh, 2015a; Thai, 2014). Where remittances have become the primary currency of care, the making or breaking of family relationships is essentially contingent on how individuals handle remittance processes. In any context, remittances are deeply classed and gendered experiences. This is underscored by Supriya Singh's (Chapter Seven) long-term qualitative research into Indian migration to Australia across five decades. More specifically, she reveals important changes to gender dynamics relating to money, remittance, inheritance, and control of family finance as a result of migration and mobility, with women now having a say in transnational remittances and being more likely to inherit than their mothers. These changes entail shifts in the discourse about money and morality in the Indian family. The 'good son' (that is, the man who sends home money) used to be a central figure in the moral economy of Indian migration. The 'good daughter' now also occupies a position in transnational remittance relationships. The 'good daughter' has become a part of the narrative of transnational filial piety and, at times, of filial care, while the male ownership and control of money is now subject to discussion. Migration and mobility, it seems, have not only changed people's lives for the better, but also reconstituted moral norms and value judgements in what is arguably considered one of the most rigid and oppressive patriarchal systems in the world. The concern with the impact of migration and remittances on intergenerational relationships within the family is also central to Cheryll Alipio's research in Chapter Eight, where we turn our attention to the context of the Philippines.

The Social Life of Money in Asian Moral Economies

Part III of the volume maintains its focus on the social meanings of money and wealth in moral economies of Asia, but goes beyond personal reflexive processes and interpersonal relationships to situate the debates in a broader institutional context. By looking at the very different contexts of the Philippines, Singapore, and Laos, Cheryll Alipio, Catherine Gomes and Jonathan Tan, and Roy Huijsmans relate the anxieties and ambivalences produced by increased mobilities, rising wealth, and modernity across the Southeast Asian sub-region. In Chapter Eight, Cheryll Alipio takes us to the Philippines where the transnational labour migration of overseas Filipino workers, who leave behind children, exposes the costly investment of migrant parents as

their direct, physical love and care is deferred for the promise of economic gain. Recast instead in material goods and remittances, the porous quality of money extends to a range of exchange relationships between migrant parents, left-behind children in the Philippines, and their caregivers. Migrant money is then imbued not only with the power to buy essential and material, luxury goods, but also has the power to substitute for absent love, care, and intimacy. Like previous chapters, the tension that arises in conforming to cultural values morally enmeshes Filipino children and young people in a system of reciprocal obligations and behavioural expectations. In transgressing this system or 'wasting' the productive energy produced by migrant remittances, children face condemnation. To prevent immoral behaviour, nationalist and NGO discourses turn to cultivating values of hard work, discipline, sacrifice, and development that inadvertently create and reproduce a capitalist migrant culture, compelling some children to aspire towards upwards mobility and migration in the future.

The relationship between cultural and Christian values, wealth, and materialism that captures Alipio's attention in the Philippines is also the focus of Catherine Gomes and Jonathan Tan's (Chapter Nine) research in Singapore. In one of the wealthiest nations in the world, where the 'Five Cs' – condominium, car, cash, credit card, and country club membership – have become the mantra for personal aspiration, it is perplexing that Christianity (including Catholicism) is the fastest-growing faith, given its original emphasis on equality and disapproval of the pursuit of material possessions. Through the case studies of two wealthy and popular megachurches in Singapore and their larger-than-life pastors – the New Creation Church with Pastor Joseph Prince and the City Harvest Church with Pastor Kong Hee – Gomes and Tan show how these powerful religious institutions have successfully capitalized on their members' economic prosperity to finance their further growth. Unlike the social gospel of earlier Singaporean Christians, who championed social-economic reforms and worked to change the lives of the economically marginalized and disenfranchised, the 'prosperity gospel' preached by these megachurches' pastors is a strategic blending of the Christian gospel with capitalism and its business- and marketplace-centric emphasis on material success. This proves particularly attractive to middle-class Singaporeans, who are now able to justify their socioeconomic privileges within the stratified Singaporean society as signs of God's blessings and grace on their success. Wealth and material accumulation, as such, are not treated as incompatible with Christian values, but have been incorporated into the essence of Singaporean Christianity.

In Chapter Ten – the final chapter of the volume – Roy Huijsmans reaffirms the position articulated earlier by Sylvia Ang, Cassie DeFillipo, and Supriya Singh that systems of moral values and judgements relating to money and wealth are deeply gendered, regardless of context. With a focus on the newly introduced banknotes in Laos, especially the controversy around their iconography, Huijsmans discusses how cash-related moralities emerge from the loose relation between national currencies and national territory. In Laos, as elsewhere in the broader Southeast Asian sub-region, women are regarded as bearers of tradition and nationalism (see, for example, Nguyen and Thomas, 2004; Sunindyo, 1998), which partly explains why the use of the image of three actual women on a newly introduced 1000 Kip note in 2008 became such a controversial topic in the country. Their iconographic representation underscores their role in preserving the multi-ethnic nation, while the fall-out over using photographic images instead of pen-drawings points at a public fear about the moral corruptibility of such existing women. The introduction of two large denomination notes (50,000 and 100,000 Kip), on the other hand, caused much public anxiety about social (in)equality in the (post)socialist nation-state. The moral tales about banknotes, as shown by Huijsmans's chapter, constitute a productive lens to explore some of the frictions and shifts in moralities brought about by the rapid change characterizing post-socialist societies in Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

The chapters in this volume illustrate the remarkable resilience, flexibility, and resourcefulness with which individuals – from the young women engaged in a range of sex work in Thailand to Chinese migrant men and migrant casino workers in Singapore, Vietnamese traders both at home and abroad in Russia, left-behind children of migrant workers in the Philippines, and members of Indian transnational families in Australia – embrace the opportunities and challenges brought about by neoliberal and global forces and use their agency to recode the traditional values, norms, and practices that shape their social and economic lives. The cases of Christian megachurches in Singapore and banknotes in Laos remind us that the mobilities and wealth created by new economic regimes are not just refashioning individuals' ways of being and doing on a mundane, everyday basis, but are also leading to sweeping changes in broader social and institutional contexts within and beyond the Asian region. The moral dilemmas and anxieties that emerge

from these profound social transformations deepen our understanding of local cultures as well as the inner contradictions of global capital.

The growing importance of money in these societies is seemingly a result of neoliberal policies that hold the individual solely responsible for their own well-being and the well-being of their families, as well as wholly accountable for their success or failure. As we see in these chapters, this has led individuals to pursue risky forms of work in the sex market, small-scale trade, shadow economy, and transnational and global labour markets, while at the same time confronting and reconciling desires of money, love, and care with internal ethical struggles, class conflicts, ethnic stereotypes, and even economic discourses and decrees. With rich ethnographic insights and a diverse range of empirical contexts, chapters in this volume shed important light on the multifaceted complexities and contradictions in the many different forms of relationship between money and moralities. Money, they affirm, is not an impersonal, objective economic instrument with homogenizing powers (Parry and Bloch, 1996 [1989]; Zelizer, 1998), but a culturally constructed and socially mediated currency of which meanings are constantly contested and re-negotiated across time and space in contemporary Asia.

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Part I

Money and Moral Selfhood in the Market Economy

2. The Moral Economy of Casino Work in Singapore

Juan Zhang

Abstract
Singapore opened two casino resorts in 2010 despite strong public suspicion and resistance. Casino work brings a good income and a certain prestige, but it also places employees in a state of moral uncertainty. Drawing from fieldwork in Singapore, the chapter looks at the moral economy of casino work, especially how employees negotiate moral dilemmas with financial and professional gains. Casino employees fashion a flexible sense of self and hold on to a strong belief in professionalism and self-responsibilization. Such strategies allow employees to suspend personal emotions in the workplace, and to value personal detachment as professionalism. As casino employees recode their moral values through the logic of 'making exception', they actively contribute to the moral economy of the casino in Singapore.

Keywords: moral economy, casino, work, responsibilization, professionalism, Singapore

Introduction

'Are we going to hell? Because what we are doing [in the casino], it is sinful.[1] But we have to earn money. It's our job … But as long as you are doing your job in the casino, it's fine because people [like us] rely on the casino to

1 Research for this paper was supported by the Humanities and Social Sciences research grant (R-395-000-025-646), National University of Singapore. I thank Brenda Yeoh, Kamalini Ramdas, Melody Lu, Esther Ng, Rachel Ng, and Jocelyn Ng for their intellectual collaboration and research assistance. Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper. There are no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this paper.

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH02

earn money'. This was how Vanessa, a 27-year-old Filipino guest service representative working in a mega casino resort in Singapore, thought of her work. As a mother of two young children, who remained left behind in the Philippines under the care of their grandparents, Vanessa said that she needed the money and a good career to be able to support her children's general well-being and future education. Her job in Singapore's casino came with not only a good salary package, but also an Employment Pass that suggested a slim possibility of getting permanent residency (PR) down the track. If she obtained PR, she could then bring her children to Singapore for study without paying high fees for schooling as foreigners.[2] The casino job was 'sinful', Vanessa said; but if this meant that she could support her children and have a future with them in Singapore, this 'sinful job' also offered hope. Vanessa's account brings to light the moral economy of casino work in Singapore. Using moral economy as an analytical framework, I depart from the historical social concept developed by E.P. Thompson (1971) and James Scott (1976), who described the moral causes for popular agrarian resistance. In the contemporary context of neoliberalization and speculative urbanism, I instead use moral economy to explore the changing notions of moral value and moral conduct in a particular economic environment carved out of the normative political order and turned into an 'exception'. By speculative urbanism, I mean the specific urban development process in which desires for attracting capital-flush investment deals and for certain locations to emerge as the next 'world city' drive large scale mega projects. This process is speculative because the re-fashioning and re-branding of urban locations is stimulated by fast-track improvement following a projected vision of future profitability and the making of new growth markets (Zhang 2017). The emerging casino economy in the past decade reflects the phenomenon of speculative urbanism occurring in aspirational cities across Asia. Billions of dollars are poured into mega projects on the basis that urban governments may offset financing risks in these cities, and the return on investment tends to be quick and generous. The making of mega projects, such as the casino resort in Singapore in which Vanessa worked, often lends legitimacy to spatial practices of 'making exception' (Ong 2006), confining speculative

2 Singapore's bifurcated foreign labour policies determine different conditions and privileges accessible to migrant workers based on a set of criteria predicated upon perceived contribution and skill. Only eligible Employment Pass or S Pass holders can bring certain family members to Singapore on a Dependant's Pass. Public school fees in Singapore differ widely between citizens, those with Permanent Residence, and foreigners. According to the Ministry of Education, in 2016 the total monthly school fees for primary school was free for local residents, S$110 for PR, and S$550 for foreigners.

development initiatives in enclaved spaces removed from the everyday life of ordinary citizens. The making of exception legitimizes shifting moral norms, rendering the otherwise morally ambiguous practices as something normal, acceptable, and even necessary. Ong (2006) has taken note of the strategic ways in which Asian states like Singapore produce elastic scales of exception to make space for capitalist forces. Making exception involves governmental techniques that 'cut up populations and spaces into different orders of regulation (Ong, 2008, p. 121). The building of mega casinos in many Asian cities is legitimized through the prevailing neoliberal process of space making and value coding. Such morally ambiguous places are skillfully repackaged and promoted using the logics of capital accumulation and the language of leisure and fun (Zhang and Yeoh 2017). As casino resorts become a kind of 'special zone' that are carved out of the everyday norm for the purpose of profit expansion, ethical understandings of self and others may become skewed to reflect particular economic relations that underpin changing social relations. A moral economy perspective therefore helps to illuminate the effect of neoliberal and speculative urbanism on individual lives, as many are looking for ways to cope with the increased precariousness of work and life. In such circumstances, narrow notions of goodness or fairness could no longer define moral actions, as they become pragmatic choices informed by calculated decisions. Like Vanessa, many are willing to do 'sinful work', or something they would otherwise not do, for the sake of earning a living, providing for loved ones, and advancing a future that is worthy of making a few exceptions.

This chapter focuses in particular on casino work to examine the political-economic processes of normalizing casinos in the previously conservative city-state of Singapore, and its moral-economic implications. Casino employees have learned by themselves to engage with certain neoliberal discourses of aspiration, material success, status, and flexibility, and equated some of these values as new codes of professionalism and self-responsibly circulated on a global scale. In E.P. Thompson and Scott's classic analysis of moral economy in the UK and in Southeast Asia, peasants rise in protest when they sense that the common moral codes are breached by capitalist elites; but today, such moral regulations seem to have shifted targets toward the less privileged individuals themselves. Instead of popular resistance, the new twist of moral economy implies self-regulation and self-discipline. Instead of grassroots justice, the 'moral conduct' of workers today consolidates a regime of control.

This chapter begins with theoretical discussions of moral economy in the past and present, especially the recent 'neoliberalisation of moral economies'

(Wiegratz and Cesnulyte, 2016) and its larger impact on the moral agencies of individuals. Following a brief discussion of methods, this paper presents a critical engagement with the emerging casino urbanism in Singapore and the shifting moral discourses associated with the rise of a casino economy. Next, this chapter discusses in detail how casino workers uphold ideals of professionalism and responsibility as fundamental values to their work ethics and moral being. But, as this paper will show, such professionalism entails deliberate emotional detachment, suppression of empathy, and a particular emphasis on 'doing the job right' – not necessarily about doing good, but doing 'right' according to corporate rules. This chapter also discusses the daily moral negotiations that many casino employees carry out with themselves, their emotional battles, compromises and sacrifices, and strategies of 'making exception' and 'holding on to principle/faith' that give many a temporary sense of peace. Such moral strategies help to give meaning and purpose to some of the casino workers as they continue to strive for a career and live for a better future in a time when 'doing the right thing' becomes increasingly hard to define.

Moral Economy and the Casino

The notion of moral economy had a particular religious and social reformist origin in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a concept that suggested divine judgement over human immorality (Götz, 2015). The contemporary popularity of this concept started with E.P. Thompson, who wrote his seminal article in 1971 on food riots in eighteenth-century Britain (Thompson, 1971). Thompson's moral economy thesis was based on his analysis of the historical agency of the British crowds in times of scarcity. When the popular consensus on rights and customs, availability of subsistence, and the price of food were breached, British peasants rioted against local elites, especially the immoral profit seekers. Such consensus was so strong that 'it overrode motives of fear or deference' (Thompson, 1971, p. 188). Following Thompson, James Scott developed this notion further in his book *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (1976) by looking at peasant rebellion in the context of colonial state formation and free-market expansion in Southeast Asia. Scott showed the normative roots of peasant politics in which it was not necessarily the absolute extraction of profits but the violation of local norms and moral entitlements that led to rebellion and resistance. This notion has since been used to analyze particular peasant politics and the 'righteous protest' of the poor in China (O'Brien and Li, 2006), and the formalization

of peasant behaviours and the creation of solidarity networks in the global South (Fafchamps, 1992). Scholars also use this framework to understand religious restoration in response to capitalism (Tripp, 2006), alternative development of fair trade as a transnational moral economy between the North and South (Goodman, 2004), and the politics around the production and consumption of energy in China (Tilt, 2014). These analyses of moral economies of the subaltern classes point to the power of everyday checks and balances maintained at the local level, when the poorer individuals could still hold the more powerful classes accountable in times of scarcity.

More recent scholarship on moral economies also tries to move away from the sometimes rather romantic notions of subaltern resistance, to pay attention to the intricate politics between economic relations and class-specific social relations (Palomera and Vetta, 2016; Wiegratz and Cesnulyte, 2016). Karandinos *et al.*'s study of the rampant drug economy in inner-city America (2014) showed how violence was incorporated into local ethical norms and obligations and recognized as a legitimate means of establishing community solidarity. But this moral economy of violence should not be valorized as a local victory, for it did nothing to counter the hierarchical relations and the disenfranchisement of the poorer neighbourhoods. Worse, the moral acceptance of violence on the street level reinforced the negative public opinion of the poor as the dangerous other. It also prompted more intense institutionalized actions of suppression in the name of public safety and produced 'de-facto apartheid boundaries' of the US inner city (Karandinos *et al.*, 2014, p. 10). The 'identity loan' industry in the US also formed a kind of moral economy of document exchange, where legal residents lend their identity documents to unauthorized migrant labourers in order for them to secure a job (Horton, 2015). The illegal nature of document exchange was rendered trivial when codes of reciprocity and co-ethnic solidarity gave such practices additional moral value. But this moral economy also fuelled exploitation, abuse, and betrayal, when identity donors were in a stronger position to make a profit out of the vulnerability of migrants without papers.

These studies powerfully suggest that ideals of morality and associated imaginations of justice and mutuality might be universal; in real social and economic relations, however, moral codes and practices are situational, class-specific, and fluid. Moral underpinnings of economic practices do not necessarily generate grassroots justice or marketplace fairness; they often exist to justify excessive profiteering, appease social contentions, and legitimize unequal exercises of power. Wiegratz's (2012) study clearly showed how economic fraud could be easily justified and normalized through a moral discourse in today's neoliberal market society.

In describing a 'neoliberal moral change' in post-crash economies in the global North, Whyte and Wiegratz (2016) proposed a novel understanding of neoliberalism's 'moral project' in our time. Traditional wisdom often has it that fraudulent practices indicate the weakening of public morals, a symptom of 'evil' and wrongdoing due to the erosion of moral justice. However, as Whyte and Wiegratz (2016) show, fraudulent practices themselves are often clothed in particular sets of 'morals' guided by dominant values in specific political-economic contexts. In C. Wright Mills's (2000) classic text *The Power Elite*, he notes that the morality of the corporate and political elites is a morality that does not necessarily serve the public interest: 'Every such naked interest, every new, unsanctioned power of corporation, farm bloc, labour union, and governmental agency that has risen in the past two generations has been clothed with morally loaded slogans. For what is not done in the name of the public interest?' (Mills, 2000, p. 344). In banking, as Wiegratz (2012) notes, harmful trading practices are routinely sanctioned by dominant profit norms in order to advance sales, secure commissions, and to enhance the power and wealth of the trader as well as the corporation. Geraint Anderson's book, *Cityboy* (2009), shows how unscrupulous city traders in London believe in their moral contribution to society because they bring in tax revenues for hospitals and schools. The moral claims they make reflect class-specific norms that underpin popular ideas regarding what constitutes the appropriate, beneficial, or ethical. In the accounts of Thompson and Scott, the poorer class could still hold on to a counter-belief that questioned such moral claims; today, this has become increasingly difficult, as some of the new moral orders under neoliberalism are able to 'confront other moralities and give impetus to a process of substantial and lasting moral change' (Whyte and Wiegratz, 2016, p. 7).

Michael Sandel (2013) shared in a recent lecture his growing concern about the changing moral landscape, when the dominant values of neoliberalism give legitimation to an economy based not on production but speculation. Speculative politics tend to reward 'winning' much more generously than 'earning'. The financialization of everyday life, the global expansion of casino capitalism, the growing appetite for speculating on future prices and events as a basis for profit making for both the state and individuals – all these new trends seem to suggest a moral economy that has shifted the notion of morality away from ideals of equality and justice, and towards pragmatic calculations of gains and losses. The 'necessary evil' becomes acceptable (e.g. the tobacco industry), even morally justifiable, if its risk can be managed and if it leads to greater economic gains in the name of public interest (e.g. tax revenue).

It is in this changing moral context that the legalization of casino gambling in countries like Singapore, becomes more than just an economic move; it indicates the social and political endorsement of a particular brand of competitive speculative urbanism (Zhang and Yeoh 2017). It incorporates the otherwise morally ambiguous enterprise into an ambitious package of urban renovation, economic stimulation, and cosmopolitan branding. In doing so, the social moral structure is reshaped to accommodate, manage, and justify questionable practices, profit motives, and even exploitation and class-based exclusion. The legalization of casinos is legitimized on the basis of bringing in millions in corporate taxes and other income, boosting employment, and revamping tourism. It is often framed in terms of a corporate social responsibility framework (Kingma, 2015) that shifts the morality discourse away from the overall social well-being principle to a risk-governance paradigm. Such a framework implicitly suggests that if gambling risks can be somehow managed and controlled, the question of morality becomes less of a concern. Sandel made this observation, stating that in recent decades, 'we have made our peace [...] with a moral economy of speculation' (2013, p. 336). This 'making peace' shows that speculative economic practices, such as gambling, are naturalized and made morally acceptable in neoliberal social worlds. The notion of moral economy can no longer help to form an effective grassroots alliance that holds the power elites accountable to various forms of injustices; today, it serves a legitimation function that incorporates fringe practices into the mainstream.

The moralization of casinos in Singapore also takes place in the post-global financial crisis period, when the need for economic survival and revival became paramount. During this period, employment insecurity and economic precariousness continued to impact individuals who struggled to earn a living. As global mega-casino resorts moved away from the United States and Europe, regions that suffered greatly during the crisis, and into new Asian destinations for more lucrative profits, more and more individuals tied their aspirations to these multi-billion dollar development projects, and wagered their future on speculative market promises as well as on real opportunities and possibilities opened up by the circulation of casino capital. In Singapore alone, thousands, like Vanessa, hoped to work for a better future in the newly-developed Asian casinos and casino-related industries. Their own notions of right and wrong and their practices of work and care have inextricably been transformed by the larger social-economic processes, as well as the values and norms attached to them.

Methods

This chapter draws from a two-year project on the expanding casino industry in Singapore and associated labour and consumer mobilities. Fieldwork was carried out in 2013–2015 in Singapore's two casino resorts, including semi-structured interviews with local and migrant employees (n=40) in the casinos, as well as in the associated hospitality, entertainment, and retail industries. Half of the respondents were Singapore citizens, whilst the rest came from China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Japan. Two thirds of the respondents were men between twenty to forty years of age. Most received tertiary education in a range of fields, including IT, business, and tourism, or vocational training (mostly in hospitality) prior to their employment in Singapore. One third of the respondents were women. Those who worked in guest relation services were younger, in their early twenties, and a few at middle management levels were in their late thirties and forties. All of them had university degrees, except for one woman, who paused her study in the Philippines (in arts) to work in Singapore in one of the casino hotels. Most of the transnational employees were hired as skilled migrants with an Employment Pass or an S Pass under Singapore's variegated work visa system.[3] Respondents were recruited first from personal contacts and later on through snowballing. Apart from interviews, this chapter also uses news and government reports and other published accounts as additional sources of information. They help to provide the context of analysis on the changing debate about casino legalization and the broad public attitudes towards the casino industry in general.

It needs to be noted that most of the respondents signed a confidentiality agreement with the casinos as part of their work contract, which prohibited them from sharing any specific information concerning the operation of the casinos. To respect this confidentiality agreement, the interviews were mostly about casino employees' professional experiences and personal opinions that did not involve any actual aspect of the casinos' business organization and operation. Given that there are currently only two legalized casino operators in Singapore, it is fairly easy to identify respondents' identities based on nationality and occupation. This paper therefore deliberately de-identifies not only the individuals, but also the casinos in which they work.

3 In Singapore's work pass regime, the Employment Pass is for foreign professionals with a monthly salary of at least S$3600 and acceptable qualifications. The S Pass is for mid-level skilled staff with a monthly salary of at least $2300, and who meet the assessment criteria. See <http://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits>.

Legitimizing Casinos in Singapore

In Singapore, the opening of casinos caused a tremendous controversy and triggered heated debates. Before the 2000s, Singapore's political elites rejected the idea of legalizing casino gambling on the basis of protecting traditional family values and work ethos. In the 1960s, when Singapore gained independence, there were already proposals to open offshore casinos in Pulau Sejahat and Sentosa Island to help boost tourism.[4] But the fear of moral corruption led parliamentary members to reject this idea. In the 1970s, then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew publicly said no to building casinos in Singapore: 'Not over my dead body!' In the 1980s, resistance remained strong when the former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong stated: 'There will be no casino, as long as I am PM' (Koh, 2005). In 2005, Lee Kuan Yew, who had fiercely opposed the idea of casinos in the past, adopted a completely different tone. 'The world has changed', he said, and some of the virtues he held onto in the past 'are no longer sufficient' (K.Y. Lee, 2005). From the mid-2000s, the political leadership started to make clear that the legalization of casino gambling and the opening of mega casinos were an important strategy to drive Singapore's economy forward. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong argued in 2005 that the integrated casino resorts would 'help us reinvent Singapore' (H.L. Lee, 2005). In an interview with *The New York Times* (2007), Lee Kuan Yew defended his support for casinos by claiming: 'We have to go in whatever directions world conditions dictate if we are to survive and to be part of this modern world'. If Singapore failed to 'keep up' and 'transform' with the rest of the world, Lee said, 'we are dead' (*The New York Times*, 2007). Political elites believed that casino projects would help to put Singapore on the map again, so 'we can move forward and keep abreast with the top cities in Asia and the world' (K.Y. Lee, 2005), and if Singapore rejected the casino proposals again, 'the world's investors and players will mentally scratch us off the list' and go elsewhere (K.Y. Lee, 2005).

The fear of being left behind by the world, of not being able to transform and attract the investors and players, outweighed any concerns about potential moral corruption or erosion of social ethos and Asian values. Such fear legitimized moves for casinos to be legalized as a political and economic exception that came to existence under special circumstances. Elsewhere, I have discussed in detail the politics of making exception around Singapore's

4 Pulau Sejahat is a small island off the coast of Singapore, located between Pulau Tekong and Changi Jetty. It was a military defence post in the past, and is now officially a military training base off-limits to the public.

casinos, and how their legitimization and successful operation rest on the dual logic of economic optimization and ethicalization (Zhang and Yeoh, 2016). Preventative measures, such as the casino entry levy scheme and the voluntary and enforced casino exclusions, are put in place to uphold a certain level of moral order to protect 'high-risk' and 'vulnerable groups' (e.g. problem gamblers and those in debt). The ethicalization of casinos also takes place when casino employees' credentials and credibility are constantly under scrutiny. Casino workers engage in what Aihwa Ong (2008) called a 'self-conscious practice of neoliberal subject making' by embracing professionalism and new ethics of self-responsibility. Many also believe in the values of self-discipline and a sense of ownership of the work, which are regarded as essential qualities for them to compete successfully in the global economy (Zhang, Yeoh, and Ramdas, 2017).

Professionalism as A Moral Practice

In Singapore's casino resorts, employees in different sectors associated with the emerging casino economy strongly identified with key characteristics such as ambitiousness, pragmatism, flexibility, adaptability, and shrewdness, which they believed to be essential for gaining and maintaining a successful career transnationally. Prior to Singapore, many had held a variety of service jobs in Malaysia, Dubai, Macau, and on international cruise ships. Many previously worked in smaller casinos elsewhere and regarded working in Singapore's luxurious mega casinos as a step up in their career development. Others regarded Singapore as just another stepping-stone, one that would build a convincing track record for them to land ideal jobs in the US or Europe in the future. There were individuals who did not really know much about working in casinos, who thought this was just an opportunity to explore new career possibilities since they were still young. There were also employees who wanted to settle in Singapore, and thought a career in the multi-billion-dollar industry would give them the much desired 'talent' recognition in Singapore's competitive labour market. While most of Singapore's transnational casino employees are contractual workers who provide wage-based labour, many buy into the speculative discourse of gaining strong personal and career development by engaging with the thriving gaming economy in the region and strengthening the prospect of becoming a marketable 'global professional'. Just as Ang argues in her study of Chinese migrant men in Singapore (Chapter Five in this volume), being 'transnational, transcultural, and globalized' is important for migrant professionals in the casinos to

demonstrate their economic success and global mobility. Regardless of their individual backgrounds and experiences, most of the casino employees in this study highlighted the importance of professional skills and attitudes as key aspects of maintaining professionalism in their workplace. Further, the maintenance of professionalism is a central strategy many used to negotiate and make peace with the morally ambiguous nature of casino work.

Professionalism has always been interpreted as an occupational and normative value, intrinsic to upholding the work ethic and the moral conduct of workers (Evetts, 2013, p. 782). While professionalism carries different meanings and entails different practices and values for different kinds of work, it serves as both a value system and an ideology that assesses both the quality of service and the performance of workers to a set of collectively shared professional standards and expectations. In the casino and gaming sectors, in general, the usual standards of working in the hospitality industry apply. Qualities such as commitment, competence, teamwork, emotional self-control, and strong interpersonal and problem-solving skills are expected as the norm (see Cheng and Wong, 2015). In Singapore's casinos, employees also understood professionalism to entail possessing the right kinds of customer service skills and proper attitudes particular to working in the casinos and related sectors. Jon, a Filipino guest service officer, shared that he and his colleagues could work with ultra-rich VIP guests on some days and heavily indebted gamblers on other occasions. Dealing with these different types of guests required experience and special skills. Some VIP guests were demanding and a few of them complained excessively over nothing, Jon said, but as a professional, he needed to remain patient, respond to every request with a smile, and never show his true feelings when he was annoyed or offended. Jon remembered vividly that a VIP guest from Hong Kong, who was particularly mean to him, had commented on his skin colour and how seeing his (dark-skinned) face would bring bad luck in gambling. Jon said that he maintained professionalism and let the comment pass, and eventually impressed this guest with high quality service. When the guest left, he gave Jon a tip of S$5000 as a reward. Jon and his colleagues said that VIP guests were of course difficult to handle, but if they were happy with the service, they also liked to tip generously to commend good work. There might be additional perks too, such as free tickets to concerts, casino chips, and other freebies and gifts. Being professional sometimes came with big rewards – money, gifts, and the recognition from guests and the employer. But this was not the main reason why professionalism was so important, Jon maintained. For him, it was a source of pride and confidence, a value he held on to when he felt mistreated or misrecognized.

Peilin, a young Chinese card dealer in her early twenties, talked especially about the skills needed when she had to deal with individuals who clearly had a problem with gambling. Prior to being a card dealer in Singapore, she did not have any experience in card dealing or working in a casino. She simply thought this might be an interesting job for her to do when she was young, as she held rather romantic notions of being a card dealer after watching Hong Kong films such as *God of Gambling* since childhood. She realized that casino work was not glamorous like what she saw in the films, and that not all guests were like those portrayed in *God of Gambling*. She said that the most difficult customers were not those who were superstitious or rude, or those who tried to cheat, but those who looked desperate and like they were no longer enjoying the game but were compelled to gamble in the hope of recovering loss. Peilin said that she could hardly watch when individuals who became desperate continued to play at her table, with bloodshot eyes and only a few chips left. She felt sympathetic and wanted to tell them to stop, but she knew she could not do it. She said that at first she would still try to persuade these players to have a short break for a change of luck. Now, she said, it would be pointless to do this, and it was not part of her job to be concerned. She just needed to deal her cards in the most professional manner possible, to remain level-headed and sharp. This, she reasoned, would be best and fairest for all the guests at her table.

For casinos workers like Jon and Peilin, the notion of professionalism plays an important part in how they perform at work and construct their professional identity. This notion maintains distinct professional values and moral obligations for employees, such as Jon and Peilin, to be efficient, effective, well trained, and able to perform 'emotional labour' as required. In a curious way, the ability to maintain emotional detachment allows casino employees to perform 'emotional labour' in a more effective way. Workers like Jon and Peilin had to learn to hide or suppress their negative feelings or personal views and attitudes regarding customer behaviours as these emerged, so they could continue to be pleasant and be courteous in the workplace. In the case of Jon, he needed to detach emotions of annoyance and indignation in order to maintain politeness and patience with a smile. For Peilin, she needed to also perform emotional detachment to remove feelings of care, concern and, to a certain extent, guilt in order to remain 'level-headed' and unaffected to do her work professionally.

In studies of emotional management in the professional workplace, scholars point out that the notion of professionalism is often associated with characteristics such as commitment, autonomy, expertise, self-discipline, and detachment (Harris, 2002; Lewis, 2005). Taking a Foucauldian approach,

Fournier (1999) regarded professionalism as a disciplinary mechanism in occupational contexts. This mechanism can be used to inculcate desirable workplace identities, conducts, and relations. When professionalism is fully embraced by employees, they autonomously and voluntarily carry out 'appropriate' behaviours and defend the integrity and productivity of their work. Self-discipline and commitment, therefore, are not necessarily enforced from 'above' on the corporate management chain; they are exercised as a moral requirement when employees feel they are themselves accountable to the successful operation of the business.

In this context, emotional management itself becomes intrinsic to one's professional identity, and to one's sense of moral conduct. In Harris' study of barristers in the UK (2002), one of the hallmarks of professional behaviour and competence is the suppression of emotions. For employees like Jon and Peilin, expressions of anger or sympathy could lead to serious questioning of their professionalism and service capability. They have to deliberately detach themselves from casino work on a daily basis, to emotionally distance themselves from their clients, and to stop 'caring'. At the same time, they still need to actively deliver services in an engaged, thoughtful manner appropriate to the nature of their work. Such practices often create internal tensions and conflicts when employees aspire to become more professional about what they have encountered and experienced in the workplace, which also means that they have to actively suppress how they truly feel. This active detachment blurs moral boundaries when employees lose their innate and spontaneous understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Consequently, casino employees develop new notions of acceptable, proper, and necessary ways of maintaining a professional career.

Practising Strategic Moralities

In Wiegratz and Cesnulyte's article (2016) on the changing moral economies of earning a living in east Africa, they discussed how money became the prevailing logic among African traders and sex workers. In the changing moral context of neoliberal economic restructuring and systemic fraud and corruption, when everyday livelihoods become difficult to maintain in the 'normal' way, the less privileged individuals turn to embrace crude pragmatism, short-termism, opportunism, and self-interest as an adjustment to the speedy monetization of life. The moral economies of earning a living therefore justify the otherwise illicit or taboo practices, such as the sex trade, when survival logics dictate how people think and what people do in the

broader context. They also note the 'trickling down' of moral practices and justifications used by the more powerful individuals and organizations, and how these become examples for the less powerful groups to rationalize their own practices. If the President, elite politicians, and business tycoons all 'do it', these African traders reason, what they do can be considered morally acceptable as well (Wiegratz and Cesnulyte, 2016, p. 11). Self-interest is taken as a 'default moral position' and earning a living becomes the legitimate ground for people to do things they would otherwise not do.

The moral economies of earning a living can find similarity in the casino workplace in Singapore. Instead of a survival discourse, in Singapore this is replaced by aspirations of having a promising global career. Many of the casino workers do not face extreme economic difficulties that warrant extreme measures of survival; they do, however, face the pressure to maintain secure employment and to excel in the competitive labour market. The 'trickling down' of moral justifications also takes place in the casino workplace when employees adopt a similar strategy of making exception that mirrors the ethicalization of the casino. A Singaporean employee, Emily, who was working for one casino's rewards membership program, reasoned that if the conservative government had already decided that the opening of casinos was not a big deal, she should not be too concerned by it either. As a Christian, Emily initially felt a bit uneasy with what she had to do – market and sell the rewards membership to casual players to encourage them to gamble more in order to enjoy greater rewards; gradually, however, she became used to it through conscious emotional distancing and detachment. In our conversation, she constantly referred back to the thorough casino regulations instituted by the government, and the professional conduct she had kept up (e.g. in the sense that she would not approach those who were obviously addicted to gambling, and 'poor' foreign guest workers who had no money). In doing so, she also 'ethicalized' her own work and practice in the casino venue. Moreover, Emily said that this job was not meant to be a long-term career, and she wanted to go overseas in a few years, possibly to Australia. Her work experience in the Singapore casino would be a critical step toward this dream. In light of her future professional advancement, Emily felt what she had been doing was necessary, and after a while it became attractive and glamorous as she got to know some wealthy members and received higher commissions to be able to afford some luxuries herself.

Emily might be an example of how self-advancement could be used as a legitimate ground for moral justification. There were more employees who justified their work by claiming that it was for their families. Many migrant employees talked about the lack of work security and residential status in

Singapore, especially in recent years when the immigration policies grew more and more restrictive (see Zhang, Yeoh, and Ramdas, 2017). In addition, local employees invariably talked about intensified labour competition brought about by the arrival of migrant workers, the rising cost of living, and the increased difficulties of feeding their families. Such a precarious environment became one of the key reasons why many casino employees stayed with the job despite stress, tiredness, and unhappiness. Vanessa, for example, thought that staying with the job was both a pragmatic choice (i.e. for good income and more secure status) and a sacrifice for her family. The 'sinful job' she had to do could potentially bring her children to Singapore, and this was all that mattered for her to go on. 'I am not gambling', she said, 'as long as I am doing the job, I am doing it for the purpose of earning a living for my family, I think it would be okay with God'.

In Hoang's study (2016) of the moral dilemmas of Vietnamese female migrants in Taiwan, she noted the 'strategic moralities' adopted by these migrants to undo the damages brought about by these women's migration. Being a provider and sending remittances were not enough to make a migrant woman a good mother anymore, and she had to become 'morally virtuous' by making a series of self-sacrifices (e.g. romantic love, health, food) for the sake of the family. Alipio's ethnographic account (Chapter Eight in this volume) of the complex exchanges of material goods and remittances between migrant parents and their left-behind children in the Philippines also demonstrates that money sent home symbolizes not only material provision but also love, care, and parental responsibility through the prevailing discourse of sacrifice. Similar 'strategic moralities' can be found in Singapore's casino workplace, when both men and women highlight their self-sacrifices in order to be perceived as morally virtuous. This was a particularly salient discourse among Filipino migrant employees, who maintained that they had to do what was necessary for their families back home.

Jason, a staff member of the casino surveillance department, said that he had made sacrifices for his two children in the Philippines. Before working in the casino, he was a computer programmer for a local IT company. When the casino started to recruit, he decided to switch professions, although he said he was morally against casinos and gambling. But this was not a decision for him, Jason said; it was for the family, because the salary was much higher. Working in the surveillance department was not easy, especially during night shifts, also known as the 'graveyard shifts', when he had to stay awake and alert during the entire eight-hour shift. Many locals did not want to do 'graveyard shifts', and he said that he did not mind doing more to get the higher pay. The 'graveyard shifts' were terrible for his physical and

mental health. The prolonged lack of sleep and the reliance on caffeinated drinks to keep him awake at night placed a heavy toll on his overall sense of well-being. What he observed in the casinos was not helping either. Almost every night, there would be some sort of unpleasant incident he had noticed – 'those cheaters like to attack [at] midnight!' – and he had to send security guards to deal with these situations. Sometimes he saw on camera how gamblers behaved after losing a significant amount of money, and how some of them slept in cramped spaces, such as a corner next to the washroom, so as to maximize gambling time inside the casino, yet he felt powerless. On some occasions the usually effective 'just doing my job' motto became useless when he felt overcome by a sense of guilt. He wanted to quit in these moments of crisis, but eventually he decided to stay on for a few more years. He hoped that if he could be promoted to a more senior position in Singapore, he could find a decent job in one of Manila's casinos in the near future to be closer to his family.

As a devout Catholic, Jason also described the casino as a place of sin, and that he was 'earning money in a sinful place' and 'earning money from them [the gamblers] as well'. But he tried to give more meaning and purpose to his job – 'If I gamble, or if I let somebody inside the casino to cheat, that's the time I am accountable … My job is to monitor those people who are taking advantage of other people [on the table]'. By staying away from gambling himself, Jason maintained a sense of moral integrity for not personally doing something 'sinful'. He also highlighted that his job was to catch the cheaters so they would not be able to take advantage of others – a small victory to ensure some sort of justice and fairness when gamblers play. 'Catching the bad guys' to protect the interest of other guests became an important justification for him to make moral claims about his faith and professional conduct. He believed that if he did his job well, he would not be deemed as complicit in partaking in the 'sin' in the eyes of God.

Conclusion

In the past decade, the sudden 'Asian casino boom' (Chan, 2012) has brought strong economic development as well as new job opportunities for thousands looking for new career prospects across the region. As a new global industry that continues to evolve and expand, the emergence of Asian casinos has reshaped the regional political economy, experiences of urban life, and questions of morality. These multi-billion-dollar casinos constructed across the region attracted headlines and generated heated debate in local

societies about both the industry's economically beneficial and its morally destructive potentials. The new ultra-modern casino development deliberately differentiates itself from the traditional gambling dens that evoke an impression of sleaze and crime, lawlessness and underground activities. The casino resorts of today are often depicted by the state as cosmopolitan establishments housing multiple economic activities related to tourism, entertainment, hospitality, conferencing, and exhibitions. In many of the new casino destination countries, casino resorts have been fully incorporated in the national leisure economy as nation-states strive to 'modernize' and 'cosmopolitanize' a new national image, to generate revenue, and to boost employment and productivity. In this process, the moral discourse of casinos' potential harm has been deliberately weakened or rendered insignificant. The cosmopolitan image, substantial foreign investment, and the prospect of increased employment are now reshaping not only the direction of local economic development, but also the political and ethical dimensions of social life.

Against this background, much of the public and academic attention continues to be placed on the macro-economic aspects of casino development. Limited debates on its benefits and drawbacks are often top-down and discussed from a state perspective. They are largely detached from the day-to-day lived experiences and actual practices of individuals whose lives are intertwined with the successes and failures of the casino development. But it is precisely these locally situated practices and experiences that help to contextualize the real impact of the casino industry in different settings with unique politics of profit and morality.

This chapter highlights the professional experiences and moral claims of casino workers in Singapore. Many battle with internal struggles and conflicts, and use strategies, such as emotional suppression and detachment, to perform the necessary emotional labour needed to present as a professional. The value and ideology of professionalism has a strong hold on many of these workers, inculcating them to be more compliant, adaptable, and self-disciplinary. These workers also exercise strategic moralities to assert virtuous claims on what they do in their daily encounters in the casino workplace. Some workers downplay the morally ambiguous nature of the casino work, and stress that they are doing this for their family, for loved ones, and for a better future. Family responsibility and self-interest are both legitimate causes for these casino workers to make moral exceptions and justify what they do as necessary and morally acceptable because 'it's our job'. Singapore's casino workers, like Vanessa, Peilin, Emily, and Jason, show how individuals learn to negotiate ethical dilemmas with practical

choices and decision-making. Their moral dilemmas emerge from, just as Alipio and Hoang argue, 'profound social transformations' and 'the inner contradictions of global capital' (Chapter 1 in this volume, p. 22). As casino employees recode their moral values through a similar logic of 'making exception', they actively contribute to the moral economy of the casino in Singapore.

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3. Mobility and Flexible Moralities

Insights from the Case Study of Vietnamese Market Traders in Moscow

Lan Anh Hoang

Abstract
The majority of the estimated 150,000 Vietnamese in Russia are irregular migrants with no prospects for permanent settlement or naturalisation. Post-communist Russia, with a volatile economy, a restrictive (and heavily corrupt) migration regime and disturbing levels of hostility towards foreign migrants, proves to be a particularly unwelcoming host society. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted at Moscow wholesale markets between 2013 and 2016, this chapter discusses how meanings and values of money change in a context people's radius of trust is disrupted by their physical displacement and the routinisation of uncertainty. When moral grounds for social interactions cannot be taken for granted, money emerges as a new 'anchor' in and benchmark for transnational relationships.

Keywords: migration, uncertainty, morality, money, Vietnam, Russia

Introduction

A new migratory system has emerged since the end of the Cold War with post-Soviet Russia at its core. There were over eleven million international migrants in the country as of 2013, making it the second-largest destination in the world, after the United States (UN, 2013). The majority of immigrants come from former Soviet Union countries, which have been reorganized into a more loosely structured Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that CIS migrants accounted for 53 per cent of all international migrants in Russia in 2006

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DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH03

(IOM, 2008, p. 26). Although migration within the CIS has been subjected to tighter control since the early 1990s, it is still relatively easy for migrants to circulate within the bloc because of visa-free regimes and bilateral trade agreements, as well as the extensive transportation networks, Russian language proficiency, and cultural affinity developed during the Soviet era. In a context where demographic decline is estimated to be about 750,000 per annum and considered as a major threat to national security (Herd and Sargsyan, 2007, p. 51), further growth in immigration is both imperative and inevitable.

Official statistics, however, do not capture irregular migrants. It is estimated that up to 70–80 per cent of population movement to Russia is of an irregular nature (Ivakhnyuk, 2009; Zayonchkovskaya, 1999). While CIS citizens, particularly those from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Ukraine, account for more than two thirds of irregular migrants (Ryazantsev, 2010), Chinese and Vietnamese populations are believed to have a higher ratio of irregular migrants (IOM, 2008, p. 55). Given the Russian state's tight control over population movements during the Soviet era, non- CIS immigration of a spontaneous nature started to surge at a conspicuous scale only after the Soviet Union's dissolution in the 1990s. According to the 2002 Census, non- CIS immigrants accounted for 3.9 per cent of the total number of twelve million foreign-born individuals in Russia (IOM, 2008, p. 18). As of 2006, China was the leading source of non-CIS migration (20.79 per cent), followed by Turkey (10 per cent) and Vietnam (6.81 per cent) (IOM, 2008, p. 20). Earning their living primarily from market trade, Vietnamese and Chinese migrants dominate the unregulated retail sector that caters to the lower-middle and working classes across Russia. With a strong entrepreneurial spirit, mercantile ingenuity, dexterity, and industriousness, they galvanized the post-Soviet Russian consumer market that was being hamstrung by a sluggish domestic manufacturing sector.

Post-Soviet Russia, with a fragile economy, an extremely restrictive (and heavily corrupt) migration regime (Gavrilova, 2001; Yudina, 2005), and disturbing levels of hostility toward foreign migrants (Alexseev, 2011; see Tishkov, Zayonchkovskaya, and Vitkovskaya, 2005, p. 23; Yudina, 2005, p. 597), proves to be a particularly unwelcoming host society. In such an inhospitable environment, the ghettoization of irregular migrants in isolated ethnic enclaves both results from and further entrenches their exclusion from Russian society, which has yet to fully recover from the social mayhem following the fall of the Soviet Union. The liberal economic reforms implemented since the 1990s have generated remarkable levels of wealth and mobility within society and yet render life more uncertain, even precarious,

for many. With price liberalisation, market deregulation, and privatisation came inflation, unemployment, and the degeneration of the manufacturing sector (Burawoy, Krotov, and Lytkina, 2000). To cope with the unpredictable ups and downs of the post-Soviet market economy, working-class families sought to diversify risks by expanding their livelihood portfolios, engaging in new forms of trade, service, and petty commodity production.

A parallel process was underway in Vietnam in the 1990s–2000s, albeit without a regime change. Following the introduction of *Đổi mới*[1] reforms in the late 1980s, Vietnam went from one of the 40 poorest and least-developed countries in the world to the second biggest rice exporter with an average growth rate of 7.6 per cent per annum (APEC, 2002). Hunger was substantially reduced, and the poverty rate was halved from 60 per cent in 1990 to 29 per cent in 2002 (Akardie et al., 2010). Yet, the impressive economic growth and the unprecedented income-generating opportunities it generated disproportionately benefited those with education, skills, and connections to the communist regime, widening the gap between the elites and those without these crucial forms of cultural and social capital. The abolition of state subsidies in agricultural production, education, healthcare, and many other social benefits was accompanied by consistently high inflation rates, low productivity, and under-employment. More than one-fifth of the population still lives under the international poverty line of US$1.25 per day and most pockets of poverty remain in rural areas (Badiani et al., 2013). Problems of under- and unemployment are particularly acute in places where the intense population pressure on limited arable land has long rendered subsistence farming unviable. In a context where the return on farming is marginal and yet off-farm income-generating opportunities are few and far between, transnational migration for work becomes an obvious choice for many.

Scholars have cautioned against framing contemporary Russia and Vietnam (as well as China and other post-socialist societies in Eastern Europe) as neoliberal despite the fact that a market economy is now firmly in place in both countries (Kipnis, 2007; Nonini, 2008; Schwenkel and Leshkowich, 2012; Zhang, 2012). They point out the continuity of socialist political visions and notions of personhood and instead argue for greater attention to the articulations of socialism and neoliberalism in social practice and moral subjectivities. There is no doubt, nonetheless, that the expansion of the market economy has brought about new modes of work and new styles of

1 *Đổi mới* ('Renovation') refers to the economic reforms launched in Vietnam in 1986, moving the country from the command economy to a 'socialist-oriented market economy'.

being (Wilson, 2004, p. 191). With the retraction of the state's responsibility for social protection, one is expected to exercise techniques of self-management and self-discipline – the hallmarks of a morally appropriate, neoliberal personhood (Schwenkel and Leshkowich, 2012, p. 380) – and be accountable for one's own success or failure in life. The market economy is often associated with individual freedom and choice but also fraught with risks and uncertainties, demanding flexibility and reflexivity in social practice. In this chapter, I am not going to dwell on the question of whether the Russian state's migration policies and governance could be characterized as neoliberal, but am instead concerned with the neoliberal technologies of the self that are deployed by migrants in post-socialist contexts.

The Russian state's ambivalent attitude to foreign migrants (i.e. maintaining restrictive immigration policies on the one hand and turning a blind eye to the growing presence of irregular migrants on the other) leaves them in a perpetual state of uncertainty and precarity. The routinization of uncertainty in everyday life is both productive and destructive for social relationships. The particular life circumstances and social relationships that uncertainty engenders transform people's sense of place, space, and identity in the most profound manner. I am particularly concerned with the various ways in which money is implicated in people's navigation of market life. Money, Zelizer (1997, p. 19) notes, is a socially created currency, 'subject to particular networks of social relations and its own set of values and norms'. To begin with, I review conceptual debates on uncertainty to emphasize its power in shaping our ways of life, as well as our meaning-making of self and the world. This is followed by a brief outline of the research context and my methodological approach. In my analysis of the case study of Vietnamese migrants in Moscow, I scrutinize how men and women negotiate the tensions between personal aspirations, everyday survival, and the most fundamental moral values that are central to what is seen as authentic 'Vietnameseness'.

Uncertainty and the Self in Transition

Migration and mobilities provide opportunities for challenging pre-existing and emerging identities and social relations (Van de Veer, 1995). Migration, as various scholars have pointed out, is a process fraught with emotional disruptions and disconnections (Hoang and Yeoh, 2012, p. 311; Huang and Yeoh, 2007, p. 197; Skrbiš, 2008, p. 236), which are not just triggered by the physical separation from one's intimate environment and networks, but also by the uncertainty, anxiety, and stress associated with their embarkation

into the unknown. Such shifts in one's emotional, social, and material milieu inevitably prompt the responses and behaviours that are not necessarily consistent with their normative frame of reference, challenging the most fundamental values that underpin their sense of personhood.

Uncertainty has become a dominant trope, an 'inevitable force' (Johnson-Hanks, 2005, p. 366) in the subjective experience of contemporary life. Uncertainty shapes people's ways of knowing and being (Cooper and Pratten, 2014). It is both a structural force and a social imaginary, an objective as well as a subjective experience, that shapes individuals' dispositions to social practices. There is a growing recognition that the common theorization of social action as the fulfilment of a prior intention (or a rational calculation) (Schutz, 1967; Searle, 1983) is not necessarily applicable to complex situations of uncertainty and insecurity, especially in developing and transitional societies. Likewise, Bourdieu's (1990) notion of 'habitus', which, as the system of dispositions to a certain practice, as an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, is not always the most fitting framework for understanding human behaviour in today's world. The main assumption of the habitus is that much of human behaviour follows regular modes of practice and is thus predictable. That is, agents equipped with the habitus behave in a certain way in certain circumstances. Empirical studies in the developing world have, nevertheless, pointed out that social action in situations of lived or perceived uncertainties are not necessarily attributable to a prior intention or to regular, predictable modes of practice. In Cameroon, where everyday life is unpredictable and inconsistent, for example, Johnson-Hanks (2005) observes that social action is not based on the fulfilment of prior intentions, but on judicious opportunism. In other words, people just grasp at whatever is available in the present when projections of future perfects prove particularly tenuous (Johnson-Hanks, 2005, p. 366).

This is, I emphasize, not to totally discount predictable, routinized behaviours in the context of Vietnamese migration to Russia. In a climate riddled with fear, distrust, anxiety, and insecurity, the social structures that serve as preconditions for routinized behaviours are disabled or disrupted, compelling greater degrees of noncompliance, deviancy, and delinquency. Boundaries are pushed and social values reset in response to social contingencies. Over time, the deviant becomes the new normal. As a conceptual tool, uncertainty is often used in its negative and inhibitive sense in association with opacity, risk, insecurity, instability, and the inability to predict the outcome of events or actions (Berthomé, Bonhomme, and Delaplace, 2012; Cooper and Pratten, 2014). As such, it is a problem with the potential to disrupt and distress lives. The sense of crisis and

unpredictability legitimates and reinforces both the interpretation of the world as uncertain and behaviour that contributes to that uncertainty (Johnson-Hanks, 2005, p. 366).

Uncertainty, however, has also been seen as having positive and productive impacts on people's social lives (Cooper and Pratten, 2014). There is rich empirical evidence of how uncertainty is used as a social resource to negotiate insecurity, to conduct or even create relationships, and to project the future (Berthomé, Bonhomme, and Delaplace, 2012; de Vienne, 2012). As the basis for curiosity and exploration, uncertainty 'can call forth considered action to change both the situation and the self', bringing about new social landscapes and social horizons (Whyte, 2009: 214). Yet, as a ground for action, uncertainty fashions unique dispositions, a particular mood of action. With his or her lived experiences of uncertainty, the subject approaches the present and the future with doubt, hope, caution, tentativeness, and provisionalness. This so-called 'subjunctive mood' of action (Whyte, 2005) becomes a basis for regular modes of behaviour, often with significant material and social effects.

The decision to use uncertainty as a conceptual tool in this chapter is informed by empirical studies on the Russian immigration regime and its impact on migrants' lives (Davé, 2014; Hoang, 2015). It is estimated that there are up to 150,000 Vietnamese migrants in Russia, but the vast majority of them are undocumented (Nožina, 2010, p. 229). While the Vietnamese population is predicted to continue to grow in the years to come (Ivakhnyuk, 2008; Rybakovsky and Ryazantsev, 2005, p. 14), there are no signs that Russian immigration policies will become more open and welcoming to non-CIS citizens, at least in the foreseeable future. The precarious life of irregular migrants in Russia, as discussed in the following section of the chapter, has been aggravated further by the 2014–2015 crisis in Ukraine and the economic sanctions that ensued. Their significant demographic size notwithstanding, academic literature on Vietnamese migrants in Russia is almost non-existent, except for some brief remarks in policy-oriented quantitative studies conducted by Russian scholars (Ivakhnyuk, 2008; Kamenskiy, 2002; S. Ryazantsev, 2005). The lack of empirical knowledge about such a large group of transient migrants in the volatile political and economic conditions of Russia cripples our ability to respond to the challenges posed by the situation.

The unique situation of Vietnamese migrants in Russian society offers an opportunity to understand how mobility and uncertainty reshape the social values and moral subjectivities, which are deeply rooted in the Vietnamese kinship system and communal life. In my analysis, I place a special emphasis

on the meanings and purpose of money in social relationships. The study deepens our understanding of processes of mobility and social change in post-communist societies that continue to grapple with yawning chasms between old and new ways of life, policy and practice, and obsolete governance techniques and rapidly changing economic conditions.

Research Context and Methodology

The history of Vietnamese migration to Russia is tightly linked to Cold War geopolitics, starting in the mid-1950s when small numbers of students, mostly war orphans and children of communist cadres, were sent to Russia for higher education and vocational training. Student migration picked up gradually in the 1960s–1970s, but significant increases in the Vietnamese population started only from the early 1980s, when war-torn and debt-stricken Vietnam began to export labour, first to the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, and later to other Eastern European countries, to meet its obligations to COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance)[2] under bilateral agreements (Piper, 2002, p. 9). Official records indicate that a total of 217,183 Vietnamese citizens were employed as contract workers in the Eastern European socialist bloc over the 1981–1990 period and 42 per cent of them, or 92,000, were female (MOLISA, 1995). They mostly worked in construction, mechanics, textiles, garment production, agriculture, health care, and education (Nguyen, 2009, p. 10).

The collapse of communist regimes across Eastern Europe in the late 1980s–early 1990s caused a sudden halt to labour imports from Vietnam. Political unrest, unemployment, and intensified nationalist sentiments (which at times escalated to xenophobic and racist backlashes) as well as official repatriation programmes drove large numbers of Vietnamese workers home. By the end of 1991, approximately 80 per cent of workers had left Eastern Europe (Dang, Tacoli, and Hoang, 2003, p. 12), yet many subsequently found their way back when confronted with the harsh realities of the then-struggling Vietnamese economy. Students and workers who chose to stay formed the backbone of the Vietnamese diasporic networks in Eastern Europe that have been continually expanding ever since. New immigrants often arrive under student or tourist visas acquired through

2 COMECON (1949–1991) was an economic organization comprising Eastern European socialist countries and their socialist allies in other parts of the world that focused on economic assistance from wealthier members to less developed ones.

sophisticated brokerage networks. Because a substantial proportion of migration to post-Soviet Russia is of a clandestine nature, it is impossible to accurately gauge the size of the Vietnamese population in Russia, and estimates vary widely. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2008, p. 25), there were around 69,076 Vietnamese people in Russia as of 2008. However, this figure does not include irregular migrants, whether in transit or living in Russia on a long-term basis, as well as shuttle and seasonal traders. Russia's Federal Ministry of Labour considers Vietnam as one of the leading sources of irregular migration to Russia, alongside the Caucasus, Central Asian countries, and China (ICMPD, 2006). In 2007, the Vietnamese government estimated that there were between 80,000 and 100,000 Vietnamese nationals in Russia[3]. A more recent source suggests that there are up to 150,000 Vietnamese immigrants in Russia (Nožina, 2010, p. 229). If this is correct, the Vietnamese in Russia make up half of the Vietnamese population in the former Eastern European socialist bloc (Committee for Overseas Vietnamese, 2005; Williams and Balaz, 2005).

Vietnamese migrants in Russia, like their compatriots in Eastern and Central Europe, mostly engage in market trade (Drbohlav et al., 2008; Romaniszyn, 1997; Rybakovsky and Ryazantsev, 2005; Williams and Balaz, 2005). Kamenskiy (2002, p. 94) estimates that 91.6 per cent of Vietnamese migrants in Russia generate their incomes from trade and commerce, often without work permits, a figure much higher than what is reported for Central and Eastern European countries (about 70 per cent) (Williams and Balaz, 2005, p. 545). The heavy concentration of the Vietnamese in market trade in contemporary Russia is largely driven by a restrictive and exclusionary migration regime that keeps formal employment opportunities beyond their reach. This all started from the imbalance between the growing consumer demand and the sluggish domestic manufacturing industry in command economies of Eastern Europe, leading enterprising Vietnamese migrants to engage in 'suitcase trade', smuggling consumer goods into Russia through air travel. Transnational trade in consumer goods became particularly profitable following the disintegration of the USSR, when the light industry fell apart while formal international channels of commerce had not been established (Larin, 2012, p. 41). As a legacy of the Cold War relationship between the communist regimes of Vietnam and the Soviet Union, Vietnamese migration to Russia (and other Eastern European countries) is predominantly from

3 Sài Gòn Giải Phóng, 17 January 2007, <http://www.sggp.org.vn/chinhtri/2007/1/81930/ >, accessed 12 January 2015.

the North and North Central regions of the country. Their transnational experiences are, therefore, distinctly different from those which have been observed among Vietnamese migrants in the West, the majority of whom were refugees from South Central and Southern Vietnam.

Vietnamese migrants' lives in post-Soviet Russia are highly unpredictable, characterized by the cyclical booms and busts of market trade (which have mostly been caused by knee-jerk, reactive policy changes within the federal and Moscow governments) and routine anti-immigration crackdown campaigns. Their lack of mobility beyond the shadow economy, which is largely operated with rules akin to those of the mafia, entrenches their social marginalization and vulnerability. This is confirmed by large-scale quantitative surveys on Chinese migrant traders, who report multiple difficulties associated with exorbitant rentals, high costs of living, excessive taxes, a volatile economy, and the bad reputation of Chinese products (Larin, 2012, p. 42). Most of these difficulties are directly or indirectly attributable to the endemic corruption in state bureaucracies that presents itself in various forms at every level, namely the police's extortion and protection racketeering, excessive immigration-related charges, and graft and bribery among tax and customs officials. Migrant social lives are therefore severely circumscribed by exploitative market regimes and opportunistic criminals who enjoy a sense of impunity due to the irregular status of the migrants.

Fieldwork for this study was conducted over four years from 2013 to 2016 in Moscow, where the majority of Vietnamese migrants live. I started with in-depth interviews with 31 men and women in 2013, which were informative about their personal migration trajectories but led me to the realization that I would not be able to reach the depths of migrants' lives without embedding myself in the community and participating in their everyday lives. Access was restricted by a demanding market regime, long working hours, and migrants' irregular status that resulted in a deep distrust for strangers and (largely self-imposed) social isolation. In view of such challenges, I decided to focus mainly on ethnographic research on subsequent field trips in 2014 and 2016. Ethnography allowed me to obtain in-depth, nuanced insights into people's everyday lives with minimum intrusion into their daily routines. It also enabled me to participate in their daily activities, experience market life first-hand, and place human agency at the centre of my analysis.

The fieldwork was conducted primarily in one of Moscow's largest markets – Sadovod (*Садовод рынок*), which was about 30 kilometres south-east of Moscow city centre. Besides this, I also made regular visits to a smaller market named Yuzhnyie Vorota (*Южные ворота*); wholesale market

Liublino[4]; legal and illegal garments factories in and outside the Moscow metropolitan region; migrant traders' hostels and private homes; and the local schools that Vietnamese children were attending. In total, the study draws on daily interactions, life histories, and/or in-depth interviews with 85 individuals aged from 25 to 60 who had been living in Russia between nine months and 27 years (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Demographic profile of research participants

Sex	Male	33	**Livelihood**	Market trader	43
	Female	52		Garment workshop worker	8
Marital status	Married	65		Garment workshop owner	6
	Single	11		Nanny	6
	Divorced	5		Shop assistant	5
	Separated	3		Itinerant vendor	4
	Widowed	1		Broker	4
Migration status	Irregular	78		Odd manual jobs	5
	Permanent resident	5		Long-distance merchant	2
	Russian citizen	2		White collar workers	2

Uncertainty and Market Moralities

Life at the market is plagued by intense competition, rivalry, and distrust. Ironically, trust is more tenuous among Vietnamese fellow countrymen than between them and members of other ethnic groups, even though co-ethnic networks are their vital source of support, information, and social security. The distrust for Vietnamese compatriots is so deep and routinized it has become a new *modus operandi* for market traders, informing their choices and practices in every aspect of their transnational life, from business conduct to intimate relationships. A similar observation has been made among Chinese market traders elsewhere in Eastern and Central Europe (Pieke, Nyíri, Thuno, and Ceccagno, 2004, p. 33). While intra-ethnic misgivings could be explained by the fact that Chinese and Vietnamese migrants' social interactions rarely go beyond their respective ethnic bubbles (hence creating a greater chance of friction) due to the lack of local language proficiency, the time-intensive nature of market trade, and the ethnic segmentation of the

4 The official name of Liublino (Люблино) market is Moscow Trade Complex (Торгово-ярмарочный комплекс Москва). It is commonly referred to as Liublino market (or Chợ Liu by Vietnamese migrants) due to its proximity to the Liublino metro station

market in both spatial and mercantile terms, they were often seen by my research participants as something deep-seated in the Vietnamese 'culture' and integral to what they saw as Vietnamese personhood.

Studies on contemporary Vietnamese society suggest that marketplaces are often held in suspicion and contempt by the general public because market traders are seen as self-interested and greedy individuals who are prepared to do anything to turn a profit, even if this means going against conventional moral norms and betraying one's own conscience (Leshkowich, 2015, p. 5; Truitt, 2013, p. 44). In other words, market trade and morality are mutually exclusive. At the marketplace, economic success is, indeed, a zero-sum game, compelling many traders to scramble for every opportunity and tread on one another's toes if necessary. This is particularly true for Vietnamese traders in Moscow, who mostly specialize in garments and thus face intense competition from their compatriots. The ability to eliminate competition is critical to traders' success. Therefore, one must stay tight-lipped about the conduct of one's business and be constantly on the lookout for potential competitors. It is a self-perpetuating cycle: distrust encourages lies, which breed further distrust. '*Обман, сосед умер*!' ('If I cheat, my neighbour dies') – a witty phrase commonly used by traders in a half-joking manner – sums up market common sense: trust no one.

In the market, where money is a central concern, it seems logical that '*Hôm nay bán được không?*' ('Have you sold much today?') has become the most common way to greet each other in the market lane. Every time such a greeting is exchanged, I see an identical manufactured expression of disappointment on the other person's face, accompanied by an unconvincing headshake and a predictable response: '*Đuội lắm!*' ('Impossibly stale!'). Such a phrase has become a default response, and to say something else would potentially trigger suspicion and unease. Even friends, relatives, and intimate partners are not entirely immune to deception and distrust. Fifty-year-old Thái, for example, has given up inquiring about fellow traders' business, whether as a form of social etiquette or out of a genuine concern about their welfare. When I asked him if he knew his best friend Mạnh had been doing well recently, he bluntly responded:

> I don't know. I don't even ask him. Even if I did, he would never tell me the truth. Why should I bother then? I am myself not honest with him, so how can I expect him to be honest with me?

Since no one expects to obtain information directly from fellow traders, snooping around other stores becomes the only way to do market research,

which is often met with hostility and occasionally leads to open and violent confrontation. Unexpected visits or even chance appearances near each other's stores arouse suspicion, while the act of initiating friendly small talk along the market lane might easily be taken as an attempt to pry into people's business affairs. True to the motto 'Better safe than sorry', people even lie to each other about trivial and seemingly harmless details of their lives, such as their grocery spending. Market traders are thus in a quagmire: the constant urge to be vigilant to others' intent and to pre-empt rivalry and competition has a crippling effect on social relationships, while the failure to do so risks devastating business failure. The fragility of social relationships is illustrated by the following narrative provided by Sắc, a 45-year-old trader, who bitterly recounted the intensifying rivalry between his wife and her sister, which subsequently led them to disown each other:

> We brought her (his wife's sister) here. We advanced her some money to cover the initial expenses. She worked for us for nearly two years. We rented two stores; I was in charge of this one, and my wife and her sister looked after the second one. As soon as she (his sister-in-law) had saved enough money, she moved out and rented a store only a few doors away, selling exactly the same T-shirts sourced from the same suppliers. She was in direct competition with us. Without a doubt they got into fights. They are no longer sisters. It's tough when money is involved, right? Money is impersonal. Sisterhood does not matter.

As my fieldwork progressed, I came to the realization that Sắc's embittered fallout with his sister-in-law was not something out of the ordinary, but a common story when the routinization of uncertainty and precarity seemed to encourage and justify opportunistic, self-interested behaviours. Foul play, however, does not always go without retribution. Bad behaviours, especially involving violent confrontations, are ungraciously punished by the market management. In the narrative below, 32-year-old Nguyệt recalled with much sadness how she and her sister Linh helped a neighbour from Vietnam set up his own business at Sadovod, only to see him quickly stab them in the back:

> I helped him lease the store next door. I even gave him 10,000 roubles[5] to set it up. I told him not to source the same type of kids' clothing from the same supplier or it would be difficult for both of us. But that's exactly

5 At the time of the fieldwork in 2014, the Russian rouble–US dollar exchange rate was 36:1. Economic sanctions imposed by the West due to Russia's intervention in the conflict in Ukraine

> what he did. On many occasions, he saw people buy things from me and stopped them when they passed by his shop to offer a lower price. Then the customers came back to return the wares to me. One day, when I was still at home, my sister and a cousin became so angry, they hit him, and it escalated to a big fight. He was merciless. He used a hammer to hit the girls. They got bruises all over their faces and bodies. My husband was furious. He battered the guy badly the following day. The market security sealed off his shop for two days and made him pay my sisters 20,000 roubles as a compensation for the injuries. He was then beaten up by the security guards. It got so brutal we had to beg them for mercy on him. Two days out of business – it cost him a fortune, you know.

The guards' corporal punishment, indeed, paled in comparison with the temporary closure of the store. With staggering rental rates ranging from RUB330,000 to 600,000 (US$10,000–18,000) per month for a 20-square-metre store as of April 2014, stores must be kept open for long hours every day, rain or shine, or traders would not be able to sustain such exorbitant rental rates. When I asked her why she was not taking a day off to recover from a severe bout of flu, Trang – my host – cried: 'How can I afford it? I wake up every day to the thought, "I must make at least $500 today to break even!"' While a small number of traders, especially those working at Liublino market, are relatively successful, most just manage to generate a small margin of profit, and many count themselves lucky if they earn enough to get by. Such an exploitative market regime is both an antecedent and outcome of the discrepancy between Russia's exclusionary migration regime and the insatiable demand for foreign labour and goods. With their lives and businesses perpetually on the line, migrant traders are compelled to redefine their values and priorities in an effort to keep risks and uncertainties at bay, yet inadvertently render their situations even more uncertain and precarious in so doing.

The lax morals observed in Moscow markets are not simply driven by traders' perception of the marketplace as amoral or immoral, as indoctrinated by Marxist and Leninist ideologies (Humphrey and Mandel, 2002, p. 2; Kaneff, 2002, p. 34; Leshkowich, 2015, p. 5). Rather, they are an inevitable outgrowth of a political economic system in which vulnerabilities and uncertainties are legitimated and routinized. In the contemporary world, Lemke (2002, p. 58) points out, 'what appears to be a reduction of state sovereignty and territorial integrity is actually a fundamental transformation in statehood

led to a sharp drop in the rouble's value within a year. At the time of writing, as of 23 November 2015, the exchange rate stood at 65:1.

whereby state and non-state actors co-exist on the scene of government and techniques of government are constituted by both formal and informal elements'. The emergence of powerful oligarchs in post-Soviet Russia has enabled the so-called 'subpolitics' (see Beck, 1996, p. 18) to flourish and bypass or even contravene the law and state jurisdiction in many sectors. In exchange for their support and alignment with the government, former President Boris Yeltsin and, later, President Vladimir Putin granted the oligarchs privileged, albeit ad-hoc, access to federal politics and turned a blind eye to their illegal business practices. Moscow wholesale markets are prime examples of how such subpolitics shape Russian society and economy from below. Thanks to their strong connections with political elites, market owners are able to acquire land for a trifling amount of money and then lease it to migrant traders at an exorbitant rate. Such an exploitative regime is only possible because migrant traders' mobility and agency are strictly circumscribed by their irregular status. A large proportion of market revenue is funnelled into the Russian bureaucratic system through hefty 'protection fees' paid to police and security forces and generous bribes offered to Moscow and federal government officials so they turn a blind eye to illegal practices within the market, exempting it from the rules and regulations applicable to mainstream Russian society.

In the face of insecurity and vulnerability, people's preoccupation with money and the deviant behaviours that this emboldens seem to be easily justified and tolerated. The erosion of trust is commonly observed across migrant communities in the transitional economies of Eastern and Central Europe, where changeable legislation and inadequate law enforcement deny individuals the accountability, rights, and protection that they require (e.g., Benton and Pieke, 1998; Bui, 2003; Chang and Rucker-Chang, 2012; Davé, 2014; Feige and Ott, 1999; Nožina, 2010). Commitments are breached and laws are broken with impunity, occasionally compelling individuals to take the law into their own hands: factory owners suddenly disappear without a trace, taking with them months of unpaid wages; debtors cut and run when loans are due; unscrupulous brokers charge a fortune for forged documents or run away with advance payments; and business partners swindle one another out of their lifetime savings. Seeking legal redress in such situations is out of the question for many migrants because of their irregular status. Even if they have recourse to legal processes, the corrupt justice system would be a strong enough deterrent to prevent them from pressing ahead with their quest for justice. In most situations, the only two options available to them are to hire criminal gangs to settle the affair on their behalf or to accept the damages and move on.

In a sense, the practices described in this section appear to confirm the utilitarian view of money as an impersonal instrument that replaces personal bonds with calculative instrumental ties and distorts individuals' sense of moral self (Habermas, 1991; Marx, 1975; Simmel, 2011). Money, it is argued, has the irresistible power to homogenize and flatten social ties, rendering social life cold, distant, and calculating (see Zelizer, 1997, p. 2). A fixation on money is seen as intrinsically immoral and, therefore, moralities and market trade are incompatible. Money fetishism, according to Marx (1990, 1993), is the most 'glaring' form of commodity fetishism in Western societies. Yet, the fixation on money among Vietnamese traders in Moscow can hardly be characterized as money fetishism. Neither can it be associated with commodity fetishism. Without exception, the migrants in my study maintain a frugal and minimalist lifestyle, even if they have lived in Russia for decades. They make every effort to scrimp and scrape, minimizing their economic investments in Russia, so that they can pack their bags and leave any time without hurting their pocket. The fact that money and money-making have become central to migrants' lives, I argue, is essentially informed by a keen sense of vulnerability felt at the market. In this context, a preoccupation with money expresses a rational, conscious strategy of constrained agents to cushion themselves against risks and uncertainties. The 'uncompromising objectivity' (Simmel, 2011) and transferability of money makes it an ideal anchor for those whose life is in a continual state of flux.

Money Matters in the Vietnamese Moral Economy

Nevertheless, the preoccupation with money does not stop migrants from making efforts to socialize, establish alliances, and engage in intimate relationships. In my previous studies, I have pointed out that migrant networks could be a curse and a boon at the same time for the Vietnamese, especially those in precarious and vulnerable situations (Hoang, 2011, 2016). In this part of the chapter, I shift my attention from the service and disservice of migrant networks to the various ways money has emerged as a linchpin holding social ties together. The monetization of relationships, I point out, enables migrants to establish new ties and nurture existing ones, creating new spaces of co-dependence, resilience, and personal autonomy. Yet, it also works as a double-edged sword, replacing trust, compassion, and empathy with impersonal, detached cost–benefit calculations, reproducing and deepening precarities and vulnerabilities in people's transnational lives.

In an edited volume on the transnational family, Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) coined two notions to describe the strategies that migrants pursue in their social life, namely 'frontiering' and 'relativizing'. 'Frontiering' refers to 'the ways and means transnational family members use to create familial space and network ties in a terrain where affinal connections are relatively sparse', while 'relativizing' is the manner by which 'individuals establish, maintain or curtail relational ties with specific family members' (*ibid.*, p. 11, 14). While both concepts are fitting in the context of Vietnamese traders in Moscow, the manner and means by which relationships are developed, sustained, or shunned in this context are fundamentally different from what has been observed by transnational studies elsewhere, including my own (e.g., Dreby, 2010; Gamburd, 2000; Hoang and Yeoh, 2015; Thai, 2014). Most of the traders I came into contact with made a persistent attempt to distance themselves from familial connections because of the obligations they would entail. Research on social networks in northern Vietnam, where most Vietnamese migrants in Russia come from, emphasizes the enduring influence of Confucian values that are profoundly anti-individualistic, emphasizing communitarianism, mutual assistance, family ties, and neighbourhood ties (Vandermeersch, 1986, p. 162). Traditionally, altruism and unconditional dedication are expected in family relationships, and it is the moral obligation of those with economic means to selflessly help their less fortunate relatives.

To many migrants in my study, these moral obligations prove excessive and unjustifiable in a highly uncertain and precarious context where they can only count on themselves, especially given the loose definition of the family, which typically includes all members of the extended kinship group. Dissociating oneself from relatives is a risk-mitigation strategy and a matter of survival. Unreasonable expectations, unfair obligations, unpaid debts, and unreturned favours are common causes of tension and conflict among migrant kinsmen. This is compounded by the dislike for direct and open communication in Vietnamese culture. On the surface this does not make sense, as irregular migration from Vietnam to Russia is for the most part based on family networks. Except for those who were sent to Russia by the Vietnamese government as students or workers during the Soviet time, most of my research participants first migrated to Russia with the help, and sometimes financial support, of a family member. The typical trajectory begins with the new (and young) migrant working for a relative for a few years, with minimal or no pay, to repay the travel debt and to learn the trade, often with the hope that the free labour would eventually be recompensed with assistance when they set up their own business. These

expectations of reciprocity are, nevertheless, rarely made explicit for the fear that it would make the relationship between the two parties appear transactional, cold, distant, and not *tình cảm* ('loving', 'sentimental', or 'compassionate', depending on the context). In Vietnamese culture, *tình cảm* has a premium value in social relationships and is seen to be the essence of what it means to be Vietnamese (Gammeltoft, 1999; Harms, 2005). The emphasis on *tình cảm* sometimes means the helper works for years without adequate remuneration. Silently putting up with or prematurely giving up on such an exploitative arrangement runs the risk of causing irreparable damage to the relationship. Twenty-five-year-old Danh – whom I first met in 2013 – was caught up in such an unforgiving situation:

> I failed entrance exams to the university and spent two years jobhunting without success. Everyone (in the family) said uncle Thắng should help me (migrate to Russia), but he and his wife are very selfish. They don't help anyone. Then his wife became pregnant with the second child (and could not work), leaving him with no choice. I've been here (Sadovod) for a year. I work from 5am to 7pm every day, seven days a week; never been anywhere except their apartment and the market; never seen the Red Square. They haven't paid me a dollar in salary. I hope they will help me set up my own business in the future but … you know … I do not believe it would happen … it won't.

Danh was not alone. Mạnh, a 19-year-old man working next door, was in an equally bleak situation: he had been working for a couple from the same village for two years without pay. By late 2016 when I returned to Sadovod, both of these men had given up hope and left Russia. Most migrants were driven to Russia by unemployment in Vietnam so the idea of returning home empty-handed only to face unemployment and poverty is not appealing. Countless rags-to-riches tales told and retold within the market give migrants hope and the strength to put up with exploitative work arrangements and inspire more to come. Uncertainty renders life unpredictable and precarious on the one hand and fills it with hope and desire on the other.

The so-called 'subjunctive mood' of action (Whyte, 2005), which is characterized by a constant sense of doubt, caution, tentativeness, and provisionalness, is evidently disruptive to relationships. The difficulties in establishing and maintaining trusted relationships weaken migrants' ability to survive the brutalities of Russian markets and migration regimes. In the examples of Danh and Mạnh, the employer sent for a young and poor relative instead of hiring a locally available labourer – a common

practice that is deeply rooted in the construction of social networks in rural Northern Vietnam. A strong agrarian village culture and enduring Confucian traditions in the North, Dalton *et al.* (2002, p. 375) suggest, tends to encourage trust in a relatively narrow circle of family and close friends, and caution about the unknown stranger. The inward-looking spirit that is best illustrated by the popular saying '*Một giọt máu đào hơn ao nước lã*' ('One drop of blood is more valuable than a water pond') explains why out-migration from northern villages is primarily kin-based (Hoang, 2011, p. 423; 2016, p. 10). Yet, this social capital tends to rest on existing power hierarchies and inequality, potentially turning social relationships into baggage, impeding social mobility (Turner and Nguyen, 2005, p. 1702). Danh and Mạnh's employers exploited the hope of their junior kinsmen for free labour, while at the same time preventing potential competition. What has been described as a culture of judicious opportunism arising from perceived uncertainties in Cameroon (Johnson-Hanks, 2005, p. 366) has an equivalent notion of '*văn hóa chộp giật*' ('grab and snatch culture') among Vietnamese traders in Moscow. Because trust among co-ethnics, including fellow kinsmen, is tenuous, money emerges to fill the void. Without money, as 37-year-old garment factory owner Thanh concludes below, one has nothing to depend on:

> I was completely broke (after Chợ Vòm [Cherkizovskyi] market was closed down in 2009). Did not even have a cent. No one helped. No one, even friends. You have a lot of friends when you have money. But they disappear as soon as you are in trouble. If you call them when you are penniless, they'd say 'Sorry, I am busy right now. I'll call back!' See? There is no loyalty in this place.

Money is not just a matter of survival, but also one of social status and recognition in Vietnamese society. In Vietnamese popular culture, money is often portrayed as having the power to commodify status and prestige (Truitt, 2013, p. 25). As the economic provider and the beacon of hope for the family, the migrant is under pressure to reaffirm and enhance the family's status and recognition through lavish conspicuous consumption and generous gift giving. Thai (2006, 2014), for example, has provided a sophisticated ethnographic account of how maintaining a constant remittance flow to Vietnam is an important part of low-waged men's 'status strategy' to develop and nurture social ties, serving as an avenue to assert one's sense of self-worth and a duty to fulfil in the moral economy of social belonging. The causal relationship between migration and mobility is readily assumed

in Vietnamese society. As aptly illustrated by the phrase '*Áo gấm về làng*' ('Returning to the village in an embroidered silk robe'), it is expected that 'one should return home from the wide world with the trappings of success' (Carruthers, 2002, p. 439). It is shameful to be a failed migrant, 43-year-old broker Tuyết said: 'We are under an immense pressure to make money. It's a disgrace to return home empty-handed!'

Driven by both personal goals and moral obligations toward the family, Vietnamese migrants stay away from anything that might distract them from money-making, which is best captured by the following metaphor, from 28-year-old Châu: 'Money is the flame, which we the moths dive into in our short lives. What would be the point of coming to Russia otherwise?'

Nonetheless, migrants themselves are painfully aware of the downside of focusing too much on money. In one of many conversations I had with aspiring garment workshop owners Giao, 30, and Hương, 32, they gloomily acknowledged: 'There are heaps of money around, but there is so little tình cảm ('compassion'). Tình cảm has given way to money'.

Conclusion

The supremacy of money in market life and the individualistic behaviours that it fosters are clearly at odds with both the communitarian Confucian values that underpin the Vietnamese personhood and the socialist conception of money as an anti-social, immoral force that promotes greed and selfishness (see also Humphrey and Mandel, 2002, p. 1; Leshkowich, 2015, p. 11). In Vietnamese mores, a good person is one who is modest and selfless, sensitive to the needs and concerns of other people, and aware of her/his place *vis-à-vis* others (Gammeltoft, 1999, p. 215). While there is growing empirical evidence of an unfolding process of individualization in Vietnamese society under the influence of the capitalist economy and consumerist culture (Gammeltoft, 2001; Ghuman, Vu, Vu, and Knodel, 2006; Nilan, 2012), communitarian values are still regarded as desirable and superior to individualism.

What I have observed among Vietnamese migrants in Moscow markets concurs with my previous study in Taiwan, where moral values and social practices are aptly adjusted in response to an exploitative migration regime and the money economy of the city (Hoang, 2016; Hoang and Yeoh, 2015). What money means is, indeed, socially-mediated and constantly re-negotiated (Zelizer, 1997). In the context of Russia, the meanings and values of money change when people's radius of trust is disrupted by their

physical displacement and structural vulnerabilities. It is not merely a medium of exchange or an indication of status but has also become a social instrument that replaces trust in regulating migrants' social relationships and restores a sense of certainty in their lives. This chapter speaks to Ara Wilson's (2004) notion of 'intimate economies' which emphasizes the inextricable relationship between economic systems and intimate life, which is also underlined by Zhang, Alipio, and DeFilippo in this volume. Markets are not simply opportunities for exchange but are powerful influences on social life and identities (Wilson, 2004, p. 193). Migrants' engagement with the market economy of post-Soviet Russia reconstitutes the meanings and purpose of money and redefines reference points in their social life. This study therefore allows us to better appreciate the implications of post- and market-socialism for the political economy of personhood and the wider socio-cultural landscape of countries in transition.

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4. ‘Billions and the Retrogression of Knowledge’?

Wealth, Modernity, and Ethical Citizenship in a Northern Vietnamese Trading Village

Esther Horat

Abstract
While Vietnam’s Đổi mới policy, officially introduced three decades ago, had the clear-cut aim of restructuring the economic sector, its impact on morality was not as readily palpable. The standing of merchants in Vietnam has been, and continues to be, particularly ambiguous, as they were able to quickly seize the benefits of Đổi mới, albeit without embodying the state’s ideas of modernity. Using Sheri Lynn Gibbings (2016) framework of ‘citizenship as ethic’, the chapter takes a close look at the traders’ performance of moral identities as a way of dealing with the paradoxical economic and political situation they find themselves in.

Keywords: modernity, wealth, ethical citizenship, moral identity, traders, northern Vietnam

Introduction

As Vietnam has signed multiple regional and superregional free trade agreements, among them ASEAN, WTO, and TPP, and is joining the ranks of countries newly classified as middle income, it is increasingly hailed as ‘Asia’s next tiger’ (The Economist, 2016). Although incomes have considerably risen and money has become an important benchmark of modernity in present-day Vietnam, wealth continues to be an ambiguous and inherently moral issue. Not only how money is earned, but also how it is spent is a matter of great concern.

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH04

State media frequently peddles claims about money corrupting people's character as well as social relations.[1] Often, this claim targets women in particular, because they are seen as the moral pillars of the family and the nation more broadly (Pettus, 2003; Leshkowich, 2014). The thrust of such discourses is to warn of the potentially negative effects of money on people in the wider process of the individualization of society. The fear of alienation as a consequence of the accumulation of wealth made possible through the capitalist mode of production was crucial in the writings of Marx and other leftist philosophers and politicians, and its presence should thus not come as a surprise in a Socialist Republic.

During what is now called 'high socialist time' (from 1954 in the north, and 1975 in the south of Vietnam, until 1986), land was collectivized and only state-owned companies and cooperatives were allowed to produce and distribute goods according to the central government's directives. With the launch of *Đổi mới* (renovation) in 1986, the country has moved from a centrally planned to a socialist-oriented market economy.[2] Subsequently, the country has received a boost from foreign direct investments and free trade agreements. Christina Schwenkel and Ann Marie Leshkowich (2012) have shown that neoliberal logics are discernible in contemporary Vietnam, yet they caution the readers against applying a totalizing view. Instead of conceiving neoliberalism as a hegemonic economic order, they argue for acknowledging socialist continuities and hence the coexistence of socialist and neoliberal logics. In the same vein, I argue that the tension between wealth and morality is to be understood through the lens of the government's ambivalent use of socialist and neoliberal logics, or, as Nguyen-vo Thu-Huong put it, the 'simultaneous use of freedom and tradition' (2008, p. xx).

According to Nguyen-vo (2008), making money is strongly moralized and gendered. Drawing on her findings in a study of sex workers in Ho Chi Minh City, she argues that repression is not a thing of the past – although it is represented as such – but is very much present in contemporary Vietnam. By using choice differently among different segments of the Vietnamese population, class-based social structures are being created and reinforced,

1 For a recent example, see the statement of Mr. Nguyễn Ngọc Thiện, Minister of Culture: <http://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/the-bad-vietnamese-culture-minister-schools-the-public-on-morals-blames-market-economy-3598813.html>, accessed 04 April 2019.

2 'Socialist-oriented market economy' is the official term for Vietnam's economic system since the launch of the Open-Door policies (*Đổi mới*). The policies contain a range of economic reforms, most importantly the creation of a multi-sector economy (including a private sector). Notwithstanding economic liberalization, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam remains a one-party state.

leading to freedom for some and coercion for others (*ibid.*, p. 246). The re-education of lower-class sex workers with the aim of producing 'feminine' and 'docile' subjects is a strong case of repression, yet more subtle ways of categorizing and 'bettering' citizens are at work, too. Seen through Aihwa Ong's (2006) conceptual lens of 'neoliberalism as exception', mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are at the core of neoliberal logics. By arguing that citizenship and market forces are intimately tied together, she claims that citizens who possess the skills and sorts of capital sought after in a neoliberal market order are highly valued whereas those citizens lacking 'tradable competence' are prone to exclusion (Ong 2006, pp. 6–7).

I will shift the focus to groups of people that are considered far removed from the ideal citizen and are therefore said to be lacking a measure of civility, and are seen as not having the potential to compete in the 'right way' in a neoliberal globalized market. More precisely, I will take a closer look at petty traders. That they are examined overly critically by the government is nothing new, as during high socialist times, private trade was classified as unproductive and was therefore banned. Vietnam scholars mention that even further back in the past, during Confucian times, trade was not an occupation of high esteem, but was located at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Malarney, 1998; Luong, 2003). Nevertheless, petty trade has been an important (side) activity, especially in households that relied on farming and handicraft.

When shortly after the launch of *Đổi mới* many state-owned companies were equitized, cooperatives dissolved, and the private sector was once more allowed, small-scale trade again became an increasingly popular – and often necessary – source of income. Most traders are women, and while some found their way into petty trade in the wake of losing their jobs due to the restructuring of the economy, others saw it as an opportune moment to switch to the private sector and establish a business of their own. Hence, there are a wide range of traders, from itinerant street peddlers selling fruits and fresh food from shoulder poles to market vendors with permanent stalls, who are able to maintain a stable business and sometimes even reap considerable profits. Notwithstanding the ubiquity of petty traders and their crucial role in providing the essentials for people's everyday life, their social recognition remains low.

This chapter addresses two main questions: Why are successful petty traders disdained if money is a benchmark of modernity? How do traders reconcile wealth and morality? My findings are based on twelve months of in-depth fieldwork in Ninh Hiệp, a textile-handling village with about 16,700 residents, located on the north-eastern edge of Hanoi. Having been

a famous ancient handicraft village in the past, it has experienced rapid economic growth since the early 2000s and is nowadays known as a hub for cheap Chinese apparel. The traders I have been working with were all stall vendors, yet their stalls varied by size and value. Compared to traders elsewhere, especially street vendors, their businesses are rather stable and yield substantial incomes. While Ninh Hiệp was initially used as an exemplar for economic development in more impoverished areas, in recent years the village has come under the media's increasingly critical spotlight for its supposed misalignment with the state's version of modernization (Horat, 2017). Although traders in other regions of Vietnam are confronted with a similar criticism, it is particularly pronounced in Ninh Hiệp, where traders have become comparably wealthy.

This chapter contributes to the long-standing but still hotly discussed topic in anthropology and related fields of money and morality, including works on exchange (Parry and Bloch, 1989), gender and power (Errington, 1990), intimacy (Wilson, 2004; Zelizer, 2011; Hoang 2015), and recent debates on wealth, class, and anxiety that target the moral ambivalence attached to the emerging middle class in post-, late and market socialist countries as they adopt market economy principles (Hsu, 2007; Leshkowich, 2011; Osburg, 2013). It is this latter discussion that the chapter continues by examining the rationalities and contradictions underlying a fundamental restructuring of the economy, producing novel moral dilemmas as well as creative strategies to deal with them. Dealing with related issues like Leshkowich (2014) in her landmark study on petty traders in Vietnam, I am trying to make a different argument here. While vendors in southern and northern Vietnam alike attracted moral suspicion just by their very occupation, the two groups reacted differently: While Leshkowich (*ibid*., p. 85) describes 'familism' – pretending to be related with one another so as to make one's business look smaller and less significant than it actually is – as a strategy that was used by traders in Bến Thành market, I observed Ninh Hiệp traders making moral claims to the market by invoking a 'right to survive' as upright and hardworking villagers.

This leads to the second contribution, which lies in providing an alternative to the notion of legal citizenship and thus bypasses the rigid dichotomy of the 'legal' and 'illegal' (Smart and Zerilli, 2014), and instead highlights the moral dimension of becoming a citizen (Lazar, 2008; Gibbings, 2016). The emphasis then shifts towards a dynamic understanding of citizenship – not as a possession, but rather as continuous process. Ethical citizenship does not only entail the relation of the self to society, that is, how to become a citizen through working on and educating oneself, but must also be connected to

broader societal processes and parameters, such as modernization and the reconfiguring of social hierarchies.

The article is divided into two parts. In the first part, I take a look at the state's modernizing project in a rural context, consisting of 'inner' (comportment of people) and 'outer' (infrastructure of a place) aspects. By depicting how the 'civilizing' mission as part of modernization is targeted at particular segments of the Vietnamese population, in this case petty traders, I shed light on the complicated relation between morality and wealth.

In the second part, drawing on Gibbings's (2016) 'citizenship as ethics', I show how traders present themselves as good citizens by (partly) implementing the government's agenda of domestic production and thereby trying to claim the market as their space. In addition to the individual performance of moral identities, the traders also engage in collective activities in which the state's governance is denounced as inconsistent and 'not right' so as to oppose private commercial projects promoted by the state.

'Wealthy People, Civilized Society'

Market freedom, understood as the freedom to choose any legal form to earn a living and to consume based on one's personal taste and preference, does not mean there are no restrictions at all. Since *Đổi mới*, numerous economic decrees, aimed at regulating certain aspects of Vietnam's economy, have seen the light of the day. Considering only those concerned with the regulation of marketplaces, the most important are the decree on Development and Management of Marketplaces from 2003 and the two master plans of 2007 and 2015 for market development (Bộ Thư Pháp [Ministry of Justice], 2003; Bộ Công Thương [Ministry of Industry and Trade], 2007, 2015). Thus, the opening of the economy has prompted new laws, specifying what is allowed for whom, and what is the desired direction for the national economy. In the following pages, I will examine the Vietnamese state's vision of modernity in reference to its official slogan *Dân giàu, Nước mạnh, Xã hội Công bằng, Văn minh* ('Wealthy People, Strong Country, Equal and Civilized Society'), and how it unfolds in a village setting.

As I reached the market in Ninh Hiệp one morning in April 2013, the atmosphere seemed tense. Minutes into a conversation with Ngân, a young woman trader who supported her mother in the business, she mentioned an article that had just appeared in *Lao Động* ('Labour'), one of the leading Vietnamese newspapers. Seemingly upset, she told me that the article

entitled *Ninh Hiệp: Bạc tỉ và sự thụt lùi của tri thức* ('Ninh Hiệp: Billions and the Retrogression of Knowledge') insinuated that the traders in Ninh Hiệp had become rich in the past few years, and as a consequence education was neglected and morals corrupted (see An and Nguyễn, 2013). To substantiate their argument, the authors wrote about children throwing away small bills of money, elderly villagers bemoaning the rising number of school dropouts as well as the lack of esteem for civil servants, and that money was effortlessly made and frivolously spent. To underline this, a villager was cited, stating that (allegedly) 99 per cent of the traders had an iPhone or iPad, and many had luxury cars of makes like Audi, Lexus, and Mercedes. Asking Ngân with what exactly she disagreed, she thought for a short moment, then said: 'It's not completely untrue. I mean, many people have smartphones now. But not everybody. It's true that some people here make a lot of money, but … Some people are very well educated, like me. We sell at the market because we can't find another job'.[3]

Indeed, Ngân had completed her bachelor's degree in tourism at the Hanoi National University, and was even selected for a six-month internship overseas. Yet, she was one of many young people in the village for whom the alternative to the market would be a poorly paid job well below her qualification. Throughout that day and the following days, I heard enraged traders discussing the article. It became clear that they did not find the content completely inaccurate – albeit massively exaggerated – but rather criticized the denigrating tone that depicted them as greedy and backward, and on top of that, uneducated. In short, readers were under the impression that money reigned supreme, especially when they reached the end of the article: 'wherever they [Ninh Hiệp traders] travel, whatever luxury items they possess, they still have … a market culture (*văn hóa chợ*)'.

The expression of 'market culture' stands in direct opposition to the government's notion of 'civility', the latter referring to a particular set of behaviours and manners to be achieved through a certain kind of knowledge. That knowledge is a valuable asset of a person, has a long history in Vietnam, reaching back to pre-modern times. According to Confucian hierarchy, scholar-officials (*sĩ*) held the highest position in society, then came farmers (*nông*), artisans and handicraft specialists (*công*), and on the bottom rank traders (*thương*) (Malarney, 1998, p. 271). The conception of markets as uncivilized and thus in need of enhancement was revived during colonial times. Attention was given to Western standards of health and hygiene with the underlying assumption that the market environment

3 Field notes, 4 April 2013.

would have 'civilizing effects' on traders (Leshkowich, 2014, p. 39).[4] Interesting, however, is that 100 years later, markets are still subject to civilizing attempts. Consider, for example, the statement of the People's Committee of Da Nang that explicitly requests that markets meet the three criteria of civilization; cleanliness; beauty and hygiene; and safety (see Ngọc, 2012). Attached to the statement is a detailed list of how the market staff and the traders should behave and appear, ranging from appropriate attire over polite communication style to correct business attitude, neat and beautiful display of the merchandise according to commodity groups, standards of hygiene, and many more. Thus, whether under Confucian, French, Reformist, or Socialist rule, traders and markets were always seen as in need of measures of improvement and refinement (Horat, forthcoming). It is important to add that the idea of civility is not only class-based, but also strongly gendered, then and now. While only men could become Confucian scholars and be awarded the highest merits, trade was, and to a large extent still is, considered as a female occupation (Leshkowich, 2014). Due to their responsibility to manage the household and to bring their families in line with the goals of national development, women are considered primarily responsible for upholding the norms of civility (Pettus, 2003, p. 84). As Hanoi's educated and affluent middle class has become the standard of civility in northern Vietnam, women are judged according to their cultural and geographical distance from this ideal.

One realm where expert knowledge, ideas of civility, and gender intersect is childcare. Conversations with one of the leading members of the local Women's Union, Mrs. Giang, confirmed this point by relating the high proportion of malnourished children to the apparent lack of knowledge of women in Ninh Hiệp: 'They only know going to the market, earning a lot of money'. She then continued: 'Instead of breastfeeding the baby in the first six months, they buy foreign products for their baby to drink, although this foreign milk is very expensive. Then they go back to the market and hire a maid to take care of the baby. But how can a maid know how to care for their baby?'[5] Her statement contains several points of critique, the most evident perhaps being the fundamental role of money

4 Seen in the broader historical context, the Vietnamese civilization discourse of the early twentieth century emerged out of the Reform Movement that dominated anticolonial politics (Bradley, 2004, p. 67). As members of the reform generation associated Western type civilization with social change and dynamism in contrast to what they perceived as backward Confucian values, they strove towards creating a Vietnamese version of civilization in the national struggle towards independence (*ibid.*).

5 Field notes, 4 June 2013.

in the trader's lives. Moreover, their long working hours at the market at the expense of childcare tasks, as well as their ways of spending money, were seen as inadequate.

The fact that some traders hired a maid was not in itself a problem. However, what Mrs. Giang considered critical was the maid's supposedly low level of knowledge. When bearing in mind that the Women's Union locates its ideal of civility within the urban salaried middle class, maids coming from geographically and socially distant settings are presumably less aware of the knowledge disseminated through state channels and are hence classified as less civilized. Thus, the rhetorical question at the end of her statement does not suggest mothers' 'natural' aptness for childcare, but instead distinguishes between different classes and their level of civilization, according to their 'scientific knowledge' and, following from that, their way of spending money.

Framing a normative or political issue in technical terms is a method to render it non-political (Li, 2007, p. 7). This process is set in motion when an issue is examined from an expert perspective, the aim of which is to define the problem and find an appropriate solution to it. Thus, rather than allowing for different moralities being involved in the decisions of whether or not to breastfeed, how long to stay at home with a new-born baby, and who should look after the baby, it is suggested that judgements based on expert knowledge ensure the ability to tell right from wrong in a given situation. This goes hand in hand with the Women's Union's focus on campaigning to bring about change, as Mrs. Giang has reinforced: 'The only solution is education, advocacy, and campaigning – if they want to hear, they hear; if not, we can't do anything'. Thus, instead of direct repression, subtle methods are used to instil in the traders an awareness of the need to improve (Horat, 2018). At the heart of this lies the dilemma of intimacy and money, and more specifically, the suspicion whether one can *really* care through the use of money. That money indeed figures as a 'currency of care', be it in the form of loving care for a child or a spouse or any other person, is shown by numerous scholars, including Hung Cam Thai (2014) and his study on how overseas Vietnamese express care – and are expected to do so – for their family through remittances and gifts.

In addition to these 'inner qualities', consisting of knowledge and a set of manners, another aspect of the state's vision of modernity is the built environment. Considerable amounts of money and effort are put into urban planning and rural development. In August 2008, the resolution *Xây dựng nông thôn mới* ('Building A New Countryside') was passed, aimed at industrializing and modernizing the Vietnamese countryside (Socialist Republic

of Vietnam, 2016).[6] In addition to developing the rural economy and thereby reducing poverty, the transport system and health facilities should also be improved and environmental pollution lessened, among other things. Although the plan does include a socio-cultural dimension by mentioning the enhancement of the quality of cultural life of rural people (Art. III, 7), the majority of aims listed target the built environment. As part of developing the rural economy, the completion of the rural market system and trade infrastructure suitable for the needs of the people is stated as an aim (Art. III, 2b, 06).[7] Thus, marketplaces play a crucial role in the national development strategy. Their importance becomes even clearer when shifting the focus to urban planning, where one cannot but notice the increasing number of flashy shopping malls, convenience stores, and 'upgraded' public markets. Oftentimes, such a *nâng cấp* (upgrade) consists not only of the renovation of the market building and the renewal of sanitation, but also involves a change from public to private management. Markets are prominent features of cities, not only as places for people's everyday consumption, but also because they contribute to the physical appearance of a city and often serve as tourist attractions. While marketplaces and street vendors are sometimes portrayed as a symbol of authentic Vietnamese culture, especially in travel books, often they are considered as backward and incompatible with a modern city by urban planners and state officials more broadly. One telling example was when in an attempt to 'beautify the city', a partial ban on street vendors was announced in Hanoi in 2008 (Lincoln, 2008).

During the time of my research, processes of market renovation and privatization were well underway in Ninh Hiệp. In addition to the public market, there was one privately-owned market built in 2006 (Baza Mới) and two private commercial centres built in 2011 as well as one more market under construction. As for the public market, there were rumours about privatization plans that made stall vendors seemingly nervous. That the renovation of existing markets and the construction of new markets is considered key to modernization from the state's perspective can be learned

6 For information about the updated plan see Prime Minister Decision No 1600/QĐ-TTg, dated 16 August 2016 on *Mục tiêu quốc gia xây dựng nông thôn mới giai đoạn 2016-2020* (*National Objectives for New Rural Building Period of 2016-2020*), available on <http://nongthonmoi.gov.vn/Pages/gioi-thieu.aspx>, accessed 4 April 2019.

7 'Hoàn thiện hệ thống chợ nông thôn, cơ sở hạ tầng thương mại nông thôn theo quy hoạch, phù hợp với nhu cầu của người dân. Đến năm 2020, có 70% số xã đạt chuẩn tiêu chí số 7 về cơ sở hạ tầng thương mại nông thôn'. ['Complete the rural market system, the infrastructure of rural commerce according to plan, in accordance with the needs of the people. By 2020, 70% of communes will have reached criteria number 7 about the rural commercial infrastructure'.]

from an interview with the vice chairman of the People's Committee of Gia Lâm district, during which he stated that commercial centres would advance the upgrade of Ninh Hiệp into a town (Châu, 2014). While the renovation of marketplaces is not necessarily a bad thing, a more questionable part of his statement is his claim that commercial centres correspond to the needs of the people. Regarding the heavy protests the attempts to build new markets have provoked in Ninh Hiệp, the extent to which marketization is in the interest of most people is yet to be examined critically.

The notion of modernization entails a particular set of ideas, aesthetics, and norms, and is promoted through a combination of measures, including policies and campaigns as well as media reports. As noted above, the quest for modernization brings about real consequences for traders in Ninh Hiệp and elsewhere. The upgrading of markets does not only mean more convenient conditions for selling – if at all – but also often leads to an interruption of the traders' businesses for the time of reconstruction, which results in a loss of customers as well as higher stall rental fees after renovation. In the case of complete reconstruction, the stalls are rearranged, and traders will thus lose the trusted networks they have built up during years, or sometimes decades, of stall neighbourhood. Renovation, especially in combination with privatization, can also lead to some or all traders facing worse conditions for selling. A well-known example is the Hàng Da market in Hanoi, where traders were sent to the basement of the new market building. They now have few visiting customers because it is not possible to drive through the sections by motorbike – unlike many public markets – and the entrance is not easy to find. In addition, the traders there also complain that their stalls are not appropriate for displaying the merchandise and that air circulation is bad, which is particularly a problem in regard to the fresh products that are sold, for example meat (DiGregorio, 2013). Quite generally, the privatization of marketplaces evokes discomfort among traders, as it is often not clear what the process entails, but it is anticipated that the possibility of having a say in the upkeep and development up of the market will be constrained.

The vignettes above show the complicated relation between money and morality, for instance when it is indicated that traders set the wrong priorities by going back to the market instead of breastfeeding their babies, and then spend the money on buying milk powder. Wasting money, or, even worse, not teaching children to not waste money, as mentioned in the newspaper article, is another example of the same moralizing discourse that is not just about the use of money, but about the idea of being a civilized person.

In that sense, money is not just considered a necessary condition for a civilized life as it paves the way to a higher living standard, but can also backfire if earned or used in a wrong manner. Thus, money plays an ambiguous role: While it is fundamentally part of modern Vietnamese society, it also evokes anxiety. For the Vietnamese government, it is the fear of money becoming a driving force on its own, with the potential to reshuffle existing power relations. For traders, being out of step with the state's moral guidelines, which stand for modernization, can pose a risk to their livelihoods. In the second part of this chapter, I will examine how traders react to the moral dilemma they find themselves in.

Performing Ethical Citizenship

For centuries, Ninh Hiệp was famous for its cloth production, yet since the 1970s the local weaving industry has completely ceased. As a consequence, the traders switched to cloth that was brought back from Soviet and Eastern European countries by returning Vietnamese migrant workers and students. In the second half of the 1980s, Vietnam's trade partners shifted entirely when in 1986 the *Đổi mới* policies were adopted, and only a few years later the Soviet Union collapsed and finally China lifted its sanctions against Vietnam. It is no secret that in the last fifteen or twenty years, the majority of fabric, clothes, and accessories sold in Ninh Hiệp were produced in China. This is also reflected in my conversations with Vietnamese friends and colleagues, who did not miss an occasion to remark on the dominant Chinese origin of the goods. In addition, a substantial portion of the clothes was produced in workshops in and around Ninh Hiệp, and sometimes also imported from Ho Chi Minh City or other countries, such as Thailand and Korea. Fabric, however, was almost exclusively imported from China due to the lack of local weaving mills. Those that exist are mostly located in southern Vietnam and were said to not offer a wide choice of patterns.

Not only Ninh Hiệp, but also Vietnam more broadly is heavily reliant on Chinese imports in the food and non-food sectors. Therefore, the Vietnamese government has sought to reduce the country's dependency through the 'Buy Vietnamese' campaign. Launched in 2009 by the Ministry of Industry and Trade together with the Ministry of Communication, the campaign promotes, as the name indicates, the preference of Vietnamese over foreign, especially Chinese, products (Hương, 2014). On the one hand, this should strengthen the domestic economy. On the other hand, when seen in the context of the increasingly tense relationship with China due

to recent incidents in the South China Sea, it clearly also carries a political meaning.[8]

Thus, the Ninh Hiệp traders' promotion of Chinese imports was not favoured by the government. Yet, importantly, the campaign was not only an ideological construct, but also was able to influence people's buying decisions to some extent. That this would affect Ninh Hiệp was evident when for a few days in June 2014 the markets were boycotted and hardly any customers showed up. This incident as well as the recent rise in popularity of Made-In-Vietnam clothes led traders to increase home production and use it as a marketing strategy. By inviting potential buyers to their own or their supplier's workshops and making sure it was mentioned in online news (see Diệp, 2014), they tried to come across as responsible, patriotic citizens. What is interesting about this is not that traders adjusted to the demands of the market, as this is of course essential for a business, but how it was represented. A Ninh Hiệp trader announced, for instance, that producing clothes in their own workshop meant that they had much better control over the quality and that the customers could buy *yên tâm* (with peace of mind). Thus, it was subliminally suggested that Chinese products might be defective or at least not reliable, while the ones made in Vietnam could be trusted and were therefore offered so as to guarantee a satisfactory buying experience for customers.

By incorporating and echoing government directives, Ninh Hiệp traders perform what Sheri Lynn Gibbings (2016) called 'ethical citizenship'. Suggesting that citizenship is not only a political, but just as much an ethical, project, Gibbings shed light on Indonesian street vendors' practices of performing a 'good' self in line with the state, and thereby trying to gain legitimacy as citizens. Similarly, the Ninh Hiệp traders showed that they were good citizens by implementing – at least partly – the state's campaign. As traders do not always fully operate within the confines of the law, they are not eager to start a legal case. Moreover, in a context of burgeoning uncertainty and rapid change, it is not sufficient to apply a narrow gaze to the legal circumstances, as they might also be unstable.

In addition to the individual performance of ethical practices, there are also collective activities to reinforce the belonging to a political community. As Sian Lazar (2014, p. 73) wrote, these activities are 'forms of asserting citizenship as a claim to the city – a claim to collectively regulate the city and its residents as well as to represent their demands to government authorities'. Although in Ninh Hiệp traders do not form

8 This topic is well elaborated by Hayton (2014; 2015) and Panda (2015).

unions or associations, they manage to regulate the daily market life through informal rules, and even to organize collective activities, mostly in the form of protests. In this context, they voice moral claims toward the state all the while emphasizing membership to the nation. While there are multiple examples of collective activities, the following one is among the most remarkable.

When in January 2014 the construction of a new private market in the centre of the village was announced, heavy protests ensued. The project envisaged erecting a new building next to the old market, on the premises of the secondary school and the parking lot of the old market. As a consequence, the school would be relocated to the periphery of the village, while the parking lot should be demolished. In the context of the continuously expanding market area and the trend toward private market ownership, the traders worried about the increase in competition and, most of all, about a potential closing down or selling off of the old market. Seeing that most customers arrive by motorbike and buy merchandise in large quantities for wholesale businesses, the traders were sure that customers would stop coming to the old market if there were no parking lot close by. Thus, the proclamation of the project drew hundreds of traders to the street and before the commune's People's Community. The protesters' slogans, infused with moral claims, centred around the Party's promise of social justice, which they felt was now being largely neglected by the new project. In reference to Hồ Chí Minh and a couple of revolutionary martyrs, they argued that the rich should not be privileged over the poor, and private interests should not be prioritized over public ones. By stating that they were only making enough money for a living, they presented themselves as simple people invoking the 'right to survive' (see Szanton Blanc, 1972). The communal character of markets was also highlighted in everyday conversations among traders, where the market was compared with a bowl of rice that should feed everyone.

Just as telling as their slogans were their outfits, consisting of a red headband and a T-shirt in the design of the Vietnamese flag. On the front side under the star was written in yellow lettering 'I love my homeland Vietnam', and on the back 'Request the three levels of government to give back the land to the people of Ninh Hiệp, Gia Lâm district, Hanoi city'. Other slogans printed on banners were: 'Party! Rescue the people of Ninh Hiệp', and 'The residents of Ninh Hiệp resolutely oppose the selling of land for private purposes, it's the wrong aim'. The strategy of openly approving of the Communist Party and at the same time articulating explicit demands linked to the government can be seen as an attempt to invoke citizenship to appear legitimate. At the heart of the traders' criticism was the government's

inconsistent use of socialist rhetoric and neoliberal practices, oscillating between the extremes of calling money a threat, and furthering the sort of economy that privileges money over everything else. Thus, while this governing strategy implies freedom for investments aimed at upgrading and expanding markets, it criticizes the use of money in other areas of life that do not match the idea of modernization. As women are chosen as the principal agents of the civilizing mission, their actions come under even more scrutiny and are rebuked when they are deemed inappropriate.

Although moral positioning might seem like a strategy of last resort for those who are not able to invoke legal rights, it can be quite powerful. The traders of Ninh Hiệp have protested so resolutely that their case even appeared on national television (VTV) and in major newspapers. Due to the pressure arising from the publicity, the chairman of the People's Committee of Hanoi was instructed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam to inspect the complaints and to take measures to settle the case in accordance with Vietnamese law (An, 2015). Comparing this incident with other similar events, it can be judged as successful at least insofar as the traders' claims were heard and taken seriously.

Conclusion

As Vietnam entered a new era with the launch of the Open-Door policies, many people seized the chance to establish a business. Concurrently, anxiety spread about how to be wealthy and good. During these years the vagueness of morality has increased as the contours of good and bad are constantly being renegotiated. Traders, who were among the first to seize the opportunities made available by the economic reforms, found themselves in a particularly ambiguous position as they fulfilled one part of the modernizing vision ('wealthy people'), but were considered as failing in another ('civilized'). That this shortcoming would matter became increasingly obvious when the number of media reports increased and the tone became sharper in recent years, portraying traders as wasteful and immoral. This tells us that the ambivalence of money and morality is not just a theme in non-Western or 'traditional' societies, but is ever more present in a market economy as it is intimately related to the reconfiguring of social hierarchies. As has been outlined in the first chapter of this volume, such capitalist contradictions are indeed prevalent across Asia.

Despite its far-reaching history, the civilization discourse is a symptomatic element of the modernization process in present-day Vietnam (Harms,

2016), not only because of its aim of improving and refining the self, but also because of its subtle instilling in subjects of a sense of where they belong to – and where not. This process is, as I have shown, gendered in a double way: While women are seen as less cultured than men, it is of utmost importance that they are well-mannered and possess strong morals because of their role in reproduction and as representatives of the nation.

In the context of rapid urbanization, providing basic goods and services to a growing and socially diverse population becomes a pressing issue. At the same time, the infrastructure of cities and peri-urban areas needs to be adjusted to the emerging demands of a changing society. Public places, such as sidewalks or squares, are crucial sites for people to set up temporary small-scale businesses. Yet, as privately invested commercial projects sweep Vietnamese cities and adjacent areas and particular ideas of aesthetics and order hold sway, many traders are being pushed away from their selling location or out of business altogether. This process affects street vendors as well as market traders. Even if the latter possess a certificate that confirms their right to operate a stall for one or several years, there is no guarantee that the marketplace will not be sold to an investor sooner or later. The usefulness of the concept of ethical citizenship can indeed best be grasped in a context where uncertainty dominates. According to Lazar (2008, pp. 4–5), understanding the breadth of citizenship means not just seeing it as a matter of rights and responsibilities, but as 'creating a sense of community necessary for political life'.

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Part II

Social Currencies and the Morality of Gender

5. House, Car, or Permanent Residency?

Higher-Wage Chinese Migrant Men's Flexible Masculinities in Singapore

Sylvia Ang

Abstract
While male migrants are an understudied group, even less attention has been paid to their heterosexual practices. This chapter locates such practices by examining online personal ads posted by higher-wage mainland Chinese migrant men in Singapore. This chapter empirically contributes to migration and masculinity studies by examining the understudied site of online personal ads. Theoretically, this chapter aims to contribute by firstly, extending Aihwa Ong's (1999) theory of neoliberal flexibility to an analysis of Chinese masculinity. Secondly, even as Chinese migrant men exemplify neoliberal flexibility, the chapter argues that neoliberalism is not the only condition producing flexible masculinity. Rather, Chinese migrant men's flexible subject-making can be analyzed as 'variegated' and simultaneously situated in cultural and social imaginaries.

Keywords: Chinese masculinity, Chinese migrant men, migrants in Singapore, neoliberal flexibility, variegated neoliberalization, flexible masculinity

Migration, Masculinities and Heterosexuality

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 841) suggested that 'research on masculinity needs to explore the relationship of hegemonic ideologies of "being a man" with the mismatches, tensions and resistances evident in daily life'. Indeed, in virtue of their positions as migrants, male migrants' masculinities can be challenged and transformed by a change in geography. This is noted by Datta *et al.*, who observe that gender norms are often so

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH05

entrenched that 'migrants often become particularly aware of the relational and contextual nature of gender as they attempt to fulfil expectations of identity and behaviour that may differ sharply in the several places they live' (cited in Datta *et al.*, 2008). Observations such as this have pushed for researchers to apply not just a gender lens, but also a masculinity lens to labour migration. In particular, there is a growing body of work focusing on male migration (Datta *et al.*, 2009; Batnitzky, McDowell and Dyer, 2008, 2009; Charsley, 2005; Datta, 2004; Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec, 2003; Osella and Osella, 2000). However, work (and economics) is often the focal point in the literature on migrant men (Datta *et al.*, 2009; Batnitzky, McDowell and Dyer, 2008), with little attention paid to their roles as partners and lovers. Heterosexual migrant men, in particular, are understudied. Neglecting migrant men's heterosexuality or studying migrant men's sexuality only in terms of 'deviance' from heteronormativity takes for granted migrant men's (hetero)sexuality. Further, the potential for (hetero)sexualities to fluctuate or be reworked is also present in migration contexts. As Walsh, Shen, and Willis (2008, p. 575) observed, '[a] migration focus illuminates how spatial dislocation provides opportunities for [and constraints on] both men and women to play out different heterosexual identities'. Investigating migrant men and how they perform heterosexuality and sexual desires can provide important insights into how masculinities transform with migration (Yeoh and Ramdas, 2014). This paper makes several contributions. Empirically, it contributes to migration and masculinity studies by examining an understudied site: online personal ads. Theoretically, this chapter aims also to contribute in two ways. First, this chapter will extend Aihwa Ong's theory of neoliberal flexibility (1999) to an analysis of Chinese masculinity, which is detailed below. Second, even as the chapter shows that mainland Chinese migrant men (hereafter Chinese migrant men) exemplify neoliberal flexibility, I argue that neoliberalism is not the only condition producing flexible masculinity. Rather, I argue that Chinese migrant men's flexible subject-making can be analyzed as 'variegated' and simultaneously situated in their cultural imaginaries. This will be detailed in the analytical section.

Flexibility and Neoliberalism

While neoliberalism is first and foremost a theory of political economic practice (Harvey, 2005) which seeks to guarantee individual freedom in the marketplace, it does not provide the same guarantees regarding an individual's actions and well-being. Under neoliberalism, the individual is

solely responsible for him or herself. This principle is extended into various realms under the state including welfare, education, and healthcare (Harvey, 2005:64) and has pervaded ways of thinking and become the mode which people use to interpret and understand the world. In other words, neoliberalism has become a hegemonic discourse (Harvey, 2005:3). As such, individuals under neoliberal regimes are encouraged to see themselves as 'businesses' that aim only to balance risks, alliances, and responsibilities. In this manner, an individual sees themselves as a subject to be managed, to be invested in, and worked on. Importantly, flexibility has emerged as a key defining feature of neoliberalism. Freeman (2008, p. 252) suggested that

> 'Flexibility' has been described as the cornerstone of the current neoliberal agenda—embodied in mandates for the fluid movements and restructuring of labour, capital, and information and, at the individual level, in a supple capacity for creative self-invention and self-mastery.

This is agreed by various scholars, including Bourdieu (1998) who suggested that the essence of neoliberalism is an 'absolute reign of flexibility'. Indeed, scholars have documented how neoliberalism has caused many aspects of modern life to demand flexibility. This has been discussed by Emily Martin (1994) in terms of 'flexible bodies', Ong (1999) in 'flexible citizenship', and more recently, Sarah Gee (2014) in 'flexible masculinity'. Specifically, Gee offered the following working definition of 'flexible masculinity':

> A form of identity practice that adapts to accommodate a range of dominant male stereotypes and more alternative versions of masculinity in order to negotiate shifting contemporary gender relations within the context of globalization and media-driven late capitalist consumer culture.

Essentially, Gee suggested that a man is now able to take on multiple versions of masculinities through selectivity, modification, and reflexivity. In other words, a man can use a continuous 'read-and-react' strategy to position a particular masculinity at a particular time. This particular enactment is made in a dynamic context of globalization in a 'media-driven late capitalist consumer culture'. Other than the definition, there is one other notable point this chapter takes from Gee: flexible masculinity must be understood in context. While the range of masculinities available to Beckham (in Gee's analysis) as a sporting icon may have been a large one, the same range may not be available to another man and may indeed

serve to restrict him. To extend Gee's definition of 'flexible masculinity' into this chapter's context warrants a discussion of the links between neoliberalism and flexibility.

Emily Martin (1994) suggested that the nature of work has shifted such that jobs no longer last a lifetime and people have resorted to thinking of themselves as entrepreneurs, and having to be flexible, in order to survive. She argued that people, especially in a middle-class context, have become sites of resource accumulation whether it is in terms of education, savings, houses, or so on. Indeed, in a neoliberal era, people now see themselves as 'a collection of assets that must be continually invested in, nurtured, managed, and developed' (Martin, 1994, p. 77). This is exemplified by migrants in Ong's discussion on transnational Chinese subjects. She suggested that 'those most able to benefit from their participation in global capitalism celebrate flexibility and mobility' (1999, p. 19). She argued that while humans have always been mobile and flexible, transnationality and its new links with capital accumulation have further valorized 'strategies of manoeuvring and positioning' (ibid.). While Ong's theory rests on how rich transnational Chinese subjects are flexible in striving for social capital recognized by their White counterparts, I advance her theory by extending it theoretically to Chinese masculinity. This has culminated in an intersectional analysis that includes gender, nationality, ethnicity, and class. While my study subjects are Chinese migrants of relatively high income and education, I diverge from Ong in focusing on how Chinese migrant men are flexible in striving for social capital recognized by fellow Chinese (migrant) women, rather than by 'Others'. Specifically, I suggest that Chinese migrant men use strategies of flexibility to (re)position their masculinity and heterosexuality – in order to access potential partners in Singapore.

Personal Ads as Sites of Performance

Personal advertisements have intrigued academics for a very long time (Koestner and Wheeler, 1988; Hirschman, 1987; Deaux and Hanna, 1984; Cameron, Oskamp, and Sparks, 1977). This is because, as Jagger (2005, p. 90) suggested, dating advertisements are revealing as sites to analyze the social construction of identities – 'identities that are deemed desirable and marketable in a specific cultural context and constituted in normative heterosexuality'. Indeed, personal advertisements offer insights as to how advertisers see themselves – in other words, their imaginaries of themselves. While the earlier studies on personal advertisements were of Darwinian

and psychological perspectives (Jagger, 2005), mainly from an American context, and focused only on print advertisements in newspapers, they nonetheless provide some important insights, which this paper draws from. For instance, studies showed that in general men looked for women with physical attractiveness, while women looked for men with financial security and status (Lance, 1998; Smith, Waldorf, and Trembath, 1990). In addition, an exceptional study by Pang Linlin (1993, p. 170) found that Chinese advertisers were more family- and marriage-oriented than their American counterparts. They also placed more importance upon objective traits, such as marital status, financial status, and housing. This literature points to the emphasis on men's financial status as well as the importance of examining personal ads within cultural contexts.

The advent of the internet also means personal ads have taken on new forms, such as being posted on online forums and other social networking sites. However, current literature does not appear to have caught up with the speed of online personal advertisements. Other than a few exceptions focused on queer studies (Paul, Ayala, and Choi, 2010; Gudelunas, 2005; Hatala and Prehodka, 1996) and a recently-published book (Degim, Fou, and Johnson, 2015), much of the literature comes from an evolutionary biology perspective.[1] A lacuna of online personal ads in the discipline of social sciences therefore clearly exists. Although limited, one important conclusion can be drawn from the literature on both print and online personal ads: the construction of identities in both print and online personal ads is influenced by offline social norms. The difference between print ads and online ads is that technology is now used to sustain and reproduce existing gender roles (Degim, Fou, and Johnson, 2015, p. 11; Jagger, 2005).

The instantaneous nature of the internet and the allowance for more descriptive profiles means personal ads have proliferated in a short span of time and advertisers now have to compete with numerous other advertisers to perform and 'market' themselves in ways that can garner more responses. In fact, my research shows that it is only a matter of hours or minutes before one's newly-posted online personal ad can become 'buried' amongst the other newer, more attractive personal ads. Indeed, Coupland (cited in Jagger, 2005, p. 90) has observed that (in reference to print personal

1 I have not included studies on online ads from an evolutionary biology perspective here due to the limited relevance of this literature to my paper. For details see Hall, Jeffrey A., Namkee Park, Hayeon Song, and Michael J. Cody, 'Strategic Misrepresentation in Online Dating: The Effects of Gender, Self-Monitoring, and Personality Traits', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27, no. 1(2010), pp. 117–135.

advertisements), 'in a time-pressured, work-centred and mass-mediated society, such methods are "relationally efficient", a "natural" response to modern life circumstances'. This observation rings even more true in our current technological era.

Methodology

This chapter stems from a larger project on the co-ethnic politics of Chinese-Singaporeans' and newly arrived mainland Chinese migrants, for which I conducted fieldwork in Singapore from 2013 to 2014, with follow-ups in 2016 and 2017. My fieldwork was based on mixed methods, which included in-depth interviews, participant and non-participant observations, documents research, and digital ethnography. While this chapter is based predominantly on data from digital ethnography, I have included some interview data and participant observation. As I will explain in detail later, it was the difficulty in securing data on dating from Chinese migrant men's interviews that prompted the need for more extensive online research. The inclusion of ethnographic data that resonates with my digital ethnographic data also acts as a check on the digital data, ensuring research rigour.

Digital ethnography is significant as it can be used to understand 'how we live and act in a context that is, today, almost always co-constituted and entangled with digital technologies, content, presence and communication' (Pink *et al.*, 2016, p. 2). The digital ethnographic data discussed here is derived from online personal advertisements as placed on online forum discussions. In particular, I investigate sites such as bbs.sgcn.com and bbs.huasing.org, which are offshoots of the larger bbs Chinese site catering to Chinese nationals residing in Singapore. The sites are entirely in Chinese and dedicated to migrant topics; many sites are also linked to popular Chinese apps such as WeChat and Weibo. This means locals, including Chinese-Singaporeans, are unlikely to use the sites (English is the first language in Singapore and apps such as Facebook and WhatsApp are far more popular than Chinese apps). These sites are substantially different from e-dating sites, where the sole purpose is looking for a partner. Rather, the sites used in this research are forum sites with a variety of purposes. The latest news may be circulated in the 'Exposé' section and questions about educating children may be asked in the 'Babies' section, while wife-seeking personal ads may be placed in the 'Men and Women' section. These forums can be seen as a form of online community where regular forum users exist and many may already know or know of each other online and/or offline. The

decision to use forums as my site of query is due to practical reasoning. My research has shown that forums as mentioned above are popular with the Chinese community in Singapore – the regular updates and high daily traffic on the forums suggested as much. On the other hand, while e-dating sites may offer some data, they are not as easily accessible as the free forum sites. The likelihood of 'misrepresenting' (Hall et al., 2010) oneself is also lower, since many are regular forum users who maintain 'reputations' online and whose profiles can also be easily tracked by other forum users. It is through 'lurking' on these online forums and visiting the numerous online personal ads that I have found that many users employ neoliberal flexibility (Ong, 1999) in positioning their (Chinese) masculinity and heterosexuality to attract potential partners.

All the data was collected within a ten-year period, from 2005 to 2015, matching the unprecedented immigration growth in Singapore in the twenty-first century (Yeoh and Lin, 2012). The personal ads were published in Mandarin and translated by me. All names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect users' privacy. The identity of those posting as Chinese migrants residing in Singapore was inferred from the content of their posts, such as indicating that they live and work in Singapore, their educational qualifications in Singapore, discussion of regular hangouts in Singapore, and from their online profiles, which often stated their place of residence as Singapore and even the number of years they had lived there.

The internet is commonly acknowledged as an excellent site for ethnography; however, concerns around authenticity remain (Hine, 2000). How can one really be sure that the online user is Chinese or a migrant? But the issue of authenticity is as much a problem offline. Christine Hine argues that instead of taking authenticity as a problem to be resolved before analysis can take place, 'it would be more fruitful to place authenticity in cyberspace as a topic at the heart of the analysis' (2000, p. 49). This is the position I have taken. Even if the users I quote are not Chinese or migrants as claimed, their postings together present the ideals and norms of (Chinese) masculinity. The internet as a site of cultural reproduction means it is also a site of performance; 'talking' about (Chinese) relationships enables men to perform their masculinity (Christensen, 2003). As well as complementing my offline research, digital ethnography has the potential to locate more intricately how cultural traits are used socially to establish one's masculinity. With this in mind, the narratives that were chosen had to meet three criteria. As well as being typical of the comments on the forums and matching my offline fieldwork observations, they had to reflect the issue of (Chinese) masculinity.

Chinese Masculinity: Men as Breadwinners and Providers

The literature on Chinese masculinity is limited and noticeably dated (see Taga, 2005; Louie and Low, 2005; Louie, 2002). It also has an overt focus on the positioning of Chinese masculinities in Western contexts (Chen, 1999; Chow, 2008; Hibbins, 2005). Dominated by Louie's seminal work on Chinese masculinities (2002), the literature on Chinese masculinities can be seen to revolve around Louie's wen-wu ('cultural attainment-martial valour') dyad. While this is a useful paradigm to some extent, its utility is limited by its dated nature and limited applicability to the hybrid society of Singapore.

The particularity of Singapore lies in the state's governmentality – one that is highly contingent on state-prescribed ideals of Chinese-ness and therein, Chinese masculinity (Goh, 2012). Despite being a hybrid society where nearly one-third of its workforce is foreign (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2018), the Singaporean state maintains a dated colonial model of ethnic quotas, seeking to maintain the Chinese-Singaporean population at about 76 per cent. The low birth-rates, especially of Chinese-Singaporeans has translated to migration policies that prefers ethnic 'Chinese', including mainland Chinese migrants. Singapore is clearly an apt setting to study Chinese-ness and Chinese masculinity. On one hand, the state seeks to (re) produce a 'Chinese'-majority Singapore despite the population's diversity, on the other hand, different imaginaries and hierarchies of Chinese-ness have emerged in recent decades due to the large numbers of mainland Chinese migrants in Singapore. It is also the only 'Chinese'-majority state outside of Greater China (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan). It is in this setting that hierarchies of Chinese masculinities can be teased out and investigated.

Chinese-Singaporean masculinity is highly contingent on the state. Ford and Lyons (2012, p. 141) argued that 'idealized (Chinese) Singaporean masculinity is actively promoted via a state-driven model of paternalism built on traditional Chinese patriarchy'. Goh (2012) furthers this argument by suggesting that postcoloniality, Chinese-ness, and elitism have shaped the ideals of masculinity in contemporary Singapore. This privileges a kind of 'cosmopolitan masculinity' embodied by individuals who are comfortable with border-crossing; one which is transcultural, transnational, and 'globalized' (Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, 2015; Goh, 2012). In other words, Singaporean men face increasing pressure 'to become highly educated, globally mobile, financially able and successful career men' (Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, 2015, p. 871). However, despite hegemonic ideals of masculinity in Singapore being defined by symbols of money, economic success, and global mobility, scholars (Cheng, 2015; Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, 2015) have observed

that local men still 'reproduce dominant models of masculinity predicated on "breadwinning" and "providing"' (Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, 2015, p. 867). Money, economic success, and global mobility, then, are but newer symbols that translate to men's ability to be breadwinners and providers.

The above-mentioned symbols of Chinese masculinity in Singapore overlap with hegemonic masculinity discourses in China. In particular, the possession of a house or a car have become key indicators of a man's economic success and therein his desirability. This is neatly summed up by the founder of China's biggest dating website Jiayuan: 'The key things women search for on our site are a man's height, salary, and whether or not he owns a car or a house [...] It's very hard to satisfy women in China these days' (Keenlyside, 2012). In fact, a music video admonishing men for not having a car or a house became viral in 2011, stating lyrics such as 'A man after all should be like a man; Without a car, without a house, forget about finding a bride' (Fauna, 2011). While the video attracted many criticisms, it nevertheless illustrated the popular standards of a successful man in China. As DeFillipo has argued (Chapter Six in this volume), gender is relational, and women are complicit in reproducing hegemonic masculinity. At the same time, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argued, hegemonic masculinity is not that which all men can live up to but rather, only a small section of men can live up to while the rest can only aspire toward. It is notable, however, that such dominant discourses in China privilege modernization and globalization that is central to elite or middle-class lifestyles. Since the possession of a house or a car symbolizes wealth and money, and indeed, the ability to be a breadwinner and provider, the discourse of a successful man in China does not veer from the pervasive ideal of men as breadwinners and providers.

Higher-Wage 'Foreign Talent'

I use 'higher-wage' to refer to migrant workers who are waged higher than low-wage workers (more than S$2300 per month), but whose actual incomes may vary greatly. Also colloquially termed 'foreign talent', higher-wage workers are considered skilled professionals who come mainly from the United States, Britain, France, Australia, Japan, South Korea, China, and India. Since Singapore's main economic strategy is attuned to being home to a highly-skilled workforce, immigration policies have been liberalized to make it easier for higher-wage immigrants to gain permanent residency (PR) and Singaporean citizenship. Higher-wage migrants are usually Employment-pass

holders who hold 'a good university degree, professional qualifications or specialist skills' (Ministry of Manpower (MOM), 2019a) or are entrepreneurs and businessmen. The holders of these passes do not have to pay levies and may bring with them family members, if they earn more than S$6000 a month (MOM, 2019a). In other words the state defines their ability to hold higher wages in Singapore as their right to the red-carpet treatment. A select list of passes for workers in Singapore is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 List of passes for workers in Singapore

Pass type	Who is it for
S Pass	For mid-level skilled staff. Candidates need to earn at least S$2300 a month and meet the assessment criteria.
Work Permit for foreign worker	For semi-skilled foreign workers in the construction, manufacturing, marine, processing, or service sectors.
Employment Pass	For foreign professionals, managers, and executives. Candidates need to earn at least S$3600 a month and have acceptable qualifications.
EntrePass	For eligible foreign entrepreneurs wanting to start and operate a new business in Singapore.
Personalized Employment Pass (PEP)	For high-earning existing Employment Pass holders or overseas foreign professionals. The PEP offers greater flexibility than an Employment Pass.

Source: MOM (2019a) 'Work passes and permits', Available: http://www.mom.gov.sg/ (Accessed 10 May 2019).

Foreign talent are often assumed to be a homogeneous group and are seen as possessing 'cosmopolitan cultural capital' that would enable them to integrate in any part of the world (Cheah, 2006). This assumption is challenged by the presence of Chinese 'talent' who do not always fit the stereotype associated with Westerners (Yun, Jin, and Sixin, 2009). For instance, skilled Chinese migrants may not be highly-paid expatriates or transnational elites and may be more financially modest (Yeoh and Khoo, 1998). In fact, even as Leong (2008) suggested that more recent Chinese migrants as 'young dragons' are 'well educated', 'enterprising', and conversant in 'good English', Chinese migrants have been demonstrated to work in fields that may not be the norm for Western expatriates, such as wedding planner or scientist. They may also choose their migrant destination for a variety of less than economic reasons (Yeoh and Lin, 2013).

Certainly, the fact that many Chinese higher-wage workers may indeed not be highly paid suggests that their imaginaries of Chinese masculinity – contingent on economic success in the form of a house or car – may not

be more stable than that of low-wage workers. While traditional markers of economic success such as a car in Beijing can cost quite a lot, it remains an unreachable luxury for many (migrants or locals) in Singapore.[2] Furthermore, housing in Singapore is prohibitively expensive[3], where public housing – occupied by 82 per cent of Singaporeans – is only available for purchase by permanent residents and Singaporean citizens. Subsidies and new public housing are also only available to Singaporean citizens (HDB Speaks, 2013). In other words, the house and car that define an ideal man in China are even more expensive and unattainable in Singapore. Moreover, the prohibitive price of private housing in Singapore means that the alternative of obtaining public housing in Singapore is highly dependent on one's status of residence (PR or Singaporean citizenship). I argue therefore that male migrants' imaginaries of Chinese masculinity are increasingly tied to possessing permanent residence or Singaporean citizenship. This will be examined in detail later in the chapter.

Higher-wage Chinese Male Migrants: 'I have PR'

While higher-wage Chinese male migrants may not suffer the same 'failed masculinity' as their lower-wage counterparts in terms of economic status, their masculinity is challenged by local women based on their nationality, and by mainland Chinese migrant women based on their Singaporean citizenship status. A quick look at personal ads posted by women in a forum dedicated to Chinese migrants in Singapore showed that citizenship/PR status was often explicitly stated as a requirement for potential partners.[4] It was difficult to gain insights from my higher-wage Chinese male respondents with regards to dating Chinese-Singaporean women – none of them did, and those who had partners had Chinese ones. They also showed reluctance in discussing dating local women. They often claimed they had not suffered any discrimination, even without me suggesting so – clearly exhibiting that they were aware of discourses of local women

2 For instance, a Volkswagen Jetta Sportline with licensing in Beijing may cost around US$35,000. The same car alone in Singapore costs around US$84,000, not including licensing. For details on the value of cars in China, see <www.internations.org>.

3 A one bedroom apartment cost around US$50,000 in Beijing (<www.century21global.com>), while a similar private one bedroom apartment costs around US$250,000 in Singapore (<m.stproperty.sg>).

4 See <bbs.sgcn.com> '[80后专属] 89女征婚，非诚勿扰!'; '[80后专属] 28岁女 PR 北方人 找寻一直在找我的人'

shunning Chinese migrant men. Charlie (banker, Chinese, male, 35), for instance, had been in Singapore for five years and had attained Permanent Residence. He has an expensive car and had purchased a public apartment. He suggested to me that he was looking to settle down and his mother was getting worried he would not find a partner due to his age. I attempted to find out if he had ever dated local women, but he avoided my questions. Due to higher-wage Chinese male migrants' reluctance to discuss the topic, I have had to look to additional sources. Signs of discrimination against them were found from both my interview data and online research. For instance, one local online forum thread (http://forums.sgclub.com) posted on 21 October 2009 was titled 'girls, would u date/marry a china man who speaks in HEAVY china accent?' and exemplified sentiments against Chinese migrant men. The responses of Singaporean women to the thread included answers such as 'would you? for me, i would rather kill myself', and 'when i noe [sic] he is a PRC, it already turn me off. i would go "another *ah toing* (Chinese)!" pardon me, but i pretty dislike them [...]' The Chinese male migrant, despite his apparent socio-economic capital, then, is likely to find himself with limited marriage options in Singapore. This has led many to search for potential partners by placing personal ads in forums popular with Chinese migrants. These forums are entirely in Chinese and mainly used by Chinese migrants; Chinese-Singaporeans are far more likely to use English websites than Chinese ones as English is the first language for the majority of Singaporeans and many Chinese-Singaporeans' Chinese fluency is mediocre at best. In other words, ads posted on Chinese websites especially the bbs offshoots of mainland Chinese websites are mainly seeking Chinese migrants as partners and not Chinese-Singaporeans. The following ad was posted on http://bbs.huasing.org on 1 February 2016 and headlined 'Born in '86, reliable, high quality man looking for Miss Right':

> *I am a PR*, I graduated from a local public university, my academic qualification is greater than a bachelor degree. I work in the science and technology sector. I have studied and worked in Singapore for many years. I am currently slightly above thirty years old... *I have a strong sense of responsibility, am able to take hardship and accept challenges. I have the generosity and frankness of the Northerners, and the meticulousness and diligence of the Southerners.*
>
> My height is 175, I exercise regularly, my body is quite fit... I don't have a car as yet but will buy one if the need arises. I have personal investments and housing, though not in Singapore. I am currently working hard to earn more money to buy a house in Singapore soon.

> (...)
> Requirements: kind-hearted, warm, loving, lively, reasonable. Aged between 25 years to the age of 30; the ideal height is between 160-165, try not to exceed 170. Hope you have a good face shape, good facial features, comfortable to look at. Good figure! More voluptuous. I hope you are a graduate from a Singaporean public university (or a Chinese or foreign good university) with a bachelor's, Master's or Ph.D. I hope you are capable and have your own career to pursue and not contented with just a mediocre life...[5]
> (Fortune,[6] 2016; emphasis added)

Indeed, the ad above is typical of many others, especially in stating that one had PR and/or citizenship in the first few lines of self-introduction. It was also more common for the posters that declared their PR and/or Singaporean citizenship status to have a long list of requirements for the kind of female they were seeking, as can be seen.

That one's Chinese masculinity is contingent on having residency is also shown by the following post, where the poster's lack of residency (as yet) is a point he felt necessary to explain. Indeed, it shows an anxiety on the part of the poster that he may potentially get rejected by women who privilege men with residency. The following ad was posted on http://bbs.sgcn.com on 20 August 2015:

> Hello everyone, I am born in '80, October, 174CM, average size, double degree, I have worked in Singapore for five and a half years ... an engineer involved in electronic product design, EP (employment pass). I have little opportunities to get to know women due to the limited work environment. Hence, I am looking now for my other half.

5 86前靠谱优质男寻Miss Right: 本人PR，毕业于本地一所公立大学，学历大于本科，从事科技行业，在坡读书、工作一共很多年了，目前三十岁多一点...有北方人的大气、爽快，也有南方人的细腻、勤快。

身高接近175，有长期运动的习惯，身材挺好...目前没有车，但有需要会买车；自己有在做投资，也买有房产，不过不是在坡；目前努力做事业挣钱中，争取早日在坡也买房。

(...)

要求：心地善良、温暖、有爱心，活泼些，通情达理

年龄差不多25岁到30之间；身高最理想是差不多160到165之间，尽量别超过170

希望你脸型不错，五官端正，看着舒服

身材比例好！丰满些（公共场合就不说地很直白了）

希望你是本地公立大学（或者国内国外好大学）的本科、硕士或者博士

希望你能力不弱，也有自己的事业追求，不愿只是很平庸地过人生...

6 All names and nicknames have been changed to pseudonyms.

> Requirements: 160CM above, 26-32 year-old single, never-married girl, degree and above. I hope for my other half not to have complex past relationships. Due to my age, I have intentions to get married soon. Students and those looking for only fun, please stay away. If you have been married before, please stay away!
> (…)
> I am gentle, kind, easy-going, and slightly humorous, no bad habits, I do not smoke or drink. *I do not currently have PR, but I believe I will have everything I need after marriage, hence there is no need to worry including PR.*
> (…)
> I will settle here in the immediate future. *What will happen five or ten years later, who knows?* Hence, do not think too much!… I am waiting for you. Come on! I will care of you.[7]
> (tt, 2015, emphasis added)

The following ad was posted on http://bbs.sgcn.com on 23 August 2015 and is headlined 'A very sincere "nuan nan" ('warm man') looking for a girl he can look after for life':

> Hello, everyone. I am 29-year- old, soon to enter the age of settling down. Although my career has picked up, I have yet to find the girl that I want to look after. I am a heterosexual male, 175 cm, 65 kg. I studied high school, university in Singapore and am also working here. I am a small manager in a biomedical company. I have diverse interests; I drink but do not smoke, visit prostitutes or gamble. I have a passion for life, love sports and travelling. I have used my *Chinese* passport to travel to several continents and oceans (through formal applications for tourist visas) haha. I spend my leisure time volunteering for a local NGO. I like to experiment with cooking when I am home – hoping to be able to cook for you in the future. The girl I am looking for is not restricted to age. It is more important that we both get along. If you are interested,

7 大家好，本人80年10月人，174CM, 正常体型，211双学士，现在新加坡工作五年半，外企高工，电子产品设计方向，正常双休，EP, 由于工作原因，社交面教窄，认识的女孩比较少，所以现在借助这个平台寻求人生另一半，

要求： 160CM以上，26-32岁单身未婚女孩，大专以上，不希望对方的感情经历过于复杂，另外由于年龄原因，故希望有近期结婚打算的，玩玩的勿扰，学生勿扰，有过婚史的勿扰！本人脾气温和，善良，随和，少许幽默，无不良嗜好，不烟不酒（可少饮）。目前还不是PR，不过相信如果结婚领证后该有的都会有，所以PR也不纠结!… 近期会定居于此，后期五年或者十年以后的事情，谁说得准？所以，不要考虑那么多！我等的就是你，Come on ! I will care of you.

> please message me privately and we can exchange contact information. I am wholeheartedly looking forward to the appearance of The One.[8] (Cal, 2015; emphasis added)

Cal's ad was one of the most popular ads on the forum, amassing more than fifteen pages of views and comments, many of which were women expressing interest.[9] While Cal's popularity – despite lacking Singaporean citizenship and PR – may seem to suggest counter-hegemony, the fact that he deemed it necessary to mention his (lack of) citizenship status ('Chinese passport') underscores the importance of the PR/Singaporean citizenship in constituting desirable masculinity. While his popularity may suggest that female Chinese migrants do not necessarily buy into hegemonic masculine ideals of having citizenship and PR, his own imaginaries of (Chinese) masculinity appears to still hold citizenship and PR in high regard. Cal's flexibility is demonstrated in positioning himself as a 'nuan nan' (literally 'warm man') who can cook, does volunteer work, and wants to look after his future partner. By so doing, Cal steers attention away from his lack of Singaporean residency or citizenship. Moreover, while Cal has a considerably good job as a manager, he has listed few requirements for his future partner, unlike the first two users. This could very well be due to Cal's lack of citizenship status, which led him to adopt flexibility regarding the requirements for his future partner. This is in stark contrast with the first two users who because of both their considerably good occupations and citizenship status were able to make multiple demands on their future partner.

As Phoenix (2004, p. 229) discussed, neoliberalism is about the continued need to change oneself, make informed choices, engage in competition, and take up the chances available in the market and the government. Indeed, as the personal ads above show, higher-wage Chinese male migrants use a neoliberal approach to position their masculinities in order to access Chinese partners in the context of Singapore. By declaring one's possession

8 [80后专属] 满满的诚意暖男寻找可以照顾一生的妹子
大家好 小弟今年29岁，很快就要步入而立的年纪。尽管事业已经略有起色，但是身边还是缺少一个可以让我照顾的她。 所以特来接贵宝地来寻找她。 本人男，爱好女，175，65公斤。在坡读中学，大学，毕业工作至今。在某家生物医药做一个小小的manager。 平时爱好广泛，吃喝嫖赌抽，除了第一样，其他的都不沾。 热爱生活，喜欢运动，寄情于旅行，用我天朝护照走偏了几大洲几大洋（专业申请各国旅游签证）阿哈哈。 闲暇时候也喜欢去做志愿者，在某些NGO。 在家有时会精研以下厨艺，希望有机会可以给未来的你展示。 我希望的她，是女生，年龄没有太大的限制，主要是两个人聊得来就好。 如果你对我有那么一点兴趣。就请PM我站内信吧，然后我们交换联系方式。 全心全意期待那个人的出现

9 The average views and comments of most online wife-seeking posts are about three pages long.

of PR and/or citizenship in their personal ads, Chinese male migrants show awareness of the need to change oneself in a market that favours Singaporean citizenship, make choices (to take on citizenship/PR) that will increase their attractiveness in the marriage market, engage in competition with other users (who may not have citizenship/PR), and take up the chances (of citizenship/PR) available in the market and the government. My emphasis as shown in italics in the first two personal ads also reflects a privileged flexibility exemplified by both posters. While one suggested his flexibility in encompassing personality traits of both the Northerner and Southerner Chinese, and was willing to take on hardships and challenges, the other suggested he is up for anything in five or ten years. Indeed, Ong (1993, p. 770) noted that flexible subjects are able 'to turn displacement into advantageous positioning in a range of local contexts'. Furthermore, there is certainly a sense of 'value' that is attached to residency rights and citizenship. In a neoliberal society, declaring one's residency and citizenship status adds (or subtracts) value to (or from) oneself. Both the first two posters are essentially acting on the value they foresee in their residency and citizenship rights to prioritize it in the first few lines of their ads. In other words, these posters not only show an awareness of and willingness to adapt to the hegemonic ideals of Chinese masculinity, but they also employ a mean–ends calculus (Gershon, 2011) in displaying their 'value' as attractive 'commodities' in the marriage market. While the first two posters successfully used flexibility and their possession of citizenship/PR, Cal's personal ad showed an even greater need to (re)position oneself due to the lack of citizenship/PR. Although Cal, as a manager at a local firm and with the social and monetary capital to travel widely, is likely to be considered a suitable partner, his migrant status in Singapore has displaced his otherwise desirability, as shown in the fact that he felt necessary to declare his (lack of) citizenship/PR – that he (only) has a Chinese passport. The greater need for flexibility and (re)positioning is shown in how Cal 'markets' himself as a 'warm man', in both his headline and, subsequently, in his self-description. Indeed, it is his deliberate positioning as a warm man that can be read as exemplifying neoliberal flexibility.

The pervasiveness of male gender roles as providers and breadwinners is also implicit in the poster's ads. This is especially since citizenship/PR status, as mentioned earlier, are tied to the ability to purchase public housing in Singapore. As mentioned earlier, hegemonic ideals of Chinese masculinity in China are defined by the possession of a house or a car – symbols that show one has the wealth and ability to be the breadwinner and provider for the household. While the definition of a successful man may have switched to one that has citizenship/PR in the Singaporean context, the essential male

gender role as provider and breadwinner has not changed. Whether it is a house, a car, or citizenship/PR, all of these materials symbolize the ability for a man to be a breadwinner or provider for the family. Hence, while Chinese male migrants have had to be flexible in positioning themselves vis-à-vis ideals of citizenship/PR in Singapore, they still suffer the same male gender role expectations, whether in China or Singapore, of being breadwinners and providers.

Even as Ong's (1993) flexibility approach offers an insight into the neoliberal strategies of higher-wage Chinese migrant men, the approach is entirely context-specific and avoids identifying any patterns. The governmentality approach used by Ong as such sacrifices the macro for the micro. To bridge the gap between the micro and macro, it is productive to think of high-wage Chinese migrant men's neoliberal strategies through the theory of 'variegated neoliberalization' (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore, 2010). 'Variegated neoliberalization' emphasizes the uneven or variegated character of neoliberalization. Brenner, Peck, and Theodore (2010, p. 217) suggested that

> attention to the variegated character of neoliberalization provides a basis, we believe, for cutting a methodological path between mechanistic visions of a unitary global template, on the one hand, and counter assertions of unruly and unpatterned institutional flux on the other.

In other words, 'variegated neoliberalization' as an approach bridges the gap between approaches based on a unitary rule regime and governmentality approaches wherein neoliberalization is read as a collection of unruly and unpatterned occurrences. Applying the 'variegated neoliberalization' approach to analyze high-wage Chinese migrant men's strategies thus offers an opportunity to unsettle neoliberalization's hegemony as well as avoid missing entirely the 'macrospatial regulatory landscapes' of contemporary neoliberalization (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore, 2010, p. 202).

Following the 'variegated neoliberalization' approach, high-wage Chinese migrant men's neoliberal strategies should not be read simply as part of 'a haphazard accumulation of contextually specific projects of marketization' (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore, 2010 p. 202). Instead, their strategies should be read as formed by 'patterned and patterning processes – the consequence of continuous, path-dependent collisions between inherited institutional landscapes and emergent, path-(re)shaping programmes of regulatory reorganization at both micro and macro scales' (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore, 2010, p. 202). In other words, these strategies must be

read in the 'context of context' (*ibid.*) – strategies that are situated in the macro landscape of institutionalized neoliberalism. Indeed, the granting of citizenship/PR to foreigners in Singapore is entirely predicated on the 'value' of each individual. With the exception of one's being a spouse or unmarried child (below 21 years old) of a Singapore Citizen or Singaporean Permanent Resident, or aged parents of a Singapore Citizen, foreigners have to be either investors or Employment Pass/S Pass holders. The criteria are strict and clear. To be minimally eligible, an applicant for PR must have a fixed monthly salary of at least S$2300, a degree or diploma, and years of relevant work experience (MOM, 2019b). In other words, only *sufficiently* high-wage and 'skilled' workers are eligible to apply. While this immigration system of sifting out the 'undesirables' is not unique to Singapore, the Singaporean neoliberal approach to citizenship is a notable one. This has been covered by various scholars (Montsion, 2012; Sun, 2012; Ho, 2006) and will not be replicated at length here. However, it will be pertinent to note that Sun (2012) suggests the Singapore state emphasizes a neoliberal 'citizenship-as-economic responsibility' paradigm wherein merit is valued above all else. In a similar nod toward the state's neoliberal citizenship policies, Montsion (2012, pp. 478–479) argues that,

> Singapore's marketing strategy as a gateway between East and West relies heavily on the ability to define, produce and recruit desirable subjects … The new citizenship design combines mobility and talent to present who is welcome in the city–state. It is realized concretely through gateway initiatives in education and business where a state-driven distinction of un/desirability (based on class selectivity with racialized and gendered biases) is created, produced and reproduced.

As such, Montsion (2012, p. 479) noted that there are 'important interplays' between the state's design of making foreigners into desirable, neo-liberal citizens 'and their own struggles with the state project'. I read higher-wage Chinese migrant men's neoliberal strategies and struggles as situated in the Singapore state's institutional landscape of neoliberalization. Their strategies are in response to and in interaction with the institutional regime that dictates one's need to be entrepreneurial, to pursue the continued need to change oneself, make informed choices, engage in competition, and take up the chances available in the market and the government. Indeed, as a migrant that has *already* successfully migrated to Singapore to hold a higher-wage job, the higher-wage Chinese migrant man is likely to already be adept at marketing himself in this neoliberal regime.

At the same time, it is necessary to venture beyond merely locating and centring neoliberalism to subvert its hegemony. By digging even deeper into the *cultural* 'context of context' and drawing inspiration from the literature on contesting neoliberalism (Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard, 2007), I read higher-wage Chinese migrant men's neoliberal strategies not just as 'situated within responses to "neoliberalism"', *but also*, as having been 'always already formed through existing "contexts" and practices' (Smith, 2007, p. 212). As mentioned above, the *ability* to be breadwinners and providers is deeply embedded in the men's imaginaries of Chinese masculinity. While the neoliberal institutional landscape may have catalysed the strategies of shifting symbols (from house/car to citizenship/PR), the fundamental principle of these strategies – to present oneself as breadwinner and provider – remains fixed. In other words, even as the men's strategies are in response to and in interaction with institutionalized neoliberalization, their imaginaries of Chinese masculinity (as defined by breadwinners and providers) have persisted *culturally*. As Smith (2007, p. 214) argues in his analysis of food–labour exchange in Slovakia under neoliberal austerity,

> We should not treat such practices as simply responses and forms of resistance to neoliberal-induced austerity, however. Despite the increased relative importance of the subsistence economy, as formal incomes have fallen in real terms, these practices are complexly intertwined with deep-seated cultural practices of production.

Hence, even as one is able to locate high-wage Chinese migrant men's neoliberal strategies as responses to the institutional (co)-production of neoliberalization, one should not also lose sight of the deep-seated cultural aspects (of imaginaries of Chinese masculinity) embedded in the men's strategies. While such an analysis cannot be read as a direct contestation of neoliberalism, it nevertheless contributes to challenging and problematizing neoliberalism's hegemony.

Conclusion: Limits to Flexible Subject-Making

This chapter has made several contributions through examining higher-wage Chinese migrant men's 'flexible masculinity'. Specifically, I have shown that an examination of online personal sites can contribute empirically to the under-studied fields of migration and masculinity. At the same time,

I have highlighted higher-wage Chinese migrant men's marginal status in Singapore's marriage market, which has led them to adopt flexible subject-making strategies. However, my analysis suggests their strategies are not merely random micro acts of neoliberal flexible-making but are 'variegated' as a response to and interaction with Singapore's neoliberal institutional landscape. Indeed, 'place' remains an important site of analysis in both masculinity and migration studies. Similarly, culture remains integral to analyses of masculinity as well as to neoliberal flexibility. Through situating the men's strategies not only in a neoliberal landscape, but also in their cultural imaginaries, this chapter has challenged neoliberalism's hegemony and extended the theorizing of neoliberal flexibility beyond empirical studies.

It is necessary to note that Chinese migrant men have not merely responded to the neoliberal institutions of Singapore, but also to its institutionalized hegemonic masculinity. Singapore's institutionalized patriarchy has been widely discussed and will not be detailed here (Teo, 2007). Despite a change in symbols (of masculinity) and a change in geography and to some extent, culture,[10] the 'flexible masculinity' that was produced was not a resistant or alternative masculinity. Singapore's institutionalized hegemonic masculinity was one that was 'easy' to 'adapt' to or be subsumed under due to its overlap that is found in culturally-similar China. The men's adaptation could also potentially be due to its being a masculinity (of multiple masculinities) that is accepted and perpetuated on a global level. Chinese migrant men's 'integration' into this form of hegemonic masculinity – of men as breadwinners and providers – however, is also on another level, non-integration. Ghassan Hage argued that 'the proof of national belonging to the state (citizenship) can, in a practical sense operate as proof of national non-belonging to the dominant culture' (2012, p. 51). In other words, since possession of citizenship/PR status does not require declaration by those who have acquired citizenship by birth, higher-wage Chinese migrants' need to emphasize their citizenship/PR status as part of their flexible strategy stigmatizes them at a practical level. Essentially, personal ads stating one's citizenship/PR status reproduce one's national non-belonging. As such, personal ads contribute to the differentiated modalities of national belonging, resulting in the need to accumulate (national) belonging. The flexible subject-making of higher-wage Chinese migrants

10 I have written elsewhere on the co-ethnic's politics between Chinese migrants and locals in Singapore. See Ang, Sylvia, 'The "New Chinatown": The Racialization of Newly Arrived Chinese Migrants in Singapore', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44, no. 7 (2018), pp. 1177–1194.

thus faces a catch-22[11] wherein the declaration of citizenship/PR status can bring one closer to hegemonic ideals of Chinese masculinity, whilst at the same time reproducing one's national non-belonging. Indeed, examining the Chinese male migrant through the lens of ethnicity, class, and gender in context advances a more nuanced understanding of migration and its displacements. In particular, combining an intersectional lens with an analysis of neoliberal flexibility has contributed not just to an understanding of the gendered subjectivities of the higher-wage Chinese male migrant, but also to considering how the intersection of ethnicity, culture, and class can work to displace him.

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11 A problematic situation for which the only solution is denied by a circumstance inherent in the problem or by a rule.

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6. ‘Your Vagina is a Rice Paddy’

Hegemonic Femininities and the Evolving Moralities of Sex in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Cassie DeFillipo

Abstract
In Thailand, there is an adage that a woman’s vagina is her rice paddy wherein it is considered a natural resource she can harvest when necessary or desired. In a culture where sexual relationships are defined by norms of masculinity and femininity, women’s sexual decisions are often aimed at using this natural resource to perform femininity in culturally idealized ways. Through ethnographic work in commercial sex establishments, this chapter argues that heterosexual sex practices help women express and enact hegemonic femininities in Northern Thailand. In contributing to the literature on hegemonic and multiple femininities, the chapter contends that gender is relational and that analyses of men’s performances of masculinities are insufficient if reviewed separately from women’s performances of femininities.

Keywords: femininities, gender, masculinities, Thailand, moralities, sexuality

Introduction

Forty-year-old Hansa lives in the same community where she grew up, a small rural area surrounded by farmland and rice paddies on the outskirts of Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. Hansa is a successful small business owner and manager. It is her day off, so she cleans the house and folds laundry for her husband and two children. While Hansa says housekeeping is traditionally a woman’s task in Northern Thailand, her husband cleans the house on his days off too. Married once before to the Japanese father of her

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH06

children, her husband is her childhood sweetheart whom she reconnected with after getting divorced. Hansa says her marriage is a partnership and believes that her marriage reflects greater trends of gender equality in Thailand, stating:

> In the past people were taught that men were the front legs of the elephant and women were the followers. Women were weak … Now, men don't always have to be leaders or the 'front legs of the elephant'. Men and women can walk [together]. Women in the past were set to be only a housewife … And now women have more roles than in the past.

Throughout her life and within her marriage, Hansa has both privileged and challenged hegemonic performances of femininities. Hegemonic femininity can be defined as the reproduction of and conformity to 'the feminine gender role' (Krane, 2001, p. 18), which consists of the characteristics defined as womanly (Schippers, 2007). A hegemonic femininity, while idealized, is not power-wielding per se although levels of power are often available to the women best able to perform femininities. Hegemonic femininity importantly bolsters the performances of the hegemonic man, ensures the dominant position of men over subordinated women (Schippers, 2007), and often accommodates the interests and desires of men (Karupiah, 2016).

Individuals in Chiang Mai actively engage with the increasingly global market economy and, in doing so, remake social worlds, cultural meanings, and local economies (Wilson, 2004, p. 189). These engagements have led women like Hansa to choose to perform femininities in new and novel ways. Throughout recent history, gender roles have been more rigidly structured with established performances for those fitting into gender binaries, but evolving sexual moralities have created space for new negotiations of hegemonic femininity in Northern Thailand. Challenged and empowered by an emerging materialism and desire for economic upward mobility, women's performances of hegemonic femininity – and how they relate to and uphold hegemonic masculinities – have incorporated neoliberal forces into their fight to be feminine. Hansa, for example, has seen women in her generation and younger generations live life differently than older generations, where women's responsibilities were primarily in the home and involved what Hansa calls 'obedience' to their husbands. The traditional ideals of a woman in Northern Thailand are still well known by men and women of all age ranges, including Hansa, but they are met with new enactments of femininity, especially in urban and suburban areas that have greater exposure to technology and neoliberal forces. Hansa says, 'Now, I can see

that there are more strong and independent women … women are more self-confident and can do a lot of things like men'.

Not far from Hansa in the centre of Chiang Mai is Pimchan, a 26-year-old woman who works at a karaoke bar that targets foreign men. For Pimchan, entering the commercial sex industry is an opportunity to be a caretaker for her family. She sends at least $200 home each month to cover the expenses of her mother and daughter and tends to send any extra money home to support her family. 'If I keep it, I wouldn't save it,' Pimchan says. 'I would shop'. Her choice not to spend her earnings on desired material items shows that she prioritizes her ability to perform as a caretaker for the family. Research (Van Esterik, 2000; Wilson, 2004, p. 93) has found that a daughter's caretaking obligation is often measured by material support, be it money or belongings.

While these two women have drastically different daily lives, both Hansa and Pimchan consistently renegotiate their performances of femininity through their sexual practices and relationships. Stemming from ethnographic research and utilizing the multiple masculinities theory as a conceptual framework, this research argues that the effects of neoliberal globalization can be seen in women's performances of femininities. In addition, while women are negotiating a wide range of gender performances, these performances of hegemonic femininities continue to perpetuate existing forms of hegemonic masculinities.

Hansa and Pimchan, while leading drastically different lives, both have vaginas, or 'rice paddies' that they have used to pursue economic upward mobility. This phrase can be used as a visualization of the sexual decision-making process among some women. Wilson (2004, p. 94) states, 'Sexual exchanges between men and women have long been accompanied by material, even cash, exchange; this kinship economy links heterosexual relations with material exchange'. The decision to engage in sexual relations, for some women, is looked upon as an opportunity to grow and harvest material resources. This chapter argues that women harvest their rice paddies – or engage in sexual decision-making – not only to accumulate economic and material wealth but also as a means to perform hegemonic forms of femininity. This research contributes to the literature on hegemonic and multiple femininities, arguing that gender is relational, and that men's performances of masculinities cannot be holistically interpreted if reviewed separately from performances of femininities. Limitations in the literature about hegemonic femininities, specifically related to hegemonic femininities in Asia and hegemonic femininities and the sex industry, signify a need to discover how performances of hegemonic femininities affect gender relations and gender practices among countries in the region and more

globally. This chapter aims to address these gaps. I first discuss how money and modernization have transformed heterosexual sex practices in Northern Thailand and provide an overview of multiple masculinities and femininities as active and developing theoretical frameworks. Next, I examine how women's sexual choices are affected by their desires to perform hegemonic femininities. Lastly, I contend that women's performances of hegemonic femininities preserve hegemonic masculinities in Northern Thailand.

Hegemonic Femininities: Upholding Hegemonic Masculinities

In 1995, Connell reformed the study of men by offering the multiple masculinities theoretical framework through which to analyze masculinity. Connell (1995) states that each society produces and maintains a form of hegemonic masculinity, which is a more dominant, power-wielding form of masculinity. This form of masculinity has become the primary framework within masculinities studies used to scrutinize the actions of men. Non-hegemonic masculinities are found in three separate social categories: complicit, subordinated, and marginalized (Connell, 1995; Connell, 2000). It is important to note that men and women can fit into more than one of these categories throughout their lives. Complicit masculinity suggests that the majority of men may not be able to perform hegemonic masculinities but are still complicit in supporting hegemonic masculinities because they derive a patriarchal dividend that ensures men's collective power and privilege over women (Coles, 2008; Connell, 1995). Subordinate masculinities contradict performances of power-wielding masculinities (Schippers, 2007), with non-heterosexuality serving as an example of a subordinate masculinity in both Thai and Western settings. Marginalized masculinities, in contrast, recognize intersectionality and refer to performances of manhood by men of less power-wielding classes, races, ethnic groups, religions, and nationalities (Schippers, 2007; Connell, 1995). Women also fit into complicit, subordinated, and marginalized categories of femininities, although they may face additional adverse consequences for not performing hegemonic femininities given that they do not benefit from a patriarchal dividend. Hegemonic masculinities are often linked to a powerful and privileged social class whereas men who perform subordinate masculinities have been found to 'express themselves through dominance, violence or sexuality in relationships to female partners' (Groes-Green, 2009, p. 288). Men tend to perform hegemonic masculinities because, in addition to losing social rewards, they also face corrective actions if they are unable to (Herdt, 1981; Herzfeld, 1985; Fordham, 1995; Plester, 2015). Initially, Connell

documented only one hegemonic masculinity in any given setting. New theoretical and empirical research has revealed otherwise, and this research will follow Messerschmidt (2012) Schnurr *et al.* (2016), and Kitiarsa (2012) in discussing the terms 'hegemonic masculinities' and 'hegemonic femininities' in the plural form.

Since performances of masculinities are relational, masculinities research cannot be done without examining men's relationships with women. While many researchers in masculinities studies have previously analyzed men independently of their relationships with women (Connell, 1995; Herdt, 1981; Herzfeld, 1985), this is now being rectified by researchers who recognize that gender is relational and that women play an important role in male performances of masculinities (Hearn, 2004; Schippers, 2007; Schnurr *et al.*, 2016). Those able to perform hegemonic masculinities may receive many benefits, including power and money, but one of the greatest profits is access to women; this is one of the reasons that recognizing women's roles in men performing manhood is vital. Women, as active agents of power, influence and encourage men to perform masculinities in various ways. The decisions women make, and the actions women take, play an essential role in upholding gender roles and performances of hegemonic masculinities. The research concerning hegemonic and non-hegemonic femininities is still budding in comparison to research on masculinities and remains largely underdeveloped (Schippers, 2007; Schnurr *et al.*, 2016) and under-researched (Budgeon, 2014). One exception is the study by Schippers (2007), who developed a framework to analyze hegemonic femininities that were contingent upon 'the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinities and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (2007, p. 94).

Hegemonic forms of femininity maintain gendered structures of power. Thailand provides a lucid example of this dynamic gendered hierarchy that hegemonic femininities are built upon. Women in Thailand simultaneously hold images of powerful women from the past alongside subordinate positions at work and in their households (Van Esterik, 2000). Subordinate positions are performed through a range of choices that Thai culture connects to the 'ideal woman', the primary hegemonic form of femininity. While women who do not fulfil hegemonic forms of femininity may face corrective measures socially (Plester, 2015; Gilmore, 1990), no women are powerless (Schnurr *et al.*, 2016). They have the ability to resist, challenge, and ultimately transform expectations and performances of hegemonic femininities (Krane, 2001; Schnurr *et al.*, 2016).

Research Settings and Methodology

Drawing upon a constructivist epistemology, this project is based on one year of field research in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Built from ethnographic research consisting of approximately 250 hours of participant observations in numerous sex establishments, this research also includes 60 formal interviews and approximately 75 informal interviews. As Willis and Trondman (2000) state, ethnography is valuable not just owing to the data it produces culturally, but also because it analyzes the relational factor. In this particular project, ethnography provides the framework for building a theoretical understanding of femininities in Thailand and the impact of neoliberal forces on the range of feminine performances by Thai women. Ethnography allows for the identification of feminine ideals in the culture through interviews and for the contrast of these ideals to women's enactments and performances of femininity. No other model of quantitative or qualitative research would be more appropriate for an in-depth examination of such a sensitive topic, especially in terms of analysing relationships and how they affect the performance of femininities and masculinities in the context of sex.

To effectively argue that performances of hegemonic femininities uphold and perpetuate performances of hegemonic masculinities, a brief overview of gender norms in Thailand is necessary. Historically, gender roles in Thailand can be fluid and have always been perceived by the west as non-patriarchal because the culture was – and to some extent still is – matrilineal. Many Thai women observed a matrilocal kinship system, which, in reality, was a gendered division of power (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey, 1987). After marriage, men tended to live with the woman's family. In this way, women customarily had great power and responsibility within the home, whereas men controlled a sphere of power outside the home that included religious institutions, the military, and the government. Women held responsibilities for daily tasks, including budgeting money, cleaning, and caring for parents. Women were also expected to work outside of the home to support the family through earning an income, although the positions they qualified for were often socially regulated to what interviewees referred to as 'inside' jobs, or a particular set of lower-paying jobs that were seen as appropriate jobs for women. Women completing these domestic responsibilities and inside jobs allowed men to seek success outside of the home environment, primarily through achieving spiritual enlightenment. Kirsch (1975, p. 191) explains:

> Buddhist factors serve to rank various kinds of activities: religious highest, political next, economic lowest. Thai men have been so overwhelmingly

> committed to religious and political achievements that economic activities have been left up to non-Thai and to Thai women. Thai women are left with such economic roles because in religious belief, in the structure of religious roles and rituals, and in popular thought, they are deemed to be more deeply rooted in this-worldly activities and secular concerns than men.

Kirsch's argument demonstrates that women's autonomy and freedom do not necessarily make them equal to men in Thai society; rather, Kirsch contends that autonomy is given to women to permit them to conduct specific tasks in a male-dominated culture. Evidence that women, while leaders in the home, still live in a male-dominated society can be seen in the superstitions that men and women are expected to follow in the home to honour men and maintain men's purity, traditions that informants said are still being practiced today. Senawong (2006, p. 21) shares some of these practices:

> It is considered inauspicious to wash women's clothes together with men's clothes. The washing has to be done separately in separate containers. Men must not go under the clothes lines where women's clothes are usually hung out to dry even when the lines are empty. When drying clothes in the sun, men's clothes must be hung on the highest lines. Women's clothes are hung on the lower lines. Women's undergarments must be hung on the lowest line and arranged in such a way that they are hidden from view [...] [and women] cannot step over a man's body or touch a man's head.

This range of superstitions may serve as a reminder to women that their autonomy within the home sphere is limited. Using heterosexual sexual choices as a lens into Thai culture, this chapter maintains that Northern Thailand is undergoing a reconfiguration of the daily lived experiences and performances of femininities as a consequence of the changing social valuations of money amongst newly-accepted neoliberal notions. Similar to Ang's discussion of Chinese migrant men in Chapter Five, the strategies employed by Thai men and women to make money morally, i.e. according to gendered norms and expectations, must be read in the context of context (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore, 2010, p. 202) and situated within institutionalized neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is often viewed as an economic doctrine that aims to limit the government, but governments in Southeast Asia often modify state-wide practices to better participate in the global market (Ong, 2006; Stivens, 2007, p. 292). Ong (2006, p. 3) states that neoliberalism can

be conceptualized 'as a new relationship between the government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as non-political and nonideological problems that need technical solutions'. Ong's (2006) theory of neoliberalism as exception articulates that neoliberal policies are not as separate from the government as they may seem, and in fact neoliberal policies push governments to change their relationship with the governed. Neoliberalism, thus, is a 'malleable technology of governing taken up in different ways by different regimes' (Stivens, 2007, p. 292). The government responses to neoliberal pressures are reconfiguring relationships and shifting power relations between the governing and the governed. These shifting meanings of money and modernization do not discard ideals of hegemonic femininity, but rather are employed to help women fulfil them. The data analysis that follows will argue that 1) modernizing forces and the quest for money have transformed the enactments of heterosexual sex practices in Northern Thailand; 2) women's sexual choices are affected by their desires to perform hegemonic femininities; and 3) women's performances of hegemonic femininities actively perpetuate norms of hegemonic masculinities.

Money and Modern Moralities: The Transformation of Sex in Chiang Mai

Modernizing forces have complicated hegemonic femininities in Northern Thailand through exposure to and acceptance of greater sexual choices for Thai women and greater potential economic gain surrounding sexual choices. Economic upward mobility in the Chiang Mai Province has become a seemingly attainable goal in a globalized economy that has turned Chiang Mai into a small urban centre. According to Angeles and Sunanta, 'Villagers and *mia farangs* [Thai women married to Western men] use economic upward mobility markers to measure their success: modern houses, increased farmland size, conspicuous consumption of expensive commodities, and adherence to gendered familial expectation and filial roles, particularly the extent to which daughters take care of their parents [...]' (2009, p. 568). While Angeles and Sunanta focus their research on the Thai wives of Western men, many interviewees in Chiang Mai used these same economic upward mobility markers to define success. Women involved in the sex industry, for instance, tended to share a narrative that they had chosen the sex industry as a career because it was the most direct route to economic upward mobility for themselves and their families. Women in and out of the sex industry discussed using their sexual relationships to fulfil economic upward mobility

markers, often choosing who, when, and why to marry and have sexual relationships based on the potential for economic upward mobility (Muecke, 1992; Angeles and Sunanta, 2009; Hoang and Yeoh, 2015).

Hansa exemplifies choosing sexual relationships with a goal to gain economic upward mobility. Many years ago, Hansa's parents encouraged her to break up with her Thai partner because he was not financially stable and to marry a wealthy Japanese man instead. Hansa explains: 'It doesn't mean that my parents didn't want me to get married with a Thai man. But my parents didn't want me to have a poor life'. She continues, 'They pushed me to marry a Japanese man. I had a Thai boyfriend, but my parents didn't allow me to be in a relationship with him'. Hansa followed her parents' advice and sought economic upward mobility through marriage. Now that she is divorced from her former husband and is financially secure with her own company, she has married the Thai man who she had previously left on the encouragement of her parents. In contrast, 26-year-old teacher Winai says she is hoping for a Western man to marry because she believes all Thai men cheat and are *kikia* or 'lazy'. 'Love isn't necessary. I think *ngern* ['money'] is necessary' she says. 'You don't get [a] full [stomach out] of love'. Much like Hansa's decision to marry a Japanese man, Winai believes a Western partner will provide more economic support and has made decisions on who to date and even where to work in order to accommodate her belief. Modernization has given women like Hansa and Winai new tools to negotiate their performances of hegemonic femininities and to use sexual decision-making to realize one aspect of performing hegemonic femininity – fulfilling gendered expectation and filial roles.

Through the adoption of transnational industry, foreign products, and technology, previously foreign ideas about sex and relationships have been localized and interpreted into local traditions. Two such practices are casual sex and pre-marital relationships. Sexuality as a social construction has been supported by a range of empirical studies (Hoang and Yeoh, 2015; Hirsch, 2003). Female interviewees expressed an awareness of the social construct that women should stay chaste in Thai culture until marriage, but this was met with a separate and conflicting expectation among younger generations that young women should be able to attain boyfriends. Some younger female interviewees stated that they felt a great pressure among peers to have boyfriends, often using online sites or visits to bars and clubs to meet potential partners. Older female interviewees said that casual sex or being caught with a man before marriage held punitive consequences for previous generations but that these consequences are no longer as severe or widespread. Chirawan describes this, stating that 'in the past, parents

didn't allow women to hang out or have a boyfriend. Now, there are some parents who allow their children to go hang out and have a boyfriend or a girlfriend'. For previous generations, the acceptance of foreign influences in the form of crypto-colonization (Herzfeld, 2002) led to a differentiation and protection of Thai values and traditions. Now, part and parcel to the effects of neoliberalism, previously protected traditions co-exist alongside the foreign influence of Korean pop music videos, cinemas full of Western movies, and large numbers of foreign expatriates and visitors in Chiang Mai.

Decha, a 20-year-old male student, describes this transformation. He states, 'Society has changed and [now Thailand] is like a foreign society'. As foreign values intertwine with Thai traditions, women renegotiate Thai attitudes about sex to create hybrid hegemonic femininities that authorize women to have more sexual freedom. This sexual freedom, together with the aim of many women to realize economic upward mobility, has led to the normalization of using one's sexualized body for financial gain – or harvesting one's rice paddy. For the interviewees, participation in the sex industry was seen as normal and acceptable for women hoping to attain economic upward mobility. Asnee, a 22-year-old male student from a rural area in a neighbouring province, holds problems in the agricultural sector responsible for steering women into the sex industry. 'The farmers who are the grass roots people were disturbed by the industrial sector. It affected people', he explains. 'They have to change their job and can become a sex worker. Sex work is one kind of job where they can earn the money for their survival'. Asnee then affirms that commercial sex work is an acceptable job for attaining economic upward mobility. Similarly, Chakan and Kamnan, two men in their twenties who were interviewed separately, both referred to the sex industry as an 'honest career'. Chuachai added, 'It is the right for sex workers to work. It is a kind of job'. Many women shared the belief that the sex industry was an acceptable career. Achara, a 20-year-old female student, said, 'It's an occupation. If they get money like one kind of service or a job, it's OK. If they keep seeing each other or have emotional attachment, this is not good'. Chaveevan, a 22-year-old female, shared a similar opinion, 'I think [sex work] is quite normal in Thailand and I think it should be legal [...] I think sex work is a kind of job'. Adranuch, a 52-year-old woman, said that many commercial sex workers do not have many opportunities for employment, and that she does not have any 'negative thinking' about them. 'If men go to visit sex workers, it is not wrong. But if men have another girl [a minor wife], if men have a lover, it is immoral', she explained.

For some women, choosing to engage in casual sex is a way to gain social and financial capital. While a fixation on money within complex sexual

relationships appears incompatible with morality in many other contexts (see Alipio and Hoang, this volume), in Thailand many women fixate on money as a means to gain moral integrity through providing familial and religious support. In addition to building connections, some women may expect gifts, money, and financial support from the men they have sex with, in addition to men paying for their meals and outings. This is reflective of Wilson's (2004, p. 13) finding that exchange is the mechanism for many relationships in Thailand. Aroon, a 20-year-old male student, provides an example of this. Aroon visited commercial sex workers at a massage parlour when he was seventeen but now only engages in casual sex regularly with women he meets at whiskey bars. He says that sometimes women request money from him after they have casual sex, on average around A$80, and he honours these women's request. Increasingly challenged gender norms, partnered with increased exposure to foreign ideas and technology, have led to a range of new moralities within Thailand that allow women to perform hegemonic femininities through neoliberal capitalist systems. In Chapter Ten of this volume, Huijsmans clarifies that money shapes social relations and that the value of money is shaped by social relations. This is evident within morality in Thailand. New moralities have not replaced more traditional moralities, but instead co-exist with them. While some individuals have chosen to follow more established moralities and reject modern ones or vice versa, more commonly individuals struggle between what respondents referred to as traditional and modern ideas. The mix of modernizing forces that leads to social pressures to achieve economic upward mobility have been met with a greater number of Thai females voluntarily entering the sex industry to economically support themselves and their families, with some women using the sex industry as a contingency career or means to occasionally earn extra income. In addition, some women engage in the commercial sex industry to meet potential foreign husbands or long-term sexual partners (Vaupel, 2016).

Female interviewees in Northern Thailand shared that they are re-negotiating their roles as wives, employees, and citizens. Globalization has impacted Thai culture in negative and positive ways, but increased educational levels and economic independence have allowed women more autonomy than ever before. Women have used this autonomy to re-negotiate their performances of hegemonic femininities. According to Humphery-Smith (1997, p. 567):

> While the traditional Thai woman was apparently expected to make her husband's life comfortable and tolerate his infidelities in return for

> financial security and status, the findings suggest that Thai women are beginning to demand more from their relationships. With increased educational and economic opportunities Thai women are slowly gaining in social and economic independence, and through the mass media and globalization women are becoming more aware of the options available to them.

Humphery-Smith clarifies that the hegemonic form of the feminine has changed enough to allow women increased educational and economic opportunities. Women have also new avenues of power, which can be used to re-negotiate their gendered ideals and relationships. Somswasdi and Nicholas (2004, pp. 55–56) state:

> Women have made significant inroads in the struggle for equality, particularly in the areas of education and the civil service. Women are getting married later or not at all, travelling, and obtaining varied life experiences and exploring their sexuality in new ways. As women transform themselves, so too are the relations between men and women transformed.

These transformations have not just changed relationships between men and women but have challenged men's performances of hegemonic masculinities. Women have challenged existing hegemonic masculinities in numerous ways, including by staying single, adopting new ideas about fidelity, and searching for foreign partners who enact diverging hegemonic masculinities from Thai men. The National Statistical Office in Thailand states that more women are choosing to stay single (Peek *et al.*, 2015), which is likely a response to women's amplified financial autonomy and the negative consequences of men performing hegemonic masculinities. While non-marriage was considered an aberration just a few decades ago, there have been considerable increases in the number of unmarried women and men (Jones and Ramdas, 2004). Female respondents also stated that fidelity was important to hinder diseases, and younger generations of women were more open to the possibility of divorce. Kalaya, a 19-year-old woman, says, 'If I am a wife and I know that my husband visited sex workers, I couldn't accept this and maybe we would separate. It is very likely that I will divorce that man because I am afraid of diseases. I am afraid that man will spread HIV to me'. As illustrated by 31-year-old Isra, some women feel not only empowered, but also required to leave relationships where cheating is normalized: 'If he goes out with friends and his friends visit massage parlours and he is

unaware we have to discuss it. But if he always goes, I will divorce [him] because I am afraid of diseases'. While divorce has been denounced in previous generations, fear of diseases matched with women's economic independence has allowed women to decide whether they are willing to accept men's hegemonic behaviours – which has swayed some Thai male respondents to alter their behaviours.

Thai women also challenge localized hegemonic masculinities in pursuing partnerships with Western men. Yet, while these relationships challenge localized masculinities in some ways, they simultaneously allow women to perform hegemonic femininities by adhering to 'traditional Thai notions of marriage wherein women are caretakers and men are breadwinners' (Esara, 2009, p. 420). Esara asserts that these positive opinions of Western husbands exist due to transnational contacts, observations of foreign tourists, and television programmes (2009). Some women also favour foreign men due to their perceptions of the greater level of financial support they can provide (Odzer, 1994). Women's choices to stay single, divorce, or search for foreign partners challenge hegemonic masculinities, which indicates that Thailand may currently be undergoing an evolution of gender norms that will likely have very tangible effects on the daily lived experiences of Thai men and women. As new negotiations of hegemonic femininities are still expressed and enacted through heterosexual sex practices, they still pay tribute to more traditional gender roles and are built out of the same social system that idealizes certain feminine performances and punishes others.

Women's Sexual Choices and the Desire to Perform Hegemonic Femininities

Scholars have defined one form of hegemonic femininity in Thailand as the accomplished wife and mother, who should be submissive, obedient, and attentive to her husband's needs (Khuankaew, 2002; Tantiwiramanond and Pandey, 1987). A woman can perform this ideal form of hegemonic femininity as a sexually submissive woman who honours her family by waiting to be a wife to have sex. Even after marriage, women should be submissive and discreet in the bedroom. Tangchonlatip found that Thai wives were ashamed to show sexual desire (1995) and Vichit-Vadakan found that 'wives as "good" women are not expected to perform sexually in the same manner as "bad" women could and would do' (1996, p. 443). These structured archetypal definitions of 'good' and 'bad' women preserved in Thai culture sustain performances of hegemonic masculinities in Thailand,

which include extra-relational sex and visits to sex workers, in numerous ways. For instance, women who are performing the 'good' form of hegemonic femininity are less likely to question men's outside sexual choices, given that doing so is not culturally appropriate. Chirawan, a 20-year-old woman from a rural area outside of Chiang Mai, describes her definition of the ideal woman:

> A woman should be neat, well-behaved, and be a virtuous lady following Thai tradition in the past. She shouldn't giggle. Women should be calm and quiet. In the household, women should know how to take care of a husband and children, how to cook and clean the house.

Women who perform this type of femininity were tasked with inhibiting their sexuality because being too sexual would be seen as *raan* (ร่าน), which means 'slut' or 'woman who behaves badly sexually'. As a result, women who aim to perform this form of hegemonic femininity are unlikely to express their own sexual needs. Ambhom, a 42-year-old woman in the service industry, says, 'I don't tell [my husband how to pleasure me] because I want him to think I am happy to have sex with him. [My pleasure is] not important'. Business owner Hansa, when asked if she is willing to speak to her husband about sexual enjoyment, responds that she feels confident telling her husband when she does not want to have sex but would not tell him how to pleasure her. When asked about sexual enjoyment and orgasm with her partner, which in the Thai language is referred to as reaching 'happiness', Hansa plays on words when she says that while she may not orgasm, she is 'happy' just hugging her husband. Anchali, a 55-year-old woman, says, 'It is normal for women to sometimes pretend they are happy [i.e. orgasm] so the men will be happy. Women want men to have pleasure and just want to pass [get through] sex'.

Since both femininities and masculinities are not static social constructs but are subject to redefinition and renegotiation (Hoang and Yeoh, 2011), many women are attempting to re-negotiate their performances of femininities through speaking with their partners about sex and sexual pleasure for the first time. Dara, a 22-year-old student, says she likes to talk to her boyfriend about sex. 'For me, I feel comfortable, but he likes to change the topic and doesn't like that,' Dara says. 'He doesn't like a woman that talks too directly about these things, but for me it is just a joke. Before we were girlfriend and boyfriend, we were friends, so it is only joking. But if I had a boyfriend who was older than me, I wouldn't talk to him like that because it isn't polite'. Dara and Anchali enact sexuality in different ways, but in both

examples the woman's sexual choices are affected by her desire to perform hegemonic femininities. Anchali wants to ensure that her husband is happy even though she says she does not enjoy sex and enacts a form of hegemonic femininity by allowing him sexual release without recognizing any sexual needs of her own. In contrast, Dara chooses to discuss sex – to the discomfort of her partner – but does so while still indicating the limitations of what she can say, when she can say it, and to whom. Thai women are actively negotiating sexual relationships in lieu of cultural ideals of femininity. Dara and Anchali make many sexual decisions that allow them to perform hegemonic femininities – although as can be seen in the case of Dara, who chose to actively discuss sex with her partner to her partner's discomfort, these women are simultaneously renegotiating femininities.

For a selected number of individuals, primarily from lower-class backgrounds (Askew, 2002), choosing to enter the sex industry serves as a long-term plan to perform hegemonic femininities within their families and communities. While the literature on hegemonic femininities and sex work is underdeveloped, sex work has historically been a detriment to a woman's marriage prospects in Northern Thailand. However, the social stigma is mild, which may account for the widespread participation in commercial sex by Thai women (Peracca *et al.*, 1998). In Chapter One of this volume, Alipio and Hoang state that money has at times been treated as a prevailing force capable of corrupting social relationships (Helleiner, 2017, p. 145). On the other hand, in Chapter 3 Hoang describes money as a linchpin that holds social ties together and a means to demonstrate social status. In the case of the sex industry in Northern Thailand, all these statements are true. Women who engage in the commercial sex industry often do so as a means to manage social relationships within their families, the success of which is often contingent on their economic gain. For instance, some women choose to enter the sex industry upon the prompting of their families; in addition, when women choose to leave the sex industry, they are often pressured by their families back into the field once family members are no longer receiving regular payments (Vaupel, 2016). Kulap, for instance, is a 26-year-old commercial sex worker who left the sex industry for a short time but then returned to it because she was not earning enough income elsewhere. When she sells sex, she earns 1100 baht ($48.80) plus tips. She says that she is driven to do the work in order to care for her family. Kulap states, 'My mother knows about my work, but she does not blame me because this is the kind of job where I can earn enough money for us. My brother works currently, but he always requests money from my mother'. While commercial sex work is not seen by many as a hegemonic form of femininity

because it is neither power-wielding nor idealized, commercial sex work does create a forum wherein hegemonic masculinities can be enacted. Successful commercial sex workers perform a form of femininity within the context of their work in order to allow for men to feel manly. Participating in the sex industry permits men to purchase status, dignity, position, and dominance over other men through the consumption of commercial sex work (Hoang, 2015), while male clients and female commercial sex workers, through their interactions, 'reproduce hierarchies of desire and desirability outside macro-level institutions such as nation-states, from the bottom up through the relations between individuals in the mundane discourses and practices that construct new hierarchies in everyday life' (Hoang, 2014, p. 527). Zhang (this volume) states that the moral economies of making an income justifies practices that are otherwise illicit. This is also true in the Thai context wherein the illegal act of working in the sex industry has become normalized precisely because it serves as an avenue for women to further the moral positions of themselves and their families.

Commercial sex work is one of the few means available for moral and economic upward mobility for women of lower-income classes, which is true of a bulk of the Thai women who enter commercial sex work (Muecke, 1992; Askew, 2002). A strong obligation for Thai daughters is to provide economic support to the family (Muecke, 1992), a tradition that is particularly strong in the northern region of Thailand (Boonchalaksi and Guest, 1998). This tradition can be understood in light of the Buddhist belief that supporting one's family is a way for daughters to gain merit and show gratitude toward their parents (Kaime-Atterhog *et al.*, 1994). Sending the majority of her earnings to her family indicates a desire to enact one of the idealized forms of femininity in Thailand as the family caretaker, a woman who financially and physically supports the family members around her (Askew, 2002; Angeles and Sunanta, 2009). This desire to perform the role of the caretaker is not new, and researchers have established that women will go to great lengths to enact it. Muecke recognized in the 1990s that 'Prostitution, although illegal, has flourished at least in part because it enables women, through remittances home and merit-making activities, to fulfil traditional cultural functions of daughters, conserving the institutions of family and village-level Buddhism, as well as government' (Muecke, 1992, p. 891). While this research found that women fulfil traditional cultural functions of daughters similarly to the 1990s, the means that women used to meeting this ideal are modern and reliant upon neoliberal structures.

The women who successfully perform the role of caretaker support their extended families, including their parents, siblings, and children.

For 40-year-old Hansa, performing this role by building a house for her parents is a vital responsibility in her role as a daughter. Hansa said that while she considers financially supporting her parents to be her duty, the Japanese father of her two children comes from a different cultural background and refuses to let her use the family money on supporting her parents. Hansa said that while her former husband wanted to focus on supporting the smaller family unit, she could not accept that. 'As a Thai, I have my parents to think of and I cannot leave them. For example, my father had a debt and I wanted to pay it off, but my former husband didn't allow it. I wanted to build a house for my parents, but he wouldn't allow it,' she said. 'My ex-husband isn't a bad guy. He's really nice [...] but I decided to follow my dreams and help my parents'. Hansa says this issue was the primary reason she and her former partner divorced. This cultural clash between Hansa and her husband limited Hansa's ability to perform hegemonic femininities in a culturally relative way, a manner that the majority of female interviewees expressed is still very important to them. Hansa's story exemplifies that women in Northern Thailand make sexual choices based on their desire to perform hegemonic femininity, with Hansa choosing who and when to marry *and* when to divorce according to how the sexual relationship allowed her to perform in a gendered role. Women in Thai culture perform femininity through each of their sexual choices. Women make intentional – albeit sometimes unreflexive – sexual decisions in order to perform hegemonic femininities. Gender performances are relational, and just as men use women as tools to perform masculinities, women use their sexuality and their relationships with men and their families as a means to perform hegemonic femininities.

Hegemonic Femininities and the Perpetuation of the Hegemonic Masculinities

When women perform hegemonic femininities, they maintain hegemonic masculinities and play a role in perpetuating gender inequality in Thailand. A hegemonic form of femininity is not just an idealized and socially rewarded form of femininity, but more importantly, it allows for the performance and fulfilment of hegemonic masculinities. While women in Chiang Mai regularly navigate complex gender structures that limit their decision-making abilities and increase their responsibilities, women play an important role in perpetuating or changing the behaviours and

actions of men. Hearn (2012, p. 598) states that one element of his theory of the hegemony of men is 'how women may differentially support certain practices of men, and subordinate other practices of men or ways of being men'. By actively affirming Thai hegemonic forms of masculinities, some women are complicit in upholding these forms. In addition, performances of masculinity are corrective (Butler, 1988; Plester, 2015) and women often punish men who don't perform masculinities in their hegemonic forms.

While women have re-negotiated their performances of femininity in a range of ways, many women still uphold hegemonic masculinities through their performances of femininity. Amidst a rising consumerist culture, one where moral judgements and values are being re-negotiated, these examples show that women tend to define and re-define their moral discourses based on their desire to perform hegemonic femininities. This section will detail a few female behaviours that uphold current structures of hegemonic masculinity, namely that women 1) assert that men should be leaders; 2) desire men who perform hegemonic masculinities; 3) perceive men's extramarital sex as 'biological'; and 4) blame other women rather than holding men accountable.

A number of female respondents believed that women should allow men to be leaders, including at work, at home, and in government and religious institutions. Reflecting the hierarchical structures of leadership and membership in society (Kitiarsa, 2012), many male and female university students stated that men were expected to perform as leaders in classes, which prepared them to serve as leaders and managers in the workforce. Several female interviewees who attended university, for instance, asked their male colleagues to present group projects to the class for them. While several women expressed a desire for a greater degree of gender equality, they still expected men to be leaders in the home and performed specific femininities that permitted men to do so, which can be seen through Hansa's relationship with her husband. Even though Hansa considers herself a modern woman, she is careful to maintain certain elements of traditional femininities – arguing that the ways of the past are necessary to maintain successful marriages. She states that:

> [Women] can mix old and new ideas in order to maintain their marriages [...] If we integrate the old and new traditions, there's a good balance [...] when men go back home, they want to see the woman as a wife with her mildness. A woman has to be a wife. Sometimes, women should pretend we can't do something and let men do it for us and let him protect us. It looks cute. Couples can stay together if women act like this.

Although Hansa has accepted and enacts many modern values, here she shows that she chooses when and how to enact femininity because she wants to be able to allow her husband to enact hegemonic masculinity in the household. Hansa believes that the downside of more independent women in Thailand is increased rates of failed marriages and that performing femininity in a more traditional manner will help her maintain her relationship.

In addition to a willingness to perform hegemonic femininities for Thai men, many Thai women expressed a preference for men who perform hegemonic masculinities. The high number of *kathoey* individuals in Thailand, and Chiang Mai in particular (Käng, 2012), is one reason why female informants narrowly defined masculinity based on a hegemonic form – what men and women often call the *neung roy percen puuchaay* or 'one hundred per cent man'. Some women are wary not to fall for men who are gay, describing a gay man as someone who is polite, well-groomed, pays attention to detail especially in regard to clothing, has good manners, performs (i.e. being a singer, dancer or actor), and has a gym membership (Käng, 2012). Men who perform any of these behaviours fail to perform a hegemonic masculinity and may be at risk of women considering them unsuitable partners. In this way, women encourage men to perform hegemonic masculinities, reward men who perform correctly, and punish men who do not (Connell, 1995; Butler, 1988). Through perpetuating these hegemonic norms of masculinities with narrow social definitions of 'manhood', women also perpetuate gender inequality in that they tend to favour partners who maintain homosocial circles, womanize, and desire power and sexual domination with limited to no ramifications for these actions. This can be seen through the words of one Thai woman in research conducted by Whitehouse, who says, 'If a man isn't good at flirting and/or isn't mischievous, it's like he is a snake without poison. Not a 100% man' (2015, p. 11).

Despite the standardized expectation in Thai culture that women will work to earn money and support the family (Manopaiboon *et al.*, 2003), female respondents seek marital partners who would play the hegemonic masculine roles of leader and protector, including financially. Ittiporn, a 20-year-old female student, describes her ideal man. She states, 'I don't like men with a certain look. I like their money [laughs]. And a man who gives me honour. He has to be smart and have money and a good heart, but I don't care about the looks. If you have money, my parents will accept you'. Ittiporn suggests here that she wants a man who will play the role of leader and provider for the family. Other female interviewees shared similar perspectives. In fact, 96 per cent of female interviewees hoped to

find a partner willing and able to perform masculinity under a certain script – as the provider. While all the female respondents either worked or expected to be working in a professional environment once they finished their education, they still put great value on finding a man who served as an economic supporter of the family. Through privileging men who perform power-wielding forms of masculinity, women ensure that these forms of hegemonic masculinities will maintain power.

Female interviewees believed that men's primary reasons for visiting commercial sex workers or seeking casual sex were a desire for sexual variety, boredom, and the need for sexual release. Women showed an awareness of men's choices and actions, including their reasons for performing masculinity in particular ways. Many women, aged 40 and above in particular, expressed a belief that men's need for sexual variety was biological. For instance, fifty-year-old Adranuch contracted HIV from her husband after he had extra-marital sex, and she has lived alone since her husband died more than ten years ago. When queried if she thought men should not visit commercial sex workers given the risk of diseases, she laughed and responds, 'We cannot forbid men to visit'. Through justifying men's actions, women uphold hegemonic masculinities. Through accepting men's actions as normal behaviours of men, women allow hegemonic masculinities to exist unchallenged and to maintain power-wielding forms.

Women also tend to blame other women for men's behaviours. When asked why men visit commercial sex workers, female interviewees responded, 'Their wives can't give them what they want', 'some men have problems at home, so they visit sex workers', and 'For the man who is married already, he maybe has a problem with his partner'. Twenty-year-old student Achara, who contends that women are oppressed by men in Thai society, shares similar justifications. She states that, 'They can't have sex with their wives. They are stressed from work. They are looking for a way to express their emotion […] [Visiting sex workers is] OK if the man wants to'. In this case, Achara rationalizes men's reasons for visiting commercial sex workers by blaming the wife's gendered performance and asserting that the wives are not fulfilling the man's needs. Achara justifies the man's actions as a consequence of this lack of fulfilment in the marital relationship. However, when asked personally how she would feel if her partner cheated, she expressed discomfort: 'I would feel anxious and unstable. Isn't he happy to be with me? I won't be so sad as long as the man doesn't have an affair [i.e. just purchases sex]'. While Achara was quick to blame other women, in this example Achara also first blames herself for her husband's hypothetical decision to cheat and wonders what she has done wrong to lead him to cheat. Forty-year-old

Hansa experienced similar feelings of blame for herself when her former husband cheated. She stated:

> Maybe it was my fault that I always rejected having sex with him or didn't give him what he wanted. My husband, when I got pregnant, I didn't allow him to have sex with me for one year [...] So my husband had another girl [...] We stayed together for a while then separated. I always thought about the children only. I forgot to think about him.

In these examples, both Achara and Hansa looked inward to identify wrongdoing. Not holding men accountable for their individual actions perpetuates hegemonic masculinities, allows men freedom in making choices, and eliminates accountability. Women blaming women for the actions of men also upholds hegemonic masculinities and leads to a limited discourse of the negative consequences of gender performances.

This section has contended that women 1) assert that men should be leaders; 2) desire men who perform hegemonic masculinities; 3) perceive men's extramarital sex as 'biological'; and 4) blame other women rather than holding men accountable. Through these actions, women perpetuate norms of hegemonic masculinity. Simultaneously, consumerist culture and increased desires for economic upward mobility have pushed women to re-negotiate gendered performances. As some women gain new economic power, thanks to neoliberal globalization and the economic upward mobility it has provided for a portion of the Thai population, women's reinforcement of hegemonic masculinities through performing hegemonic femininities could be increasingly challenged.

Conclusion

Thai women's performances of hegemonic femininities are not simply based on social desires and familial pressures but are also intertwined with the individual and social construction of feminine identity (Hoang and Yeoh, 2015; Hirsch, 2003). As Southeast Asian states make exceptions to traditional practices of governing in order to compete in the global economy (Ong, 2006), individuals within the Thai socioscape have increasing methods at their exposal for interacting with the effects of neoliberal globalization. Since gender is relational, women define their performances of femininity based on men's ability to perform hegemonic masculinities. This research shows that women are willing to go to drastic lengths to fulfil hegemonic

femininities, although it is important to recognize that performances of femininities, which are necessarily multiple, contrast with their lived expectations of femininity formed within a hegemonic normative set of ideas that defines a woman (Hoang and Yeoh, 2011). Despite new negotiations of sexual decision-making in Northern Thailand that are part and parcel of new moral discourses around neoliberal capitalist values, performances of femininity still tend to privilege power-wielding forms of masculinities that, in turn, perpetuate gender inequality in the Northern Thai context.

When women choose to 'harvest' their 'rice paddy', they choose to exchange one resource for another: money. The meaning of money is culturally constructed, socially mediated and continuously under negotiation. In this chapter, I have tied the intensification of neoliberal globalization in Northern Thailand to sexual relationships in Chiang Mai. From this case study, it can be seen that many of the changes that Chiang Mai has experienced because of neoliberal globalization are localized: the quest for economic upward mobility has been internalized and processed by Thai men and women in unique ways where moral codes still hold great importance. While the quest for money and morality is seemingly contradictory, women's increased access to money has enabled them to fulfil moral commitments and enact hegemonic femininities. This chapter correlates the normalization of the sex industry in Northern Thailand with the desire to perform the 'caretaker' form of hegemonic femininity. While individual performances of femininity cannot be predicted, given that women are 'creative agents in their own lives, not simply [...] pieces in some global monopoly played by capitalists and state representatives' (Lynch, 2007, p. 8; as cited in Hoang, 2015, p. 25), patterns in entering the sex industry are based upon women's desires to perform femininities in a localized manner. Limitations in the literature about hegemonic femininities, specifically related to hegemonic femininities in Asia and hegemonic femininities and sexuality, signify a need to explore how hegemonic femininities are performed and affect gender relations and gender practices among other countries in the region and more globally. These findings contradict literature that portrays hegemonic masculinities as created and perpetuated by men alone and contend that the localized performance of masculinities cannot be understood without considering the role that women play in upholding such masculinities through their own gender performances. These ever-changing performances are complex, and as they are redefined by the changing values and meanings of money and materialism in Thai culture, this shift in gender norms and performance can lead to ripples of social and structural transformation.

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7. The Gender and Morality of Money in the Indian Transnational Family

Supriya Singh

Abstract
This chapter is focused on changing gender dynamics in inheritance and remittance practices and their effect on the morality of money in the family across five decades of migration from India to Australia. Inheritance and remittances are no longer wholly male. Drawing on two large-scale qualitative studies of nearly 200 Indians from over 100 families, who have migrated to Australia, the chapter shows that 'the good daughter', together with the 'good son', is changing the moral discourse around money in the patrilineal Indian family. At the same time, male control and ownership of household money is no longer accepted without question in some migrant Indian families.

Keywords*:* money, morality, gender, migration, India, Australia

Introduction: The Gender and Morality of Migrant Money

The conceptual framework of this study connects the perspectives of the sociology of money and the sociology of migration. In particular, I build on the literature around the social shaping of money and remittances. The basic tenets are that money shapes and is shaped by social relations and cultural values. Money does not belong solely to the market, but is an important part of personal lives. Money is intersected with morals, emotions, and power. Money is gendered in the way it is managed, controlled, owned, and inherited.

The gender of money can change at migration. This is because of the feminization of migration, when women migrate alone to support their families back home. It is also because of a change in the woman's earnings

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH07

and the influence of different norms of money management and control in the country of destination. In other ways, as in the continued maleness of remittances in patrilineal families, the gender of money may remain the same.

I draw on two qualitative studies of five decades of Indian migration to Australia covering 199 persons from 108 families to show how the gender of inheritances and remittances has changed over this period. Early Indian women migrants who arrived in Australia between the 1970s and mid-1990s chose not to accept their inheritance of family property. These women, however, intended to divide their property equally among their daughters and sons. Land in India remains sticky, as does accepting money from daughters.

There has also been a noticeable change in the gender of remittances within the context of patrilineal families. Early women migrants sent gifts, while their husbands sent money to their families. But some recent women migrants, particularly those who contribute substantially to the household income, send or plan to send money to their parents. They also query the husband's right to send their earnings to his family without consultation.

This has led to corresponding changes in the morality of money. The 'good daughter' is now part of the narrative of transnational filial piety and at times of filial care. The male ownership and control of money is also now subject to discussion. Sending the wife's earnings to the husband's family may show he is a 'good son'. But when this happens without consulting the wife, she may perceive this control of money as financial abuse.

The Social Shaping of Money

The sociology of money since the 1980s has changed the way money is studied in personal lives as well as markets. It has challenged the assumptions underlying economists' and classical sociologists' views of money. I draw closely on Viviana Zelizer's work since the 1980s for it has been effective in shaping the contours of the sociology of money, particularly in showing that money needs to be studied both in intimate lives and in markets. Money does not belong only to the market, but is an important part of intimate lives. There are different kinds of monies, rather than money being homogenous and defined only by quantity. Money shapes and is shaped by social relationships and cultural values (Bandelj *et al.*, 2017b; Zelizer, 1985; Zelizer, 1989; Zelizer, 1994; Zelizer, 2005; Zelizer, 2011a).

Money is relational and a medium of communication. Money communicates emotions, morality, and power (Wherry, 2017; Zelizer, 2012). Keith Hart's work on money as a 'memory bank' highlights the communicative power of money (Hart, 1986; Hart, 2001; Hart, 2007; Hart, 2017). The emotional nature of money is interlaced with morality. Money communicates the moral contours of relationships in the family and marriage. The morality of money changes over time within and across cultures (Bandelj *et al.*, 2017a; Hochschild, 2017; Singh, 2016; Singh, 2017).

Seeing the way money and society are intertwined, it is important to note that money has a gender in the way it is managed, controlled, inherited, and owned. The gender of money encompasses the ways men and women perceive and use money. It also includes the management and control of money in the household and family. Jan Pahl's work on the management and control of money in the household in the United Kingdom helped lay the empirical basis for the gender of money (Pahl, 1983; Pahl, 1989; Pahl, 2008; Vogler and Pahl, 1993). The management and control of money differs from the husband and wife managing and controlling their own money to the complete jointness or independence of money belonging to the couple. The common thread of the gender of money across cultures is that women spend more of their money on the household and children compared to men (Zelizer, 2011b).

The theoretical outlines of this approach initially drew on the experiences of households in the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, and the United States. This work was extended by the cross-cultural work on money in the household and family, together with the examination of women's role in the economy, inheritance in the context of empowerment, and financial inclusion (Agarwal, 1994; Basu, 2005a; Basu, 2005b; Fleming *et al.*, 1997; Johnson, 2016; Kishwar, 2005; Kusimba *et al.*, 2013; McAuslan, 2010; Pahl, 2008; Singh and Bhandari, 2012; Taiapa, 1994).

Control and power are important aspects of the gender of money (Vogler *et al.*, 2008; Vogler and Pahl, 1993). In the literature for the most part, control and power are charted through decision-making processes. Who made the main decisions regarding money in the household? With increasing attention being paid to financial abuse, the distinction between control and coercion becomes important. Jan Pahl was one of the earliest to study abuse in marriage (Pahl, 1985). This question, however, still remains to be discussed in greater detail. This is particularly important for patrilineal families where male control of money is the norm. When is control accepted as being for the welfare of the family and when does it cross the boundaries and become abuse?

The Gender of Money and Migration

The discussion of gender, money, and migration has gone beyond the initial measurement of the amount, frequency, and relative proportion of income sent by men and women. Remittances are now placed in a wider social context of migration patterns, kinship, household structures, and norms around the gender of money (Ghosh, 2009; Naerssen *et al.*, 2016; Robert, 2015).

The gender of money can be reaffirmed or changed with migration. When families migrate together, the gender of money in their home countries influences who remits and to whom. For instance, when Indian male migrants remit to their parents, this continues the traditional male ownership and control of money in the family (Singh, 2016). Among the matrilineal Akan, where women traditionally manage and control the money, it is the woman who sends money, preferably to her mother (Wong, 2006). With marriage migration when some Vietnamese women marry Singaporean men, a change in the gender of money is negotiated as part of the marriage arrangements so that a woman can remit money to her family (Yeoh *et al.*, 2013).

Most often, the change in the gender of money comes about because of the feminization of migration when women migrate alone to provide for their families. When men migrate alone, the receiving of remittances can diminish or increase the woman's role in the management and control of money. It also is the result of changes in the relative earning power of men and women and/or because the norms of money management and control in the country of destination differ from that in the source country.

The greater migration of women alone to provide for their families in the Caribbean, Latin America, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia gives women more control of how much money they send to whom. That does not necessarily give them more control over how the money is used. Moreover, their provider roles through migration may leave the traditional gender norms in place where the woman continues to be seen as the mother and homemaker and the man is the provider. At return especially, the woman's role could revert back to the one she had before migration (Gallo, 2005; Gamburd, 2002; Gamburd, 1998; Parreñas, 2005; Rahman, 2008).

The management and control of household money in the country of destination and differences in a woman's earning power can influence change in the traditional norms around money. For instance, migrant women from the Caribbean and Latin America have more earnings, management, and control of household money in the United States than in their home countries. It is this relative empowerment over money that makes women more enthusiastic about staying in the United States. Women fear that, on

returning, their husbands will revert back to male control of money (Curran and Saguy, 2001; Pessar, 1999; Smith, 2006).

When Syrian Christian nurses from Kerala became the principal breadwinners after migrating to the United States, it overturned the traditional norms around money. The women either over-compensated to ensure the man continued to have an important role or changed their money and childcare arrangements to accord with the partnership model of money and marriage in the United States (George, 2005). The matrilineal Akan women of Ghana, however, moved from separate to joint management and control of money after migration to Canada. Part of it was because women slid in earnings and status after migration (Wong, 2006).

The pattern of migration, medium of remittances, religion, definition, and structure of the household, family, and kinship influences whether women are more or less empowered when the husband migrates. Prema Kurien (2002) writes of this difference, comparing three different recipient communities receiving remittances in Kerala, India. The Mapilla Muslims, who are patrilineal, had a long history of single unskilled and technical migration to the Middle East. They sent money informally via the 'Tube' because of better rates. This money came to the male relatives rather than the wife, even when the wife was not living with the relatives. So the wife had less agency over money than before.

The Ezhava Hindus also migrated singly to the Middle East, but for skilled work. They were matrilineal, with the wife and children staying with her parents. Remittances were sent to the wife or her father via postal orders. The wife continued to earn through her agricultural activities, so remittances added to her ability to manage and control the money. The Syrian Christians were more educated and often went as families to the Middle East as professionals. When the wife did not travel with her husband the money was sent to her via a bank account for her to use and invest. This pattern of remittances reduced ties with the extended family and the community, but increased the wife's control of money. As seen in the next sub-section, the gender of money after migration raises issues of morality around family relationships and money.

Remittances and the Morality of Money in the Family

International migrants send money home for complex reasons varying from obligation to the repayment of loans, social payments, and gifts, to investment and diaspora philanthropy. Remittance transactions have 'material, emotional, and relational elements' (Carling, 2014, p. 226).

Remittances reflect the morality of money in the family. Money in Asia is defined as money belonging to the family, rather than the couple. It is deeply personal and ritually packaged: for example, money is often the preferred gift to mark life stage events and celebrations. There is a reciprocal intergenerational transfer of money in the family – from parents to children and from children to parents. In Asia, as well as the rest of the global South, that is, Africa, the Pacific, the Middle East, and Latin America, parents feel they have a responsibility to ensure the well-being of their children. Children also have a duty to contribute to their parents' welfare and that of their extended family through the medium of money. Parents accept this money from children, for it is evidence they have filial children (Akuei, 2005; Singh, 2013; Smith, 2006).

The melding of the morality of money in the family and funds transfer has led to formal international remittances to families becoming one of the largest international flows of funds. India, China, the Philippines, and Mexico received the highest amount in remittances in 2015. In 2015, formal remittances were estimated to be US$601 billion. Of this, about US$441 billion flowed to developing countries. This was nearly three times development aid (Ratha *et al.*, 2016).

In India, the morality of money in the family is discussed in the context of the patrilineal joint family. The Indian family equates to the Hindu patrilineal joint family, where married sons live with their parents (Uberoi, 2004). In patrilineal families, where descent goes from father to son, the son inherits most of the property (Agarwal, 1994). It is seen as the duty of the son to look after his parents. Indian families are mainly patrilineal across religions and language, with small pockets of matrilineal and bilateral families in the south and north-east and among non-Hindu and tribal peoples. Traditionally, money in the joint family is controlled by the man, whether it is the father-in-law or the husband. This control is meant to be exercised responsibly for the wellbeing of the family as a whole. The main impulse is to protect wives and children, as seen in the nominee function of Indian bank accounts. If a person has been named as a nominee on the bank account, he or she will inherit the money when the account owner dies (Singh, 1997; Singh, 2009; Singh and Bhandari, 2012).

This morality of money combined with a different gender of money is replicated across many of the countries of the global South and some communities of the global North, with varying definitions of family. The world's most successful mobile money system, M-PESA in Kenya, was built on the moral imperative to 'send money home' (Jack and Suri, 2011; Morawczynski, 2008; Omwansa and Sullivan, 2012). Sharing money with family

is a distinctive characteristic of Aboriginal money in Australia and Maori money in New Zealand (Godinho and Singh, 2014; Senior *et al.*, 2002; Taiapa 1994). In Papua New Guinea and much of Melanesia, gifting money to *wantok* is a moral imperative.

Dinka (primarily from South Sudan) migrants in the United States send money to a wide range of kin as a moral duty. A Dinka man is seen to be related and responsible for three immediate generations on his father's side and also has obligations to his wife's kin. He is expected to contribute to everyday expenses, bride price, and payment for bribes or fines. Akuei (2005) writes of Joseph, who 'Within the first two years of resettlement to San Diego, [...] became directly responsible for 24 male and female extended family members and indirectly 62 persons displaced across a number of locations' (p. 7). He also sent money to four unrelated friends in Egypt who had helped him in the past (Akuei, 2005).

The morality of money is most often seen through its breaches and ambiguities. Senders and recipients may perceive different meanings in remittances (Carling, 2014). An important 'script' for senders is that they perceive remittances as their expression of care and duty to the welfare of the family members left behind. Recipients may see the money sent as less valuable than the face-to-face care provided by family members in the source country. One-way infrequent communication increases the distance in meanings, value, and family relationships, because remittances are relational and communicate meaning (Hoang and Yeoh, 2015; Singh 2016).

Some of the ambiguities in the meanings of remittances emerge from the assumptions that money is easy to earn overseas. Thai (2014) highlights this aspect in his study of low wage Vietnamese earners in the United States and their left behind family members. Migrants pointedly present themselves as successful through expensive gifts and conspicuous consumption on their return visits. This transnational money then becomes 'a currency of status' (p. 193). Other tensions occur within the sending family where the morality of sending money home sits alongside neoliberal values relating to the welfare of the nuclear family in the country of destination.

The moral imperative to remit is so strong that Somalian and Dinka migrants would be 'shamed' if they did not remit. These obligations are onerous, particularly when the migrant is also meeting settlement expenses for his nuclear family in the country of destination. But not meeting these obligations means he is not a 'good moral person' (Akuei, 2005, p. 3). Lindley (2009) quotes a Somalian migrant, Fartun, who was homeless for a time in the United Kingdom, saying, 'People at home think Fartun is in London and he is not going to help us. They think I am just a bad man' (p. 1324). Not

meeting the expectations of the family left behind can mean that sending or taking less money than expected can lead to disaffection. Madeline Wong writes of a Ghanaian woman migrant in Canada who had faced a long period of employment and sickness. She went home upon the death of her father with US$500 and it was as if she had taken 'peanuts'. Her mother was disappointed and made her feel unwelcome, for she had not lived up to expectations as a migrant and particularly at the time of death (Wong, 2006).

The morality of money falters worst when the duty of care is at its highest. This is particularly evident in the children's duty of care towards their parents. The duty of children and heirs to look after their parents is legislated in India in *The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007* (2007). But as the Supreme Court made clear in a 2016 judgement, it was 'a pious obligation of the son to maintain the parents' (Tripathi, 2016). Yet as a community study in Chennai shows, 14 per cent of the older adults aged 65 or above had experienced some form of emotional, financial, and physical abuse (Chokkanathan and Lee, 2005). I build on this research below, to study the gender and morality of migrant money.

Studying the Gender and Morality of Migrant Money

This chapter draws on two studies of 199 persons from 108 families. The first is the Money, Migration and Family (MMF) study, which covers remittances and changes in the gender of money over five decades of migration from India to Australia. This study was based on a decade of open-ended interviews and participant observation (2005–2014) with 186 Indian migrants from 95 families in Australia and India (See Table 1).

The study covered four groups of migrants and their families. The first were the early migrants who came from the late 1960s to the mid-1990s. They were professionals arriving as families from metropolitan cities with permanent visas. The second group were second generation Indian Australians who were born in Australia or migrated with their families before they were twelve years old. The participants were university students or professionals like their parents. The third were Indian students who came from 2005 onwards, with most contemplating permanent residence in Australia and becoming community leaders. Most of the students interviewed were male, reflecting the dominance of males in this migration cohort. Like the first two parts of the study, the students also came from middle-class families. However, most of them were from regional cities, small towns, and urban villages. The fourth part involved interviewing Indian migrants who

arrived in the mid-1990s and their families in India or Australia. In some of these family sets, the migrant children and their families were interviewed, whereas in others, it was the migrant child or the family. These families were predominantly from Punjab, Haryana, and the National Capital Region. This reflected the increased recent migration from these parts of India.

The second qualitative study in 2016 on Money, Gender and Family Violence (FV) focused on thirteen Indian women's past experience of family violence in Australia. It was part of a comparative study including thirteen Anglo-Celtic women and fourteen community leaders and service providers. For this chapter I draw only on the Indian participants in the Family Violence study. Their ages varied between 25–79 years, though five of the thirteen women were 25 to 34 years old. Nine of the thirteen were recent migrants. All the Indian participants had a graduate or postgraduate education and nine of the thirteen had managerial or professional jobs.

In both studies, participants were accessed through personal, community, professional, and media networks. The interviews were conducted in English, Punjabi, and Hindi.[1] They were transcribed and coded using NUDIST and NVivo, computer programmes for the analysis of qualitative data.

Daughters are More Included in Inheritance[2]

The Money, Migration and Family (MMF) study showed how the maleness of inheritance changed as the early migrants continued to live in Australia. Early migrant women either did not inherit property from their parents or ceded it to their brothers. These women now plan to leave their wealth equally to their sons and daughters. However, the male bias has not wholly disappeared. Agricultural land remains sticky in that it remains male, even though other property can be equally divided. And if parents have to choose between their sons and daughters in inheritance, even with the second generation, the sons are favoured.

The male ownership of money in India's patrilineal families is dramatically demonstrated in that sons rather than daughters inherit property. The dowry continues to be seen as an 'inadequate compensation' for an equal

1 Some of the interviews in the Money, Migration, and Family study were conducted by Anuja Cabraal and some of the interviews in the Family Violence study were conducted by Jasvinder Sidhu.

2 This section and the next build on, Supriya Singh, *Money, Migration and Family: India to Australia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

share of parental property (Kishwar, 2005). This unequal division of resources results in only 38.4 per cent of women in India owning a house or land singly or jointly in 2015–2016 (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2017). This is despite The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 mandating that joint family property be divided equally between sons and daughters. These rights are often breached as women sign off their rights, with or without pressure, in favour of their brothers. They fear that if they pursue their inheritance, their relationship with their brothers will be negatively affected. Moreover, the woman is most often married outside the village, making it difficult for her to manage agricultural land or retrieve it when illegally occupied (Basu, 2005b; Kishwar, 2005; Palriwala and Uberoi, 2005).

Women's lack of inheritance of land, the major agricultural resource, is evident across South Asia (Agarwal, 1994). The best indicator of women's lack of control over agricultural land in India is that only 12.8 per cent of agricultural holders are women. An agricultural holder makes important decisions about the land and may be the owner (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2017). The data is drawn from the Agricultural Census (2010–2011) showing there has only been a slight increase from 11.7 per cent in 2005–2006 (UNDP India, 2015).

Among the nineteen early migrants, the nine female participants – Hindus and Sikhs – did not inherit parental property or would choose not to inherit. Seven female participants ceded or planned to cede their shares to their brothers. Preeta (the names of participants are pseudonyms), aged in her late 40s to early 50s, a Hindu who grew up in Fiji, said her parents left the property only to the sons. She was left a bit of jewellery and money. Rita, a Christian, decided her inheritance would go to her mother.

Gurjeet, 55, a Sikh, migrated with her husband and daughters in 1995 from Punjab. She said, 'We sisters did not take our share … Even the brothers get a little. So, what is the need for the sisters to get it? They will get it through their in-laws'. Charan, in her late 60s, who migrated from India to Europe and then to Australia in the late 1980s, concurred. She said,

> When my mother was alive, he looked after her. When we go to India, he looks after all our expenses. Why does he do it? He is our brother. He feels that he is in our father's place.

At times the situation is more complex. Charan and Gurjeet knew they had been named in the inheritance. Hema, 54, who migrated in 1986, laughed off the issue of inheritance, saying: 'I am not even in the picture'. Her son, Hemat, said: 'It definitely is a touchy issue', and has led to a family rift.

Charan's views have changed on inheritance. She said that even her brother in India has decided to leave some of his property to his daughters. She said,

> I have told my children that my property will go to the two of them. I am not going to do the 'gender' thing … I know my daughter wants equal rights … If I don't leave her anything, she's not going to like it … I didn't get it but I am leaving for my daughter.

Banta, 65, and Bhagwan, 68, multiple migrants from India, Malaysia, and Singapore to Australia, have also partly changed their views on gender and inheritance. They will divide their Singapore property into four so that it goes equally to their three sons and a daughter. But Banta said, '… the land [in India] goes to the [three] boys'. Bhagwan said, 'Yes the law has changed [in India], but this is our thinking. My father's land, my father never gave to the daughters. Only to the sons. We follow the same'. This may be a theoretical discussion, for they also realized they may soon have to sell the land.

Most of the second-generation participants have not as yet faced issues of inheritance. In the one case where there has been a transfer of property, there remains a residual preference for the son, as shown by the experience of Ina, a second-generation Indian. She is in her late 20s and came with her parents to Australia when she was twelve. When Ina's parents returned to India, they gave their house in Melbourne to their son, though Ina is married with one child and struggling with a mortgage.

The changing gender for inheritance also comes with a lingering preference for the son as the primary caregiver. Charan for instance thinks she may consider staying with her daughter but thinks the right thing to do is to stay with her son when she needs support. Banta and Bhagwan still feel it is not proper to receive money or gifts from their daughter. Anita, in her 60s, had her father staying with her. Her husband's father also lives with his daughter in India. Anita and her husband are actively involved in helping to care for their daughter's children in the United States. Despite this reversal of traditional care patterns, Anita bristled at the idea she would ever accept money from a daughter.

Continuity and Change in the Male Ownership of Money

Remittances continue to signify the gender and morality of money in the family before and after migration. Though remittances remain mainly

male, the 'good daughter' is now part of the narrative of transnational filial piety and at times of filial care. The male ownership and control of money is also now subject to discussion. Sending the wife's earnings to the husband's family may show he is a 'good son'. But when this happens without consulting the wife, she can perceive this control of money as financial abuse.

The Intergenerational Reciprocity of Money Remains Unchanged

The intergenerational reciprocity of money is more evident with recent migrants, as the two-way flow of money has become possible. More frequent, instantaneous, and affordable communication because of the mobile phone, Skype, and frequent reciprocal visits make both sides of the transnational family understand everyday rhythms and needs. Senders and recipients of money understand the sacrifice for both parties.

This is different from the early migrants, wherein financial remittances went only one way. They arrived as professionals, most often married and with children. They had been successful and established in India and migrated to Australia for further opportunities. Most got employed in their field of expertise. They were also supported by the welfare buffer, though only one family used it for more than a month. Earnings in Australia were many multiples of earnings in India. Money also could not easily be sent from India because foreign exchange controls came into place in 1974 and were only liberalized after 1998. Though there was a 'circulation of care' (Baldassar and Merla, 2014), money and communication for the early migrants only went one-way from Australia to India.

Indian international students were the first Indian migrant group in Australia that had to pay to migrate. This was because of changes in Australia's migration policy in 2001, when education became a pathway to possible migration. Parents funded their children's education, drawing on their savings and retirement funds. They sold land, liquidated shares, and borrowed from relatives and banks. Parents continued to help their children financially if they had the capacity with funding for homes and businesses (Singh and Gatina, 2015). Their children in turn helped repay the loans when able, sent money and gifts to show care, and planned their parents' long-term care in Australia, if the parents so chose.

Among the early migrants, three of the fifteen early migrant families had at least one parent living with them. Another two sets of parents were living independently but supported by their children. This was a response to care systems faltering in the home country, rather than a planned outcome.

The norm for early migrants and the second generation was the nuclear household. Recent migrants, however, planned for joint family living. In the transnational phase of the study, 2010–2014, it was clear that planning for a joint family household influenced their choice of four-bedroom houses in the outer suburbs of the city, rather than small units closer to the city centre (Singh, 2017).

Close to half the transnational family sample, 16 of the 31 migrant households, are, were, or plan to be in temporary or long-term extended family households. Joint household living replicates the most common form of co-residence in India, as 66 per cent of older people live in some form of multigenerational household with beneficial health effects (Samanta *et al.*, 2015). It is the other households who explain why they will not be in joint family households. The reasons varied from parents' caring obligations in India and parents' preference to remain in India to there being no siblings in Australia (Singh, 2017).

The Continued Maleness of Remittances

Remittances among the early and recent migrants continue to be largely male. But there are signs of change, as one of the eight recent women migrants in the Family Violence study sends money home to her parents. Another two question the husband's right to send his earnings to his family without consultation.

The morality about remittances among the early migrants was about being a 'good son'. It was the men who sent money home. Women sent gifts. Ambika, 68, a multiple migrant from India, Malaysia, and Singapore, said her mother sent her father suit cloth, and her mother and sisters *dupattas* (long scarves). Ambika sent her grandfather a bottle of coffee. He would send her *rewaris* (a sweet gifted in mid-January for the Lohri festival) and clothes. Charan would send small gifts of money to her nieces on their birthdays. Gifts were also taken on visits. But sending money home meant that the husband sent money to his parents, if and when needed.

There were three exceptions among the nineteen early migrants where the migrant couple jointly decided to send money to both sides. Karan, in his late 40s, an Anglo-Indian Christian, sent money to his parents and his wife's parents. Hema and her husband sent money occasionally for a special celebration on either side. Finally, Murali, aged in his late 40s or early 50s, from Singapore, said his wife gave money to her mother when she visited. Murali's parents had already died. Remittances from the son to his parents remained the norm. Even Hema said when her husband's brother sent money

to his wife's family, her mother-in-law '… used to feel very angry and upset about it, that it was her son's money which was being squandered'.

This pattern of male remittances was matched by parents refusing to accept money from their daughters. Ambika said, 'Only the very poor families would accept money from a daughter'. Banta and Bhagwan protested when their daughter gave them a gift. Daya, aged in her 50s, who migrated from India in 1983, said her parents would not even countenance staying in her house. She said, 'When I worked before marriage, my parents would not take any of my salary. It is our custom; parents don't take from girls. Never. They never expected it from me'. The student migrants interviewed in the Money, Migration, and Family study were often still struggling to survive in Australia. Five of the 35 students were sending money to repay loans. Another student who had a regular, well-paid job sent money regularly, for his parents were in need. Recent migrants took gifts with them when they returned to visit.

Male remittances continued to dominate, partly because most of the Indian international students in Australia are male. Reflecting the maleness of this cohort of migrants, 25 of the 35 student migrants studied were male. There was one student migrant who was earning, who sent money to his wife's family. She had been the only earning member of her family when they got married. He accepted that now they had to support her family in India. His own family relationships had dissolved after his parents' deaths due to a conflict over property.

Two of the women aspired to send money home, once they were earning enough, for their families were struggling. It was in the Family Violence study, where the recent migrants had had enough years in Australia to start earning, that there were signs of change. Asha's story is telling, for she sent money home to repay the loan and help her family when her father was ill. This was easier when she was single.

Asha sends money home

Asha, 32, came to Australia in 2007 to study. Her father took out a loan against shares. She says it was 'on the condition that when I start earning I will repay the financial loan … But by the time I started earning, he had already paid it off … When I had my first full time job, I started sending him A$1000 every month to pay him off for my education loan'. She continued to send A$1000 every month after the loan was repaid, for in 2011, her father fell ill. Much of this was needed just for his medical treatment. She went to India to see him but came back to work in Australia for she needed to send money home.

Before she got married to an Indian student – from another part of India – she told him of her ongoing financial commitment to her family. She said,

> This was clearly put on the table. I have this financial responsibility. I don't know how long it's going to be … I need to send this money to him every month and if you have any issues with this or if you have any concerns maybe we should reconsider getting married.

At the time of marriage, he did not have any problems with her sending money home. She was the main earner at this point. He was working at two jobs but hoped to start his own business. When they got married, the situation began to change. She said, 'He was unhappy that I was supporting my parents … I didn't see it was wrong in any way. I was supporting the expenses here but I had to support my parents as well'. He wanted her to give him her salary to manage. 'He saw this as a trust issue'. She refused. Early in the marriage she said,

> Let's create a joint account and to be fair and equal, you put in $2000 every month and I will put in $2000 every month. From that joint account we manage all our expenses together … For everything else we have our own separate savings. He can do whatever he wants to do from whatever remains from his salary … I had to send $1000 every month to my home. Whatever remains, I would put that in savings for our future goal, whether that was to buy a house or to buy a car.

Over the next few months, her husband began putting in less and less into the joint account, sometimes only $500 a month. She took over the $2000 a month mortgage. He stopped contributing to the joint expenses. He queried every two dollars she spent. It was a 'spiral' of abuse. 'He's fine for five days. Then he finds a fault … reprimands me … blames the victim for abusing or creating this situation and then he apologizes. And then again he goes into the fault-finding cycle'.

Reflecting on the abuse, Asha said, 'It was about being in control, whether it is money or any situation'. It started with her sending money home. He said, 'You are married to me. So, you should be giving all your money to me. That's how it was done, that's how it is done'. Then it moved on to why she still followed her religion. He said, 'You are now from my family. You are not from your family'. He did not want her to eat rice, but eat chapatis like him, saying, 'You are married to me now and you should follow what I say'. He wanted her to ask his permission before she called her family;

before she went out. She said, 'It was all about control'. Within two years the marriage ended.

Recent Migrant Women Question the Maleness of Money

Asha's husband continued to think of money in the traditional way, though earning patterns had changed. He felt the money in his household belonged to him and his family and was to be controlled by him. Six of the eight recent women migrants, unlike the early migrants in the Family Violence study, question this version of money.[3]

Some of this change originated in the woman's experience of earning and controlling her money before marriage in India and Australia. This was true of Asha, as seen above. It was also the case for Manbir, 38, an engineer, who worked in India before her arranged marriage. When she joined his joint family, her father pressured her for dowry and then for her to hand over her earnings to him. This triggered Manbir's migration to Australia in 2014, and her husband joined her in 2015. But his inability to get a job and the emotional and financial abuse she suffered led her to call the Police and ask for an Apprehended Violence Order. Her husband left for India soon after in a couple of months and has not returned.

Financial control becomes inflamed when the woman's earnings are sent for luxuries for her husband's parents, while the migrant couple struggles in Australia. Kelly, in her 40s, divorced and with one child, migrated to Australia in 1993. She went to work soon after, being pressured by her husband. She said,

> He was sending all the money that I earned to India to his parents. With that money his parents built a big five-bedroom mansion with marble bathrooms … In the meantime, we were living in a one-bedroom flat … which had no heating, no laundry. I had to take three modes of transport to go to work and took me over three hours each day, just to travel to and from work.

Devi, 33, a qualified engineer from India, came to Australia on a student visa in 2006, with her husband on a spouse visa. She found her husband

3 In the other two cases, the husband had full control of the money. In one, the woman worked in the husband's business and had no separate banking account. Her parents' substantial gift money went into her husband's account. In the other, the husband prevented the wife from working and kept her so short of money that he gave her 'coins rather than notes'. These marriages broke down because of emotional, financial, and physical abuse.

was sending money she was earning to his family in India. It was not a shared decision. 'Sometimes, I knew he had sent money to his parents and sometimes, I did not come to know', she said.

Chitra, 29, a health professional, and Laura, 33, a teacher, were initially comfortable placing their earnings in a joint account. Their husbands did not contribute to this account, but controlled it. Earning money did not give either Chitra or Laura the freedom to spend money. Chitra found money missing from her joint account. She said, 'I told him that you withdraw all the money, at least leave some amount for me too for my personal need. He said, "Oh you want to spend money now."'

When Laura began teaching, she too opened a joint account for her earnings. However, she had to explain every ten dollars she spent. She could buy bananas but none of the more expensive fruit, for he would rebuke her and ask, 'Have you got so much money that you are spending here and there?' The financial and emotional abuse, together with his intimacy with another woman, ended Laura's marriage within six years. A year before she left, she opened her separate account, but still did not take any money out of the joint account, fearing a hostile reaction. She was glad to get away, saying, 'Now I can eat raspberries'.

Heer's story: An early migrant maintaining the image of male control and ownership

The four early migrant women in the Family Violence study tell a similar story in that financial abuse went together with emotional abuse, a loss of a sense of self, and at times physical assault. However, they did not question the male control of money. Despite their earnings, they strove to keep the façade of male ownership and control. In one of the four cases, the woman ceased earning, though she was a professional before marriage. The marriages lasted for many years. When they finally divorced, the male control of money was not the main contributing factor for the end of their marriage. Heer's story illustrates the length to which a woman would go to maintain the image of male control and ownership of money within the cultural context of her time.

Heer, 59, migrated to Australia with her husband and family in 1984 after nine years of marriage. Married at 18, she completed her graduate study after marriage. Though her father-in-law was supportive of her education, there was physical and emotional violence in her marital home – the father-in-law to his wife; between the father-in-law and son; her husband to her and the children. She accepted it, for nobody talked about it. The message was that if she was being abused, it was her responsibility. 'So, I didn't speak to anyone', she said.

Heer got a job in Australia before her husband. She rose to a managerial position and was the main earner in the joint family with her parents-in-law. She gave her money in the beginning to her mother-in-law, who would give her some spending money. Later, when Heer's father-in-law got a better job, her parents-in-law kept their money, and Heer and her husband looked after the expenses. Though Heer and her husband had joint accounts, she had to ask him when she wanted to buy clothes. He often would say they could not afford it. Then she'd shop in her lunchtime. 'I'd take it out and say, "I bought it a year ago". I learned to lie. That was a survival trick, lying'. She learned how to 'hide' her purchases, passing them off as gifts from her family. Despite this, she suffered physical, economic, and emotional abuse from her husband. Even then she agreed to her husband giving AU$40,000 to his parents to build a house in India.

She left the marriage twice in the first ten years in Australia because of physical assault and his womanizing, but came back. The financial suppression continued in small and big things like buying a house. If she expressed an opinion her husband would accuse her of becoming 'Australian'. When she wanted to move to a better house, she manipulated the situation, saying it was her sister-in-law's idea, and then that it was her father-in-law's choice. That way, 'I didn't choose anything, right?' The same strategy worked with their investment property. Her husband said he would decide whether they could afford it. 'I am in control. I will be telling you what to buy!' he said.

When she finally left after twenty-four years of marriage, her husband took all the money in the joint account. She had to go to court to get her half of the property. Heer said, 'I didn't leave him for domestic violence or financial stress or suppression'. She left because of his womanizing and because her children threatened to move if she didn't. She reflected on her decision to stay so long in her marriage, particularly as she knew about family violence and her options through her work. She was educated and was earning.

She said, 'I was in a cultural bind myself'. She kept on 'copping it'. She worried how the end of her marriage would affect her younger siblings. She had clients whom she was advising about leaving their marriage because of family violence. She spoke to a person in the women's department who said, 'We cop it. We don't say anything. We do have double standards'. When she and her children finally left, they talked openly about the family violence to each other and to a few friends. She is now part of building community supports so that people in her position have somebody safe with whom they can speak about their troubles with family violence.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the continuities and changes in the gender and morality of money as seen in inheritance and remittances across life stages and the different cohorts of migrants. There is a change in the gender of inheritance among early Indian migrants, making for greater gender equality. Early women migrants ceded or planned to cede their parental inheritance to their brothers. However, these women plan to leave their own property equally to their sons and daughters. Agricultural land remains sticky and male. Mothers still do not see themselves receiving money from their daughters. But overall, they plan for gender equality in inheritance when they die.

Intergenerational reciprocity of money continues to be an important aspect of the Indian patrilineal family. This defines the moral norms of being a 'good parent' and a 'good son'. It sets the stage for caring for the old and young. The early migrants fulfilled their duty of care through remittances, but money went one way from Australia to India because of economic constraints in India. Intergenerational reciprocity of money became possible even after migration for the recent migrants as parents funded their children's education in Australia. At times this meant reducing their retirement security and increasing their financial vulnerability. Children continued to feel it was their filial duty to repay this care through money, gifts, and plans to ensure their parents were looked after when they became old, preferably in a joint family household in Australia.

Most remittances continued to be male among the student migrants. This was partly because a larger proportion of the student migrants in the study were male. However, dents became apparent in the norms of male ownership and control of money. Unlike early migrants, a recent women migrant sent money home and another two female students planned to send money home. The 'good daughter' has entered the narrative of filial piety in the Indian patrilineal family. Recent women migrants also want to be consulted about the use of their earnings.

Men amongst the early and recent migrants sent money home without their wives knowing the full extent of the remittances. However, amongst the recent migrants, if the man sends the woman's earnings to his family, she wants to be consulted. Male control of money without consultation is seen as financial abuse and often leads to the early end of the marriage. This leads to the wider question: When does traditional control of money become coercive and seen as financial abuse?

The morality of money in the re-imagined joint family of the recent migrants remains to be studied. Early migrants and the second generation planned for a nuclear family, though some households became joint because of the dissolution of support systems in the home country. Most recent migrants studied planned for a joint family household. When parents join children, it changes the traditional developmental cycle of the joint family. Instead of sons getting married and remaining with their parents in the family home, the sons establish a family home in Australia and the parents join the sons. Some of this change has also happened in India, as parents join children because of urbanization and job mobility. This too leads to changed dynamics of money management and control. But when the move involves international migration, then parents and children also have to face different social and legislative meanings and boundaries of money. In the case of the recent migrants, it could mean dealing with a possible conflict between the family boundary of money, particularly in the joint family in India and the couple's ownership of money and property in Australia. Considering the changing gender and morality of money among Indian migrants to Australia leads to a consideration of these important questions about money, care, and abuse.

Table 7.1 Selected characteristics of participants

Participants	Number of families	Number of persons
Money, Migration and Family Study May 2005-February 2014		
Early Indian migrants	15*	19
Gender		
Male		10
Female		9
Religion		
Hindu		8
Sikh		7
Christian		3
Muslim		1
Second-generation migrants	16 †	20
Gender		
Male		7
Female		13
Religion		
Hindu		14
Sikh		2
Christian		2
Muslim		1
Buddhist		1

Participants	Number of families	Number of persons
Indian students	32 ‡	35
Gender		
Male		25
Female		10
Religion		
Hindu		15
Sikh		17
Christian		3
Muslim		0
Indian community leaders and representatives	–	13
Transnational families of student and skilled migrants who migrated 1997-2014	32	99
Matched sample	17	
Unmatched sample	15	
Family of:		
Student migrant	24	
Skilled migrant	8	
Total: Money Migration and Family Study	*95*	*186*
Total: Family Violence Study 2016 – Indian women	*13*	*13*
Early migrants		4
Recent migrants		8
Second generation		1
TOTAL	**108**	**199**

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Part III

The Social Life of Money in Asian Moral Economies

8. Money, Maturity, and Migrant Aspirations

'Morality-in-Motion' among Young People in the Philippines

Cheryll Alipio

Abstract
Since the state institutionalization of migrant labour began in the Philippines, countless children have been 'left behind' bereft of one, or even both, parents. Consequently, the moral evaluation of familial and financial responsibility has intensified. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork in the various institutions involved in the quotidian lives of young people, this chapter uses Cheryl Mattingly's (2013) notion of the 'moral laboratory' at home and in school to explore lived engagements with money, morality, and mobility. In the reimagining and pursuit of future possibilities beyond a life of poverty and unemployment, this chapter contends that young people's experimentation with money as a form of mobile or migrant aspiration reflects their strategic moral values and maturation.

Keywords: money, morality, migration, children, youth, Philippines

Introduction: Migration as Moral Catalyst

One afternoon I was called to watch over ten-year-old Hanna, whose parents had recently migrated to Spain to work as domestic helpers for the same employer.[1] As I entered the house, Hanna announced that she wanted to go to the *sari-sari* store ('convenience store') with her younger cousin to buy *chichirya*, or 'junk food', like soda and chips. Asking if I wanted some,

1 Pseudonyms are used throughout the chapter to protect the privacy and confidentiality of research participants.

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH08

I declined, explaining that I only had a large bill for 500 Philippine pesos, or ten US dollars, and that it was my allowance for the whole week.[2] Dubious, Hanna questioned me: 'Is that really the only money you have? How do you get money if your parents don't send you money from the US?' I replied that my money came from my *sariling ipon* ('own savings'), which she did not seem to understand as her own money came from her migrant parents. Instead, she pressed on, asking if I received a salary from volunteering at the local nongovernmental organization (NGO), called Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative, Inc., or Atikha for short, and its children's psychosocial programme. 'No', I said, explaining that to volunteer was to provide free services or to work for free. Hanna, still confused, wondered out loud, 'How do you get around, how do you move, if you don't have money?' Here, unaware of the stigma of talking about money and the morality rooted in volunteerism, Hanna simultaneously ties one's physical movement to financial resources while giving money power and life. In embodying Marx's assertion that money has 'changed into a true God' (Ollman, 1971, p. 203), children, like Hanna, exemplify the fetishization of commodities that could occur in migrant families.

Under the neoliberal ethos of national development and global competitiveness, a new capitalist subjectivity has emerged, extending not only to overseas Filipinos (OFs) and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), but to children, young people, and families in the Philippines as well (Ortega, 2016). Combining neoliberal self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship with the Filipino traits of *sipag* ('hard work') and *tiyaga* ('perseverance') in order to navigate the precarity and uncertainty prevalent in the 'individualism, privatization, and marketization of everyday life', this new subjectivity is articulated through state projects and policies (Ortega, 2016, pp. 13–14; see also Alipio, 2013a; Alipio, 2019). These include the contractual work that began with the 1974 Labor Code to alleviate poverty and unemployment. While contractual work ebbed in the 1980s and steadily grew after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, it has become firmly entrenched in the lifeworlds of Filipinos families with the 2017 passing of the Department of Labor and Employment's Department Order (DO) 194, which amended the Labor Code to regulate contracting and subcontracting (see Alipio, 2019). Alongside the institutionalization of transnational labour migration, the 1996 Moral Recovery Program, or Executive Order (EO) 319, has created a uniquely neoliberal terrain in which the formation of the ideal citizen–subject is

2 The following currency conversion is used throughout the chapter: US$1=PHP50 (as of 30 December 2017).

centred on 'strengthen[ing] the moral resources of the Filipino people rooted in Filipino culture, values and ideals that are pro God, pro people, pro country and pro nature'.

Subsequently, the rise of transnational labour migration in the Philippines and annual increase of remittances since 2002 (PIDS, 2019), which reached US$29 billion in 2018 (BSP, 2019), has led to the moralization and 'making exception' of OFWs in three ways (Ong, 2006): Firstly, in nationalist discourse as celebrated '*bagong bayani*', or 'modern-day heroes', who economically prop up nations, communities, and households with their money and *balikbayan* cargo boxes full of goods; secondly, in Catholic discourse as martyrs, whose devotion for and sacrifice of their families are revered; and thirdly, in public discourse, as vilified transnational parents, who incite 'social costs' from the break-up of intact families (see Alipio, 2019). These discourses simultaneously rationalize and denounce the out-migration of Filipinos, precipitating the perception that the children of OFWs are dependents who have been 'left behind' or rendered 'immobile'.

There are at least nine million of these children, forming 27 per cent of the total youth in the Philippines (Reyes, 2008). Their supposed suffering and abandonment has long been the subject of sensationalist reports despite the fact that most children are left with extended family members, like Hanna, who is cared for by her great aunt Josie, and are able to track transnational movements of both bodies and monies. Moreover, these children 'left behind' are also often cast in the media and scholarly work as being 'in deficit', as lacking morals and the 'right kind of aspirations' (Zipin *et al.*, 2015, p. 229). Tied to neoliberal modes of rationality and governmentality (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1999), this 'deficit discourse' places the onus on the individual to take responsibility (Zipin *et al.*, 2015, p. 229). As 'entrepreneurs of the self', Nikolas Rose (1999, p. 142) suggests that they themselves have the will to actively make choices in order to further their own interests and those of their family, or risk being blamed for becoming what Zygmunt Bauman (2004) calls 'wasted lives'.

Amidst this backdrop of moral value systems clearly in motion, this chapter will explore how transnational labour migration acts as a 'catalyst for intensified moral evaluation and decision-making' (Fechter, 2014, p. 148). To understand the circulation and accumulation of capital that leads to children being left behind or young people aspiring to migrate and move (see Alipio, Lu, and Yeoh, 2015), this chapter looks at the underlying moral discourses, values, and judgements surrounding money, and how these might offer insights into the localized negotiations of money as both a fetish and an organizing principle of life. While moral development has long been

studied among children in the Philippines, such studies were done primarily by psychologists like Maria Carmen Jimenez (1976, p. 3), who observed the following: 'Any attempt to define morality necessarily encounters difficulties. It is a concept everyone presumes to know until asked. Then everyone discovers an inability to conceptualize it. It is a subject to be lived rather than consciously defined'. While Jimenez's understanding of morality did not take into account the attendant effects on matters of money, her bold assertion about the unknowability of morality provides an important basis in which to bring into dialogue 'difficult' areas around the conceptualization of morality and young Filipinos' lived engagements with money, concerns which have traditionally been the focus of adult-centred studies.

Turning, then, to children and young people in this chapter, the following questions will be examined: How do their mediations of money offer insight into their conceptualization of morality? Conversely, how are moral values tied to their moneyed practices and embedded in their social lives? Finally, how do the various institutions involved in the quotidian lives of children and young people, like the family, school, and local NGOs, instil competing or complementary values around money and morality? In addressing these questions, the chapter will draw upon Cheryl Mattingly's (2013) notion of the 'moral laboratory' to highlight aspects of young people's moral and moneyed life that might otherwise be hidden, and to consider how these are in a constant state of experiment.

Young People's Everyday Experiments with Money and Morality

Through the analytic lens of the moral laboratory, this chapter takes young people not as objects of study but, like Mattingly, as 'researchers or experimenters of their own lives' (2013, p. 309). As actors in the everyday social and material spaces in which they live, they experiment with what is possible and build a repertoire of experiences that, in turn, transforms these spaces. This is comparable to Michael Lambek's (2010, p. 42) conception of ethics, in which morality can also be regarded as 'an intrinsic dimension of human activity and interpretation'. In privileging young people's agency and locating their moral and moneyed practices in the everyday, the chapter endeavours to understand children and youth in their own right in order to capture what Anne-Meike Fechter (2014, p. 147) describes as 'the possibility of change or transformation as a person tries out different moral possibilities' (see also Zigon, 2010). For instance, Fechter (2014, p. 145) finds that anthropology and related disciplines have emphasized 'moral selving',

a process of creating a more virtuous and spiritual self (Allahyari, 2000), which others, like Yunxiang Yan (2011), believe overshadows and neglects an analysis of people's immoral behaviour.

While many have been concerned with aspirations and desires connected to being or becoming a 'good person', or distinguishing what is 'right' from wrong, Jimenez (1976) reminds us of the difficulty of defining and conceptualizing morality, with Fechter (2014, p. 146) even warning us of the risk of ethnocentrism. As Charles Stafford (2013, p. 4) argues, there is no single 'collective morality' characterizing a whole society as different actors contend with questions about what is considered a good or bad child, how to raise them, and how to instil the 'right' social values. For instance, in studying the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, Bambi Schieffelin (1990) finds that children vary in what they learn is socially accepted behaviour through linguistic and social interactions. By examining young people's 'different moral possibilities' in relation to different social relations, this chapter is an effort to move away from singular, ethnocentric notions of a 'collective morality', and from polarizing dichotomies of being a 'good' or 'bad' person or distinguishing what is 'right' from wrong.

Instead, as Fechter (2014, p. 147) notes, children engage in constant negotiations of what it means to be good and bad as 'different value systems that feature in their lives grate and compete against each other'. For example, in Helle Rydstrøm's (2003) study of rural North Vietnam, children face not only the highly regarded tenets of Confucianism, which value boys over girls, but also the values of the socialist state, which promulgates gender equality. Likewise, in India, Peggy Froerer (2007) finds that children are disciplined according to both Hinduism and the nationalist values of political movements. However, instead of simply viewing these moral negotiations solely in terms of friction or as a set of transformative states in which a more virtuous and spiritual, moral self could arise through learning from immoral behaviour, these moral possibilities could rather be conceived as being 'in motion'. My idea of 'morality-in-motion' in the laboratory, or space of experiment, then, offers a way to empirically understand young people's flexible and strategic transition into moral selves that takes into account the full range of contestation and content, as well as multiple, and even competing, value systems.

Moral Debts in the Philippines

In her work, Mattingly (2013) looks at the moral work of African-American families as they try to create morally good lives for themselves and their

children, who are impacted by chronic illnesses and disabilities. In their care work, parents attempt to transform themselves, often turning to normative moral discourses of the importance of family to cultivate and resist certain virtues, such as the 'good mother' or 'Superstrong Black Mother' (Mattingly, 2013). Similarly, OFW parents use their responsibility towards the well-being of their family in response to their moralisation as *bagong bayani*, martyrs, and absent parents. Hence, much of Filipino culture's moral habitus is invested in the domestic sphere – that is, on the reciprocal bonds of obligation between parents and children – as shown in the case of Hanna. In a narrative writing exercise I asked her to complete, Hanna apparently consulted her great aunt Josie, unsure what to write about lessons she had learned about money. When I went to check up on her progress, I found them together, discussing what she would eventually write:

> Money is important to me because if I don't have money, then I won't have food. My money comes from my parents. If my parents weren't alive, I wouldn't exist too. My parents are very hardworking for my benefit. If they didn't work, then I wouldn't be able to study. I want to finish school so that I can help my parents.

While there is an element of collaboration in her narrative, Hanna, nonetheless acknowledges that her existence and continued well-being is tied to her parents. As another nine-year-old girl corroborated: '*Sila ay mahalaga sa akin dahil sila ang bumubuhay sa amin*' ('They are very important to me because they are giving life to us'). Both girls, subsequently, illustrate the importance of *utang na loob*, a Filipino cultural value inflected with Christianity, which is literally translated as 'debt of the inside', or figuratively as 'debt of gratitude'. These debts recognize socially meaningful relationships such as those between parents and children (Kaut, 1961), and are 'governed by the rules of reciprocity' (Cannell, 1999, p. 231).

As Hanna explains in an interview: 'When they are old, I will take care of them. Because when I was a baby, they were the ones who took care of me. What I want is to take care of those who took care of me'. Here, Hanna captures the indebted nature of *utang na loob*. As I have discussed elsewhere (Alipio, 2015), by virtue of being born and receiving care, children like Hanna are morally enmeshed in a system of reciprocal obligations and behavioural expectations. This kind of cultural value, however, is not isolated to the Philippines. In Thailand, Ara Wilson (2004, p. 12) observes that their moral economy is 'governed or at least constrained by local community values and expectations' in which the practice of exchange involves a 'need to

define, maintain, or elaborate relationships to kin, community, patrons, temples, and the spirit world'. Within this economy, Leonora Angeles and Sirijit Sunanta (2009, p. 555) further report a parallel Thai value to *utang na loob* that drives moral behaviours and practices, called *luk katanyu*, which loosely translates into 'grateful children repaying their eternal debt to their parents'. It can, therefore, be said that such values and exchange relationships form the backdrop to children's participation in moral economies (Wilson, 2004). For that reason, *utang na loob* goes beyond other cultural values that help to ensure social solidarity in the Philippines, such as *pakikisama* ('getting along'), *tulungan* ('act of helping one another'), *bayanihan* ('spirit of communal unity and cooperation'), and *damayan* ('act of working together'), as it makes visible young people's realization that they are embedded in a reciprocal web of relations that requires accepting their responsibility towards others.

As part of John Whiting and his associates' cross-cultural 'Six Cultures' study on child rearing and development (see Whiting, 1963), William Frank Nydegger and Corinne Nydegger's (1966) study of a barrio in northern Luzon discovered that Ilocano children are given responsibilities at an early age. From the age of five, they are expected to help their mothers, care for younger siblings, fetch water, feed livestock, and harvest vegetables (Nydegger and Nydegger, 1966). Filipino children, like others in Asia, of today are given similar responsibilities and are taught to be fully integrated members of the social unit (see Yeung and Alipio, 2013). As Jimenez (1976, p. 24) notes, they are 'conscious of [their] obligations to the other members of society and secure in the knowledge that others can be depended upon to look after [their] welfare'. With their integral participation in both the family and community, Guthrie and Jacobs (1966, p. 85) conclude that 'giving and receiving help are important interpersonal encounters in the Philippines at all ages', such that the Philippine ideal becomes that of 'family sufficiency and a refined sense of reciprocity'.

While Marcel Mauss (1990, p. 3) would argue that participation in these social transactions is in theory voluntary, the cultural value of *utang na loob* is so ingrained in Philippine society that it binds people with unequal, asymmetrical status and with 'moral debts' that seemingly can never be paid. Further, in Filipino culture, these are structured around 'capitalist scripts' (Mohanty, 1997) and normative gender roles of 'altruistic daughters' (Asis, 2002) and 'breadwinner sons' (see McKay, 2015). Here, firstborn children, particularly eldest daughters, hold a stronger moral obligation for the social reproduction of the family from caring for the young and elderly to maintaining the household (see Basa *et al.*, 2011). Sons, on the other hand, are expected

to economically provide and take charge of the family (McKay, 2015). These gendered roles can place young Filipinos under immense pressure as they mature and pursue upwardly mobile life opportunities, like schooling and employment abroad, in order to fulfil parental aspirations engendered by the promises of neoliberalism, such as a better life or higher class status offered by the accumulation of economic and social capital (see Zhang in this volume).

By not honouring the system of socially approved norms of conduct and exchange, or by acting ungrateful or without any guilt towards those who have invested in their futures, individuals merit condemnation of being *walang utang na loob* ('without a debt of gratitude') or, even worse, as *walang hiya* ('without shame') (see Alipio, 2015). Hung Cam Thai (2014, p. 43) finds a similar sentiment in Vietnamese transnational migrant families in which Viet Kieu, or overseas Vietnamese, 'who fail to take on the financial responsibility for those left behind are seen as selfish [*ich ky*], or more commonly [...] as fake Viet Kieu [Viet Kieu *gia/dom*]'. Consequently, Thai (2014, p. 52) argues that 'the absence of monetary circulation poses tremendous stigma for non-migrant members of transnational families because it signals that their migrant relatives are indifferent to their well-being'. In comparison, the translation of *hiya* ('shame') can be seen as a 'virtue when it controls and restrains selfish desires for the welfare of the other (*kapwa*)' (Reyes, 2015, p. 149). Such moral values and virtues, therefore, serve a utility in preserving and strengthening social relationships.

Researching the Logics and Labs of 'Lived Morality'

While the Filipino domestic space is seemingly invested with such moral debt that it appears to be the antithesis of the moral laboratory, this chapter pursues Jimenez's (1976) suggestion of taking into account young people's 'lived morality' in order to grasp the logic intertwining aspirational investments for the self and family. The chapter, thereby, applies Lew Zipin *et al.*'s (2015) framework of Bourdieuan logic to ground young people's lived experiences and agency with money and morality. These 'logics-and-groundings' of what can be termed 'migrant aspirations' draw upon the capitalist, religious, and gendered scripts described above to identify the following: A doxic logic grounded in 'populist-ideological mediations'; a habituated logic grounded in 'biographic-historical conditions'; and an emergent logic grounded in 'lived social-cultural resources' (Zipin *et al.*, 2015, p. 231).

Using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and narrative writing and mapping exercises from ethnographic fieldwork and community-based

research in the Philippine province of Laguna and Metropolitan Manila, the chapter explores these moral logics and how they shape the moneyed reflections, practices, and deliberations of a range of young people: The children of non-OFWs, the left-behind children of OFWs, and young migrants. In doing so, these moral logics will highlight the ways in which these young people are challenged and yet constrained by two main 'moral labs' in their lives: Home and school. In the moral lab of the home, the case study of Erik, the child of non-OFWs, will provide insight into how the doxic logic stemming from the family, religion, and culture structures his immobility. In contrast, an extended look into the case study of Hanna and her relationships at home will reveal how one's habituated logic is influenced by one's positionality, enabling her, as the left-behind child of OFWs, to make strategic calculations towards upwards mobility.

Juxtaposed to both Erik and Hanna, whose moral logics are drawn from a number of resources arising from home, the case study of George, a young migrant seafarer, will exemplify how emergent logic, which allows him to form a mature sense of responsibility, is built upon the knowledge and experiences that are instead gained from the moral lab of the school. This case study is informed by participant observation of a financial literacy and migration orientation seminar given to overseas Filipinos and their families by Atikha and its children's psychosocial programme as part of its 'information education and capacity building' campaign in schools and communities on various migration issues (see Alipio, 2015). The examination of 'morality-in-motion' through these different case studies is an attempt to follow Mattingly's (2013, p. 311) lead in seeing young people's experiences in everyday spaces as 'experiments in how life might or should be lived'. Through the following examples taken at home with those 'left-behind' and in school amongst would-be young migrants, the chapter will suggest that young people's experiments with lived morality are not only predicated on logics shaping their moral responsibility, but are also contingent on the indebted pull of parental aspirations and the sway of institutional ones.

Doxic Logic and the Contemplation of (Im)Mobility

As Zipin *et al.* (2015, p. 231) explain, 'through discourse and practice, certain beliefs and assumptions circulate powerfully across diverse settings of everyday life, constituting underlying logics that seem more-or-less unquestionable for many'. Uncontested and taken for granted, these Bourdieuan 'doxa' codify, naturalize, and wholly accept dominant norms of the world

that are often circulated in 'populist-ideological mediations' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pp. 73–74). Take, for instance, Hanna's relative, Erik, a first-year college student. Brought up by parents who are well-respected leaders in both their local Catholic church and community, Erik was raised in a household in which the migration of their relatives has impacted his life, despite his own parents being non-OFWs. When his mother, Josie, agreed to take in her nephew's child, Hanna, while he and his wife worked in Spain, Erik, an only child, effectively became an instant, older brother to Hanna and a surrogate caretaker. In the moral lab of the home, Erik's childhood and young adulthood is undoubtedly suffused with cultural and religious messages about *utang na loob*, filial piety, debt, and hard work.

Asked to reflect on the importance of family in his narrative writing exercise, Erik poignantly wrote:

> *Natutunan ko sa* [*mga*] *kapamilya kung paano mamulat sa* [*mga*] *katotohanan ng mundo, kung paano harapin ang buhay, kung paano mangarap, kung paano bumangon* [*mula*] *sa bawat pagdapa sa buhay, at kung paano tumawag* [*para sa tulong*] *sa itaas* (I learned from family members how to have one's eyes opened to the truths of the world, how to face life, how to dream, how to get up from each fall in life, and how to call [for help] from above).

Erik's response demonstrates how social institutions like the family and church, can become an important source of young people's moral discipline and individual aspirations (see also Gomes and Tan's chapter in this volume). At the same time, his response is also based on cultural tradition, as well as love and deference – all of which are deemed necessary to form a child's character and identity that would not only be considered 'good' for them but also for the nation as they can potentially become 'good citizens' – giving back with their labour – with the proper virtues, moral qualities, self-discipline, and self-restraint (Bose, 1995, p. 124). Yet, despite dreams of a better life outside his provincial one and resources and family networks that could facilitate his migration abroad if he so desired, Erik does not have any current plans of migrating. Instead, with his strong sense of filial piety and his steadfast religious belief that God has a plan for him, he is morally resolute, choosing to accept that his life is immobile – that is, it is bound to and in the Philippines.

Young people's aspirations and their pursuit of upward mobility is incited not just by various populist-ideological mediations of the proper, hard-working child or migrant, but also by parental aspirations. For instance,

in the families of young Filipino seafarers, which will be discussed below, parents and family members, who invest in 'quality' children and anticipate 'return[s] of greater assistance from their children later in their elderly lives', often finance the costs needed for migration, such as fees for schooling and training for credentials, loans for placement and deployment fees, management of the migrant's household, and provision of care to left-behind family members (Alipio, 2013b). It is, then, according to the doxic logic, and 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011), of migrant aspirations that 'desirable futures' are valorized, fantasized, and oftentimes hopelessly pursued or otherwise largely set aside as, for many left behind, these are disappointingly unattainable, out-of-reach without support, or, as in Erik's case, not prioritized.

In comparison to Erik, many of the young people I interviewed conveyed a wish to go overseas for work when they are older or to follow their OFW parents abroad, like Hanna. However, while Hanna's aforementioned written narratives portray an 'altruistic daughter', who wishes to repay her parents for their sacrifices, they also fail to communicate the 'complex, but not easily articulated, emotional [and moral] labor at work beneath what may appear as unrealistically ambitious expressions of aspiration' (Zipin *et al.*, 2015, p. 233). My interviews with her and participant-observation of her activities reveal a much more ambivalent character. To take into account this moral work at play, the next logic takes Hanna's calculations of money and grounds it in what Bourdieu calls a 'habitus', or the embodied 'dispositions' that organize the ways in which individuals cognitively perceive the social world and are motivated to react to them. Hanna's moral disposition thus emerges and takes shape through her intimate practices and relationships with money, which are, in turn, 'embedded in the material and cultural conditions of [her] given social-structural positions' (Zipin *et al.*, 2015, p. 234).

Habituated Logic and the Calculation of Money

At the start of the chapter, Hanna is seen trying to understand my own money situation and the extent of my mobility through ascertaining my worth. In habituated logic, strategic calculations and estimations are made in relation to a probable future (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53), yet are defined within the limits of one's positionality, or as Zipin *et al.* (2015) term it, 'biographic-historical conditions'. It can be said that habituated logic is therefore situated in a 'realistic' voicing of aspirations based on these positionalities (Zipin *et al.* 2015, p. 234). This kind of calculation can be seen in Hanna's engagement with money. When I asked her in return about her own money, she replied

that she is sent a monthly allowance of 10,000 Philippine pesos, or US$200, from her migrant parents. I exclaimed that her allowance was unusually high compared to the other left-behind children from her neighbourhood, but she reasoned that it was due to her *maraming babayarin* ('many expenses'): 2000 pesos (US$40) for her caregiver Tessa, who is another relative of hers, and 1000 pesos (US$20) each for her English and math tutors; motorized tricycle service to bring her to and from school; *baon* ('food provisions') for school lunch and transportation for Tessa to bring the *baon* to her every day; *merienda* ('snacks') in the afternoon; and internet services for her to keep in contact with her parents. In addition to these expenses, Hanna also noted that she places 2000 pesos as *ipon*, or 'a collection' of savings from her parents' remittances to be put away in the bank.

Due to her OFW parents' ability to send remittances back home on a regular, monthly basis, Hanna is in a privileged position. She is able to receive a wide range of care not just from her guardian, her great aunt Josie, or from her parents through telecommunication technology and social media, but also from her appointed caregivers, tutors, and drivers. Through this care chain (Hochschild, 2000), the remittances from Hanna's OFW parents enable others, such as their own relatives, to be gainfully employed and to experience a measure of social and economic mobility. As Thai (2014, p. 34) observes in his study on the 'social, personal, and relational dynamics of [migrant] money' in Vietnamese family life, remittance 'is not simply an instrument of rational exchange, but part of an economy of exchange based on norms, values, and specific networks'. Given the comparable importance of 'giving money to family across the life course' in Filipino families such as Hanna's, remittances can be viewed as a 'currency of care', serving concurrently to maintain civil relations, express filial love and affection, and financially support those left behind (Thai, 2014, p. 36, 43; see also Singh's chapter in this volume).

Through this currency of care, it is also evident that Hanna's parents hold great aspirations for a well-educated, healthy child as evidenced in the sending and specific allocation of money for food and extracurricular activities after school. However, while Hanna does not have immediate access to this money, she is quite aware of her financial situation as shown in the listing of her expenses and, besides the money she reserves for her savings, she is given a small allowance for her own personal use by her great aunt. Together, Hanna collectively co-manages her parents' remittances with her great aunt, listing and accounting for all her expenses in a notebook to keep track of how much money is spent on her care. But, while she has quickly become accustomed to having, handling, and using migrant money

in the short time that she has been left behind, she was still unaccustomed to, and angry about, the physical absence of her parents and the move to a new foster family and home even though it was with her relatives. It is within this context that her moral habitus emerges and shapes her intimate practices and relationships with money.

One day, I found her asking her dad in a tiny baby voice: 'What will you give me for Christmas? How much? The exchange rate is getting higher now. There is nothing in my bank'. After a short silence, I heard Hanna reply, 'Eh, you're cheap. Add 1500 pesos more [US$30]'. Then, she changed her mind and joked, 'Put 10,000 pesos [US$200] instead. I will save the money to buy me a car'. Michael Taussig (1977), in his work on commodity fetishism, would say that in Hanna's fetishization of money, social relationships would be dismembered and would dissolve into a relationship between things. But, through her engagement with money, Hanna situates her understanding of migration as a social relationship built upon the porous quality of money both as a 'gift of love' from her OFW parents and as a medium of exchange that transcends the typical accounting and calculating of goods to bind people to one another. She thereby uses habituated logic and hinges her well-being on the remittances and resources she can cull from her parents and caregivers. Here, she is adept at manipulating the situation and tries to recover her loss of direct love and care by asking for more money through a kind of baby talk. While this behaviour can be explained by her young age and perhaps her maturity level, nonetheless, it can likewise be perceived as selfish, as being *walang utang na loob* ('without a debt of gratitude') or as *walang hiya* ('without shame').

In the moral lab of the home, Hanna is often compared to Erik by her great aunt Josie through their past actions. For example, Josie states:

> Erik wasn't like that when he was her age. He's good. He never had trouble like Hanna. Even though Erik and Hanna are both the only child, Erik isn't spoiled [...] She always needs attention. She always gets whatever she wants because that is the way her parents are with her. She has a lot of expenses. She's spoiled. Her parents want us to bring hot food to her at school every day. She's very picky with her food and she always gets whatever she wants because that is the way her parents are with her. More so now because there is not so much affection. So, whatever she wants, she will get [...] as long as she has money and her parents send her money. But sometimes I pity her.

On the one hand, Josie recounts Hanna's behaviour in the negative – that is, as transgressing the boundaries of existing norms of appropriate, or accepted,

moral behaviour and rights that her own son embodies. On the other hand, this so-called 'misbehaviour' can also be perceived as a valid act of morality. In the attempt to assert her right to access care resources that she previously received and to gain more in her parents' absence, Hanna disputes how resources are allocated, shared, protected, and even disciplined. Following Cath Larkins (2013), who uses the term 'activist citizens' to describe children who are claimants of rights and responsibilities, I see Hanna as a 'moral citizen' as she exercises her right to fulfil her affective needs in a way that also morally compels and motivates social relations of assistance.

As a result, Hanna at times recognizes her family's migrant situation and seems to adjust her expectations and aspirations for the future accordingly while, at other times, her behaviour seems to contradict her understanding. This may be telling of her young age and her maturity level. Nevertheless, it can be reasoned that Hanna's habituated logic and use of the money and remittances sent to her by her migrant parents are a result of a doxic lure (Zipin *et al.*, 2015, p. 235). Through hard work, perseverance, and sacrifice, both Hanna and her parents believe they can achieve an upwardly mobile life, one that includes giving back through promises of anticipated returns of care, like Hanna, or through providing paid employment, like Hanna's parents, to those who took care of them or provided care. Contrary to Hanna, other migrant children, whether as the left-behind child of OFW parents or as a young person ready to migrate, are not in the same position and do not have access to similar resources or support systems.

As such, many are drawn to Atikha and its children's psychosocial programme, where they can join others like them in participating in the Batang Atikha Savers Club ('Youth Savers Club') and access services and programmes in relation to peer and professional counselling, understanding migration realities, mobilizing savings from remittances, and developing entrepreneurial abilities and other skills that Atikha believes can help them become better empowered in responding to the challenges of migration (Atikha, 2019; see also Alipio, 2015). Consequently, while young people may have doxic aspirations, their socially constituted position, coupled with a lack of resources and support, may lead them to imagine sensible alternatives instead. For example, I often came across left-behind children who excelled, or were diligent at school, and who imagined futures as professionals but who, because their OFW parents did not remit regularly, were resigned to go to technical or vocational colleges, like the one detailed below, instead of universities. Those using habituated logic in this way can, thus, be said to be morally practical as they are able to understand that their social and economic positions structure their dispositions, or available embodied actions.

Emergent Logic and the Cultivation of Maturity

While habituated logic is concerned with the implications of one's history and personal identity on practices in the present – that is, on the 'past-made-present' – the last logic discussed, emergent logic, is based on an emerging futurity, or a 'present-becoming-future' (Zipin *et al.*, 2015, p. 236). As Jimenez (1976, p. 25) explains:

> Because the Filipino necessarily has to get along with others for the satisfaction of his needs, he must from childhood cultivate the ability to intuit the other's feelings, moods and meanings. He learns to sense beyond the other's words and actions. Hence, the importance placed, not on the other's words but on the meaning hidden behind the words which may belie what was said, not on the actions but on what prompted the action, not on the perceptible and the tangible but rather on the imperceptible and the intangible.

In order to understand how this emergent sense forms the moral responsibilities and aspirations around work and family life, the chapter will now turn to the case study of George, who is part of a group of young men, aged eighteen to twenty-one, who are on the verge of being deployed as seafarers. Forming a major segment of OFWs and the international shipping industry, many had come from the Visayan Islands, where there is a long seafaring tradition, to gain formal education at the Intership Navigation Training Center (ISNTC), a professional maritime school in Manila. In the moral labour of this school, its core values of integrity, service, nurture, teamwork, and continuous improvement form its 'quality policy' and the 'ISNTC way of life' (ISNTC, 2019). In aspiring towards a high level of training and professionalism, the school partners with Atikha to conduct a financial literacy and migration orientation aimed at curbing their anxiety and providing realistic expectations about working overseas (see Alipio, 2013b).

In the orientation, Atikha, like Bauman (2004), who warns against 'wasted lives', reminds the young seafarers about the drawbacks of overindulgence, perceiving the money and gifts sent to left-behind families much in the same manner as Georges Bataille (1991) and his notion of 'the accursed share'. Atikha sees the excess 'energy' expended in these goods as being lavishly expended if this kind of energy is not productively used for personal growth and the development of the family, household, or community. The wasting of this energy – of the end of productive and reproductive 'life forces' – and the subversion, or abuse of that energy, is what Bataille (1991) calls 'luxury'. Concurrently, this practice of overindulgence and luxury also skews the

notion of reciprocity. For example, under the expectation that they should provide for less well-off family members, OFWs and seafarers often shower their family with gifts and try to provide for all the material needs of not only their immediate family, but also their extended family.

While this practice can be seen as an attempt to 'hold families together and [maintain] bonds of intimacy and care across generations', like in the case of Vietnamese transnational migrant families (Thai, 2014, p. 51), it also reflects the larger system of kinship and cultural practices of *utang na loob* and reciprocal gift giving. In being embedded in such extensive social and exchange networks, Christina Schwenkel and Ann Marie Leshkowich (2012, p. 395) would argue that in Vietnam, 'the neoliberal individual becomes a morally appropriate self'. Yet Atikha suggests that this may not be the case in the Philippines as the practice of giving and providing for an extended family under notions of moral obligation and reciprocity can also obscure the oftentimes silenced or hidden effects of transnational labour migration on the family, such as overdependency on migrant earnings, a luxurious lifestyle that can be detrimental to migrant savings, a widening communication gap, and alienation after long periods of absence (Alipio, 2013b). When Atikha staff listed these 'social costs' in the orientation, this triggered the prompt attention of the young seafarers, who became worried that their present and future lives and romantic relationships could potentially be at risk or stunted by their choice of work.

To allay these fears, Atikha then guided the young seafarers in an exercise in which they outlined, and then discussed as a group, their migrant aspirations for professional and personal growth in terms of financial and family goals. In this five-year, staircase 'dream map', a more 'morally appropriate self' is shaped as their responses for both financial and family goals revealed a mature concern for money, as well as for self and family (see Alipio, 2013b). Among the group of sixteen young seafarers, George's dream map stood out. While his dream map encapsulates many of the same goals as his peers, George was particularly aware of formulating a plan with an upward trajectory. For his family goals, he wrote that he would like to 'support [his] family and those people [who] helped [him] in [his] profession' during his first year overseas; 'continue supporting [his] family until they finish their [educational] course[s]' in his second year; 'help with [his] relatives' finances in his third year, adding that he wanted to do it 'in the right way'; 'get married and have a good family' in his fourth year; and 'help his parents' in their old age during his fifth year of being deployed abroad. In mapping out his financial goals, he indicated that in his first year he wanted 'to save money to support [his] family, like studying in college'; in his second year, he wanted 'to save money

to pay all [his] debt and prepare for [his] board exam'; in his third year, he wanted 'to invest and buy a [land] lot' in preparation for his future and his family; in his fourth year, he wanted 'to build [his] house and continue [to] invest'; and in his fifth year overseas, he aimed 'to be [a] good officer'.

While George's dream map seemingly supports Atikha's ideal use of investments, his goals also prove that there is another category of remittances. By distributing his extra, earned income in a logical and mature way to different family members and relatives, George shows how the family becomes the source of one's moral values, aspirations, and behaviour. Not only does George seek to improve his personal relationships, but also seems to pay back his financial and filial debts with both emotional gratitude and economic interest. The dream maps of seafarers like George illustrate that the money earned by seafarers and the remittances sent back to family members mean much more than their monetary value (McKay, 2011). Instead, with their careful, calculated mapping of financial and family goals and aspirations, the young seafarers embody what Steven McKay (2011, p. 5) calls a 'mature and emotionally-rich masculinity' in which they are able to transcend 'traditional gender roles as economic provider and procreator to become more professional in their careers, responsible in their debts and obligations, and family oriented in their personal lives' (Alipio, 2013b, p. 225).

Through the dream maps, the young seafarers exemplify how 'quality training' at school is part of the 'historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being' (Moll *et al.*, 1992, p. 133). Young men like George demonstrate that in the emergent sense of the future, 'lived social-cultural resources' (Zipin *et al.*, 2015), or the knowledge and experiences gained from school, NGO programmes, and from simply living, are valuable sources of capital that can foster maturity and a kind of strategic, morality flexibility, wherein they are able to adjust their preconceptions about migration and exercise better moral judgements around finances and family as they negotiate prevailing cultural norms, normative institutional discourses, and the gendered roles and practices ascribed to them. However, as Atikha and the maritime school warn, without adequate training, knowledge, or experiences, this could all be at risk.

Conclusion: 'Morality-in-Motion' Among Young Filipinos

It is precisely because of the mercurial nature of money, morality, and migrant bodies, which could stymie potential investment, that migration

NGOs, like Atikha, have shifted their attention from providing OFW families solely with psychosocial assistance and alternative, viable sources of income to teaching them, as well as non-OFW families, knowledge, values, and skills. Through building a kind of moral economy centred on cultural values as well as financial and familial, moral responsibility, rather than a labour economy, or an economy propped up by neoliberal development and OFW remittances, Atikha aims to productively use the monetary and social remittances gained from transnational labour migration towards the growth and development of families, communities, and most importantly, children and young adults. As parental and adult obligations are transformed into the sending of remittances and goods, the translation of care into monetary and commodified terms and into new channels of resource distribution highlights at once both care devoid of its physical and emotional bonds and debt-laden through relationships morally and logically built upon accountability, productivity, and rationalization. Migrant money is then imbued not only with the power to buy material goods, but also the power to serve as a substitute for absent love, care, or intimacy (Alipio, 2015; Thai, 2014).

As shown through the case studies of both 'left-behind' and migrant young people – Erik, Hanna, and George – transnational labour migration has become embedded in their experiences of childhood and young adulthood. It affects their lives in complex and multifaceted ways, such as through altering the contours of family structures as in Erik's case, caregiving arrangements and economic practices as in Hanna's case, familial and financial responsibilities as in George's case, and young people's agency in general. The contours of this agency are evident in terms of maturity and in the spiritual, emotional, and personal development of these left-behind and migrant young people, as well as in the economic development that they are involved in – that is, from sustaining households and communities to propping up the national economy.

However, this agency can be significantly seen through what I call 'morality-in-motion', which emerges in the moral laboratories of quotidian, experiential, and experimental spaces: The home and school environments. In these moral laboratories, young people's moral selves develop and transform as they carefully calculate and adjust their economic practices and social behaviours in different ways, for example as either morally resolute (as in Erik's case), morally ambivalent or transgressive (as in Hanna's case), morally flexible and strategic in the receipt of remittances (as in George's case), or morally practical in the absence of these resources. The variable nature of morality in a mobile and migrant society is also due to young people's negotiation of cultural and religious values, socioeconomic positions,

family needs, available material and educational resources, and a range of institutional discourses and policies (see Alipio, 2019; Hoang's and Zhang's chapters in this volume).

Likewise, in Paz Policarpio Mendez and F. Landa Jocano's (1974) classic comparative study of the organization of Filipino rural and urban families, they found that concepts and practices taught in early childhood are refined and reinforced throughout adolescence and adult life in order to ensure 'smooth interpersonal relations'. With Filipino culture's emphasis on the importance of interpersonal relationships, there is a move away from the egocentric self to a concern for others, which Jimenez (1976, p. 24) believes is also a function of maturity. As Jimenez (1976, p. 24) explains, 'There is a greater realization of [their] relations with others in society, a greater acceptance of [their] responsibility towards the members of a group'. From this, she concludes that 'overriding any influences due to age and socioeconomic differences regarding the Filipino child's bases for moral decisions are those influences of culture which society, through peers, kin, and especially the parents, inculcates' (Jimenez, 1976, p. 29). Thus, it can be argued that the productive and moral use of lived social-cultural resources – the knowledge and experiences instilled by and learned from the moral labs of social institutions, such as the family and school – thereby reflects children's development and transition into young people.

Furthermore, as Zipin *et al.* (2015, p. 239) suggest, it is only when young people are able to appropriately appreciate these resources conceptually and are capable of proactively using them towards educational and moral means that 'emergent aspirations [are] brought into effective expression and agentic mobilization towards alternative futures'. Yet, Arjun Appadurai asserts that an effective capacity to aspire requires the following:

> Exercises in local teaching and learning which increase the ability [...] to navigate the cultural map in which aspirations are located and to cultivate an explicit understanding of the links between specific wants or goals and moral inclusive scenarios, contexts and norms (2004, p. 83, as cited in Zipin *et al.*, 2015, p. 240).

Accordingly, it is only when young people are able to go beyond mere logics and senses of possibility to actively reimagine and constructively pursue local and wider worlds, with an understanding of their place in them, that they can then 'exceed, rather than reproduce, historically received social-structural limits' (Zipin *et al.*, 2015, p. 238). For many young Filipinos, the reimagining and pursuit of desirable, sensible, or alternative future possibilities beyond

a life of poverty and unemployment involves experimentation with money as a form of mobile or migrant aspiration – that is, the repaying of debt, the development of capital, and the growing of investments, all of which reflects an interest in and commitment to moral values and maturation.

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9. Christianity as the Sixth Aspirational 'C'

Megachurches and the Changing Landscape of Religion, Prosperity, and Wealth in Singapore

Catherine Gomes and Jonathan Tan

Abstract
Singapore is one of the richest countries in the world, whose citizens have an insatiable appetite for economic mobility. Many Singaporeans have become highly attracted to emerging Christian groups which marry basic Christian beliefs, such as the worship of Christ, with wealth accumulation. Known as megachurches, these groups preach a liturgy known as 'prosperity gospel' which equates wealth with worship. Though digital ethnography and content analysis of webpages and social media platforms, this chapter investigates two prominent megachurches in Singapore and their founding pastors: New Creation Church with Pastor Joseph Prince and City Harvest Church with Pastor Kong Hee. The results of such analyses reveal that wealth and material accumulation have become the foundations of Singaporean Christianity.

Keywords: megachurches, prosperity gospel, Singapore, City Harvest Church, New Creation Church

Introduction

Singapore is one of the wealthiest nations in the world; ranked third after Qatar and Luxembourg (Karmali, 2015). The country is a centre for technology, manufacturing, and finance, with a GDP (purchasing power parity) per capita of almost US$56,700; a country of millionaires with 1 in 35 people considered a member of this group, with this proportion predicted to increase

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH09

by 2020 (Wealthinsight, 2015). Moreover, the mantra for economic aspiration in Singapore is the 'Five Cs' – condominium, car, cash, credit card, and country club memberships (Tan, 2016, p. 17); often an unveiled code for materialism among Singaporeans. However, wealth and materialism are not the only elements that play out in everyday life in Singapore. Religion is a significant part of Singaporean life, with 80 per cent of the population affiliated with a religion. While Singapore is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world, it is Christianity (including Catholicism) that is the fastest-growing faith in the nation. How do Singaporean Christians reconcile wealth accumulation with materialist culture, particularly since the Christian bible schools its followers in equality (i.e. sharing with others less fortunate than themselves) and is critical of the pursuit of material possessions? By looking at two wealthy and popular megachurches in Singapore and their larger-than-life pastors – New Creation Church with Pastor Joseph Prince and City Harvest Church with Pastor Kong Hee – this chapter will use digital ethnography methods (e.g. webpages and social media platforms) to examine how wealth and material accumulation have become acceptable and incorporated into the essence of Singaporean Christianity.

Singapore: A Rich Nation and Aspirations of the Five Cs

In 2015, Singapore's gross domestic product (GDP) was worth US$292.74 billion, which represented 0.47 per cent of the world economy. The GDP in Singapore averaged US$71.73 billion from 1960 until 2015, where it reached an all-time high of US$306.34 billion in 2014 (Trading Economics, 2017). Singapore's wealth comes primarily from its financial services sector and its chemical export industry, as well as its open-minded economic policies, which support growth and innovation. Singapore is also the second busiest port in the world. In 2011 alone it exported an estimated US$414 billion of goods (World Atlas, 2017). However, Singapore's wealth is also represented through its citizens.

With a per capita income (PPP) of US$82,763, Singapore has 'five times the average per capita income for an ordinary individual in the world' (World Atlas, 2017). Approximately 1 in 35 Singaporeans are millionaires (Williams, 2016), with these rich citizens holding US$806.3 billion (S$1.15 trillion) in net wealth. While there are currently 154,000 millionaires in Singapore, this number is expected to rise to 188,000 by 2020 (Williams, 2016). In its annual global wealth report for 2016, Credit Suisse summarizes Singapore's household wealth situation:

> Wealth distribution in Singapore is only moderately unequal. Just 18% of its people have wealth below US$ 10,000, compared with 73% globally. The number with wealth above US$ 100,000 is six times the world average. Reflecting its very high average wealth, 5% of its adults, or 222,000 individuals, are in the top 1% of global wealth-holders, a very high number given that it has just 0.1% of the world's adult population (Credit Suisse, 2016, p. 54).

While the Singapore government's economic policies have no doubt created an environment of opportunities for wealth creation, Singaporeans themselves (and implied earlier by Sylvia Ang in Chapter 5 of this book) are self-motivated in their quest for wealth. Accumulation of the five Cs – condominium, car, cash, credit card, and country club memberships – have arguably been the unofficial set of aspirational values behind Singaporeans' desire for wealth. While the acquisition of the five Cs has been criticized even by Singaporeans as an ugly side of Singapore's materialist culture (Tan, 2016, p. 17), it provides us with a template for understanding how material success has become a marker for achieving personal success in Singapore. While the five Cs may seem ordinary and with some of the Cs (e.g. cars and credit cards) basic in any developed country, they are in fact tied to Singapore's high cost of living.

Cars, condominiums, and country club memberships cost a lot of money. In heavily populated and built up Singapore, where its approximately 5,763,044 residents live in 719.1 square kilometres of land, most Singaporeans rely on Singapore's arguably efficient train transportation known as the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) to get around. Moreover, more than 80 per cent of Singaporeans (Housing and Development Board, 2016) live in flats built by Singapore's housing authority, the Housing and Development Board (HDB). Cars in Singapore are expensive to buy and to maintain. The Toyota Corolla Altis, which was the best-selling car of 2015 in Singapore, for instance, is estimated to cost S$138,723. This price includes the cost of the car (S$110,888), in addition to estimated loan payments, road tax, and the certificate of entitlement (COE), which is a licence or right to own that particular vehicle (Woodpecker Asia Tech, 2017). Cars in Singapore also only have a lifespan of ten years before they are often deemed as worthless and destined for destruction at the scrap yard. Meanwhile, a four-bedroom condominium in Singapore may cost upwards of S$1.8 million (SG Young Investment, 2014). While a four-bedroom HDB flat may cost S$300,000 to acquire (SG Young Investment, 2014), it only has a leasehold span of 99 years. After the 99-year leasehold ends, the property reverts to the state and the owners' rights are

extinguished. Condominium apartments, however, have a 999-year lease or are freehold properties. Country club memberships cost at least S$100,000, if not more, to purchase, which does not include yearly subscription fees.

The acquisition of the Five Cs, however, shows more than just material accumulation – they also reveal the tenacity and hard work behind the acquisition of these success markers, which, interestingly, are tied to the state's version of the ideal Singaporean. Singapore government leaders, such as the late Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, have enshrined Confucian Chinese notions of hard work, personal sacrifice, and commitment to community, family, and nation as admirable qualities that define Singaporeans through the Asian Values debates of the 1990s and the Singapore Shared Values, which was formalized in 1991 (Singapore Parliament, 1991; Gomes, 2009). The Singapore Shared Values, as Gomes (2014) explains, is a set of values that incorporates the different aspects of Singapore's cultural heritage, namely the attitudes and values that have helped Singapore survive as a nation. In essence, it was a blueprint for the development of a national ideology, which all Singaporeans regardless of race could subscribe to and live by (Gomes, 2014, p. 107). These values are thus instilled into Singaporeans at a very young age in schools. Moreover, both the Shared Values' hierarchical disposition (parents before children) and egalitarianism (community before self) fit in well with Christianity's own hierarchical (clergy over congregation) and egalitarian (equality within congregation) purposes.

Christianity: A Growing Religion in Singapore

Religion plays a fundamental part in the culture and everyday life of Singapore, where religion, race, and ethnicity are sometimes inseparable. While it is common for most Hindus in Singapore to be racially grouped as South Asian and ethnic Chinese to be considered Buddhist or Taoist, religious practices and beliefs are not the primary identifiers of race. The same, however, cannot be said about Singaporean Malays who are born into the Islamic religion. For Singaporean Malays, Islam is intrinsically and culturally bound up with race. While non-Malays have the choice of converting to Islam because of community pressure, the same cannot be said of Malay Muslims if and when they so desire to convert to other religions. In other words, being Malay in Singapore is equivalent to being Muslim. The Singaporean Malay community's racial identity as inseparable from its religious identity is not unique in Southeast Asia. The Malay community in Malaysia, for example, shares an identical racial–religious identity to the

Singaporean Malays. This, of course, is primarily because of the common pre-colonial and colonial history that Singapore and Malaysia share with each other, particularly with regard to racial and ethnic (diasporic) groups and the adoption of different Asian (Islamic, Buddhist, Taoist, and Hindu) and European (Christianity) religions.

Christianity constitutes the most rapidly growing religious ideology in Singapore. The Singaporean sociologist Terence Chong notes that Christianity has not only grown rapidly in Singapore, increasing from ten per cent of the population in 1980 to 12.7 per cent in 1990, 14.6 per cent in 2000, and 18.3 per cent in 2010, but also a disproportionate number of Singaporean Christians, and in particular, over 40 per cent of Singaporean Protestants, hail from the professional classes and hold university degrees (Chong, 2016, p. 94). Catholicism accounts for one third of all Christians in Singapore, with the rest belonging to various Protestant denominations (Department of Statistics, Singapore, 2001, pp. 33–34). Moreover, Christianity in Singapore is also exclusively connected with the Eurasian ethnic group, with most Eurasians identifying themselves as Catholic. The rapid growth of Protestant Christianity in Singapore is especially significant because the majority of Singaporean Protestants are converts to Christianity.

While Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism are Asian-centric religions that are well rooted in Asia and have successfully circulated throughout Southeast Asia for centuries, Christianity is a relatively new faith that is making a profound impact on the Asian region as a whole. The first wave of Christianity occurred with the arrival of European colonial powers in Asia as far back as the fifteenth century. Catholicism, for example, was spread by Spanish and Portuguese colonists in Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines and Malacca. Protestant Christianity, such as Methodism and Anglicanism, found its way to the colonies, mainly through European conquerors in different parts of Southeast Asia. Comprising a transnational (and transitional) place of trade, the British crown colony of Singapore became a valuable location for proselytizing by Christian missionaries, who set up churches for the newly baptized and educational institutions known as 'mission schools' for orphaned or abandoned children. Today such mission schools have become somewhat exclusive, and often cater to the English-educated and middle class rather than the indigent and orphaned as in times past.

A growing religion in Singapore, Christianity not only has new converts, but also expanding denominations taking root in the nation-state. Some very well-known and popular churches are home grown, and their expanding overseas ministries have given rise to the term 'megachurches' and are represented by larger-than-life pastors. The three megachurches in Singapore

are Faith Community Baptist Church (FCBC) founded in 1986 and led by Senior Pastor Lawrence Kong, New Creation Church founded and led by Senior Pastor Joseph Prince, and City Harvest Church founded in 1989 and led by Senior Pastor Kong Hee – all of which boast five-figure membership numbers. Often offshoots of the Baptist, Evangelical, and Charismatic branches of Christianity, these new Christian megachurches minister to huge congregations, have very healthy finances, and frequently number well-known Singaporeans amongst their adherents. City Harvest Church, for example, counts as one of its members the popular Mandarin pop singer Sun Ho (Ho Yeow Sun). Sun, incidentally, is also one of the co-founders of the church and the wife of its principal founder, Pastor Kong Hee. In 2015, Sun became a pastor of City Harvest.

It is thus far from an exaggeration to say that Christianity is openly practised in Singapore. When Gomes worked for the government service, a number of her colleagues were devout practicing Christians who brought their religion into the workplace. One small unit in the government department Gomes worked in, for example, made Christianity part of their daily discourse by peppering their conversations with biblical references, playing Christian music on the radio at all times, and displaying posters in the room dedicated to Jesus Christ and passages from the bible. Today, such displays of Christianity have reached new heights of performativity with the advent of social networking sites. Besides allowing users to display their allegiance to their faith through status updates, Facebook, for example, has numerous groups with healthy memberships dedicated to different facets, issues, and denominations of Christianity in Singapore. A Facebook search for the words 'Singapore' and 'Catholics' revealed the existence of 21 groups, while 'Singapore' and 'Christians' displayed no less than 86 groups. Meanwhile, a Google search of the terms 'Singapore' and 'Catholics' yielded no less than 907,000 hits, while 'Singapore' and 'Christians' displayed over 68 million. For Christian respondents, practising their faith by actively becoming part of Christian communities, even though their specific congregations may not have included significant numbers of Singaporeans, was still an effective method of reproducing Singaporean culture.

Part of the reason why Christianity is growing in importance among Singaporeans is due to its strong links with family and nation. Christianity generally stresses the importance of family, filial piety, and obedience within an ordered hierarchical framework – values familiar to the ethnic Singaporean Chinese majority. In Singapore, the family is a basic tenet of the society's nationalist culture and agenda, while serving effectively as a microcosm for the nation. Moreover, the Singapore government has

successfully managed to infuse the Chinese Confucian value of filial piety into the culture of Singapore through the 'Asian Values' label. Asian Values was a political ideology first introduced in the 1990s in Southeast Asia and East Asia to differentiate Asian cultural and societal values from those of the West. It was a term often used by Lee Kuan Yew (Prime Minister of Singapore, 1959–1990) and Mahathir bin Mohammad (Prime Minister of Malaysia, 1981–2003) to promote a pan-Asian identity that emphasized community and hierarchy over the individual. Hence, loyalty to family in terms of structure and hierarchy becomes anecdotally interpreted as allegiance to the government and state and vice versa.

Beyond the social, cultural, and political reasons for Christianity's growth and popularity, one must not forget that Christianity's ability to act as a bridge or commonality between diverse communities is also inherent in the universalism that was present at the birth of the Christian movement at an event known as Pentecost. Specifically, the Acts of the Apostles (2:9–11) presents a grand vision of the Christian movement embracing all cultures, ethnicities, and languages of the world in a universal community without any requirement that these be abandoned for a singular normative culture or identity. This vision of the in-gathering of new believers took place at Pentecost, where those present in Jerusalem heard the gospel proclaimed to them in their own languages. This suggests that cultural, ethnic, national, and linguistic particularities need not be abandoned when one embraces the Christian faith, as borne out by the fact that those present were not asked to give up their particular ethnicity, culture, national identity, or language to hear the Gospel in Hebrew or Aramaic, the languages of the early Christian Movement. It is within this context of Christianity's growth that we examine the interconnected variables of wealth and faith as demonstrated on digital media platforms.

Methodology

This chapter uses digital ethnographic (Pink *et al.*, 2015) methods, involving content analysis of websites and social media platforms in order to understand the impact of New Creation Church and City Harvest Church on Singaporeans, particularly those who are members of these organizations. Digital ethnography, as Pink *et al.* note, 'outlines an approach to doing ethnography in a contemporary world … [and] … invites researchers to consider how we live and research in a digital, material and sensory environment', because we do not live in 'a static world or environment'

(2015, p. 1). In addition, Pink and her colleagues go on further to explain that digital ethnography:

> explores the consequences of the presence of digital media in shaping the techniques and processes through which we practice ethnography, and accounts for how the digital, methodological, practical and theoretical dimensions of ethnographic research are increasingly intertwined (Pink *et al.*, 2015, p.1).

We use digital ethnography as a method because digital media is part of everyday life. Digital media is pervasive in Singapore and connected to materialism, wealth, and consumerism, where the latest gadgets are indicators of economic and social statuses. Digital media has also become prevalent in the Christian churches in Singapore, particularly those we showcase in this chapter. While websites are now a necessary way for organizations to communicate their business and purpose, social media dominates the communication relationships between organizations and their publics. Never a one-way communication process, social media now gives agency to individuals to express their relationship with organizations. Gomes (2016, p. 8), for instance, observes that social media goes beyond 'more than just presenting us with various ways of communication with each other' to 'also allows us to broadcast our thoughts, opinions, ideas and ideologies to a broad audience'. Social media, in other words, does not only allow us to communicate our thoughts and opinions to an organization, but also to broadcast them to others. Before we examine our case studies in depth, let us look at the intertwined growth of wealth and faith through the contemporary phenomena of the prosperity gospel and the megachurch.

Prosperity Gospel and Megachurches

First emerging in the United States in the 1970s and experiencing tremendous growth from the 1980s onwards in North America and across the globe in Africa, Asia, and Australia, the megachurch movement seeks to provide a one-stop venue where every need and desire of a person or family, from faith to community support, could be met. Within the contemporary North American socio-cultural context, the rise of megachurches parallels the rise of neoliberalism and the triumph of profit-making and massive economic growth during this period. This economic development emerged as a result of the social and economic policies of Ronald Reagan, which has resulted in the rise of mega

shopping malls and massive superstores like Walmart that seek to provide a one-stop destination for every desire and need. In this regard, megachurches represent the 'Walmartization' of Christianity, i.e., building on the same goals of supersized growth to transform Christianity from traditional church structures and denominations to one-size-fits-all supersized behemoths of Christian communities where every need – spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical – could be met and fulfilled (Thumma and Travis, 2007).

Within the broader history of Christianity's evolution, megachurches represent an unprecedented transformation of Christianity from traditional small-sized neighbourhood or local churches that belong to various denominations to one-size-fits-all supersized communities that are led by charismatic pastors who, by virtue of the emotional pull of their personal charisma and 'cool' factor, have been able to amass a large following of Christians who share their vision of church communities that seek to fulfil every facet of a believer's life. To attract and retain believers, worship services at megachurches emphasize the emotional aspects, i.e., high degrees of emotional energy and psychological highs, which in turn reinforces feelings of belonging and commitment. Not surprisingly, megachurches' worship services are highly emotional events for their congregants that comprise staged and choreographed performances by Oprah-like charismatic pastors with live praise bands and big screens, as well as special effects lighting and sound inside vast cavernous spaces that serve not only to accommodate their huge congregations, but also to create the spectacular effect of vastness as part of their branding.

In a society where the traditional extended familial and familiar social structures of society are fragmenting as a result of the rapid growth of internal migration of Americans away from their families in search of job opportunities, megachurches provide an alluring sense of community and an attractive framework of communal support for both individuals and typical American nuclear families who are far away from their traditional extended familial networks. Within the all-encompassing communal framework that megachurches offer, these individuals or families could feel at home and experience a sense of belonging to large communities of like-minded fellow Christians that are able to provide for all their spiritual and physical needs and growth under one roof. Unlike their traditional church counterparts, megachurches not only offer Sunday worship services, but also ancillary services for all kinds of therapeutic needs, including support groups for all kinds of needs, childcare, educational classes for both spiritual and physical growth, and other community building exercises (Thumma and Travis, 2007).

Not surprisingly, megachurches in North America are also characterized by their homogeneity in terms of social class, economic status, and

racial–ethnic identity, with white, wealthy, and middle-class Americans being overrepresented and racial, social, and economic minorities being underrepresented (Bird and Thumma, 2011). Studies conducted in North America (Thumma and Travis, 2007; Bird and Thumma, 2011) indicate that one defining characteristic of megachurches in North America is the fact that the majority of the megachurch membership are well educated and wealthy. Because the general megachurch membership is economically well off to begin with, megachurches have been able to leverage this aspect of their membership to raise large sums of money from their membership to finance their growth and further increase in size. In other words, megachurches represent the triumph of the American lifestyle of growth and success as a defining mark of successful churches. Megachurches that are able to provide for their members' lifestyles and needs experience continued growth, which in turn attracts more members who are desirous of such affirmation in their lives.

In addition, supersized growth as a key performance indicator of the megachurches' success is central to the identity construction of megachurches and the continuing validity of the theology of prosperity gospel that undergirds the worldview and ethos of these megachurches. The Australian sociologist of religion Marion Maddox speaks of megachurches as 'growth churches' with an intense focus on increasing their market presence and utilizing the key performance indicator of material success as evidence of divine blessings of their growth strategy and spiritual development (Maddox, 2012). This in turn generates a self-perpetuating cycle of growth that depends on the ability of the megachurches' pastors to attract and retain an ever-increasing number of new members to maintain this cycle of growth and justify the validity of the megachurches' prosperity gospel for their members' own economic prosperity. The prosperity gospel, in other words, is where capitalism fundamentally intersects with the intimately personal (Wilson, 2004; Ong, 2006); and where, as Cheryll Alipio (Chapter 8) and Roy Huijsmans (Chapter 10) note, money and morality meet.

The Emergence of Megachurches in Singapore

The roots of the emergence of megachurches in Singapore in the 1980s can be traced to certain demographic trends and key socio-political developments in 1980s Singapore. First, central to the rise of megachurches is the socio-economic class and 'English only' literacy of Singaporean Christians. Sociologist Terence Chong notes that Singaporean Christians in the 1980s were:

> Certainly the best educated, with an overrepresentation of its numbers in upper secondary and tertiary education, and also the most economically well off, with overrepresentation in terms of the number living in 'bungalows, semi-detached and terrace houses' and 'private flats' [and] almost half of all Christians [...] said [that] they were 'literate' in 'English only' (Chong, 2016, p. 99).

Second, unlike earlier generations of Singaporean Christians, many of whom hailed from the lower classes, many of these Singaporean Christians are converts to Evangelical Christianity, which took root and experienced tremendous growth in Singapore from the 1980s onwards (Goh, 2010, p. 65). In particular, Evangelical Christianity is attractive to a large number of Singaporeans because of its emphasis on black and white moral clarity that not only integrates well with the Singapore government's emphasis on morality, but also with the traditional Confucian underpinnings of moral-ethical conduct and self-cultivation that continues to undergird wider Singaporean society (Chong, 2011). Unsurprisingly, these newly-minted Singaporean Christians, as beneficiaries of the social and economic policies and members of a privileged socio-economic class, are less enamoured with the Social Gospel of earlier Singaporean Christians who championed social-economic reforms and worked to change the lives of the economically marginalized and disenfranchised in Singapore (Goh, 2010, p. 65). Rather than empathizing and seeking solidarity with the lower classes, they are instead attracted to the prosperity gospel of megachurches that appears to justify their socio-economic privilege within the stratified Singaporean society as signs of God's blessings and grace on their success.

Third, Operation Spectrum, which the Singapore government carried out in May 1987 against twenty-two Catholic social activists who were working on politically explosive issues involving labour, social welfare, and the marginalization of the economically underprivileged, had a chilling effect on the Social Gospel and the fight for social justice in the name of Christianity. While this is not the forum to discuss whether Operation Spectrum's charges of Marxist conspiracy are justified, for the purposes of this discussion on megachurches it serves to reinforce the idea that liberation theology, social gospel, and social justice advocacy for the marginalized were dangerous and subversive in the eyes of the government. The unintended consequence was that Singaporean Christians who benefited from the Singapore government's social economic policies had yet another reason to avoid raising social questions and instead sought to justify their social economic success as evidence of God's blessings in their lives. As a result,

the decline of the Social Gospel and liberation theology under relentless pressure from the Singapore government paved the way for prosperity gospel and its emphasis on personal empowerment to take root in Singapore.

In other words, the socio-economic policies of the Singapore government in the 1980s that birthed and nurtured the middle class, the emphasis on meritocracy and self-improvement, and the triumph of capitalism and market forces over socialism and social intervention laid the ground work for the rise of megachurches in Singapore, which emerged in the 1980s as small breakaways from established mainline churches led by charismatic leaders with a strong evangelical worldview and an ambition to grow their nascent congregations, as can be seen in the case studies below. In many respects, megachurches in Singapore take their cues from their North American counterparts in terms of both theological worldviews and an emphasis on emotional and affective worship styles, thereby giving rise to the centrality of charismatic pastors, rock concert-style worship in massive auditoriums, and an emphasis on popular culture, consumerist ethos, self-growth, and business marketing that seeks unfettered growth to reinforce its image of successful growth.

Like their North American counterparts, Singaporean megachurches blend Evangelical and Pentecostal worldviews, emphasizing absolutist moral clarity clad with biblical injunctions in a world filled with shades of grey and the primacy of ecstatic worship experiences and personal, material, and spiritual growth. In doing so, they draw on capitalism's branding, consumerist, and marketing strategies to nurture their growth. Not surprisingly, the 'English only' middle class Singaporeans, with their familiarity with popular culture, rock concerts, shopping malls, and social-economic mobility, are thoroughly at home in megachurches and have driven the growth of megachurches in Singapore. Terence Chong's summary of his literature review on Singaporean megachurches and their membership is especially insightful:

> Quantifiable criteria such as numerical and financial growth were more likely to be taken by megachurch Christians as signs of divine blessing and personal faithfulness. Echoing capitalist logic, the time, energy, and indeed finances that megachurch Christians invest in doing 'God's work' will be multiplied, in turn, as blessings. Reinforcing this is the myth of meritocracy, which justifies material blessings for hard work. In correlating the material with the spiritual, one is able to measure the immeasurable, perfect for younger professionals who desire a linear and progressional gauge of their journey with God. Finally, many of these young Singaporean Christians not only find a brand of spirituality and

> theology that is familiar to the ethos of post-industrial Singapore but also cultural empathy with those of similar backgrounds undergoing the same class transitions, suggesting that the Singapore megachurch shares 'elective affinity' with the aspirations of young, upwardly mobile Singaporeans (Chong, 2016, p. 100).

With this background in the prosperity gospel and megachurches, let us now look intensively at New Creation Church and City Harvest Church.

Glamour, Fame, and Wealth: New Creation Church

New Creation Church is a non-denominational church based in Singapore and a member of the National Council of Churches of Singapore. While it was formed by a small group of Singaporeans, which included Joseph Prince, Henry Yeo, David Yeow, and Jack Ho, it is Prince who is almost exclusively associated with the church and associated with its rise. This is because New Creation Church's brand is exclusively tied with Prince's own cult of personality. As the church's website proclaims:

> A founding member of New Creation Church, Joseph initially served as an elder and associate pastor. However, his unanimous appointment as senior pastor in 1990 marked a turning point in the history of the church, which started experiencing phenomenal growth. Under Joseph's leadership, the church congregation has grown by more than a hundredfold – from about 150 to more than 31,000 attendees.

While New Creation Church had humble beginnings, with its original venue being a flat in a HDB apartment block, it now boasts a S$500 million performing arts centre as its main venue. The Star Performing Arts Centre seats 5000 people and has an amphitheatre that accommodates an additional 300 worshippers, and was built and is managed by Rock Productions, its business arm. The venue also incorporates a shopping mall called The Star Vista, which is owned and managed by CapitaLand Mall Asia (Zaccheus, 2016). The church is made up of members who have contributed to the financial strength of the organization, as this excerpt from a report in *The Straits Times* shows:

> In a 2012 tax document obtained by The Sunday Times, the organisation said its daily broadcast could reach 680 million households globally. And in that financial year alone, the organisation listed a revenue of

> US$27.6 million, most of which came from 'contributions and grants'. Of that amount, US$21.2 million was spent on the broadcasts. … Still, the church has been a fund-raising powerhouse, collecting $21 million in donations in a single day in 2010. This broke its own one-day records of $19 million in 2009 and about $18 million in 2008 (Feng, 2014).

Loyal worshippers not only convene at the Star venue for Sunday services, but also in other venues in different locations throughout Singapore where services are simultaneously broadcast. These include the Shine Auditorium, Marina Bay Sands Ballrooms, Cathay Cineplex Causeway Point, Shaw Theatres Seletar, Golden Village Grand (Great World City), and Golden Village Yishun. Shaw Theatres is a movie-theatre chain and Golden Village is a Cineplex chain in Singapore. While attendance for churchgoers at the Star venue is free, worshippers need to use an online booking form in order to reserve a seat for themselves. While the principal services, which are often conducted by Prince or one of the associate or visiting pastors, are in English, New Creation also offers worship services in Mandarin, Hokkien, and Cantonese at the Marina Bay Sands Ballrooms venue. The church also uses new media to reach out to its flock.

As reported by *The Straits Times*, the church reaches 680 million households worldwide through its daily broadcasts. These broadcasts take place on various cable television networks (e.g. Daystar Television Network and Christian Television Network), radio stations (e.g. KMOA 89.7 FM [American Samoa]), and online, for instance through the church's various social media outlets such as its YouTube channel (see https://www.youtube.com/user/NewCreationChurch), which has 13,793 subscribers, its Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/nccsg/) with 149,328 followers, and its Twitter account with 17,700 followers (see https://twitter.com/nccsg?lang=en). The church's followers use the social media platforms to express their faith and loyalty to the church. For example, on its YouTube channel, comments to videos often look like the following from a worshipper in response to a YouTube video titled 'Jermaine Leong, New Creation Worship':[1]

> Thank you LORD JESUS for new creation church
> So blessed with each wording… oh how beautiful savior we have in Jesus!
> I love New Creation Worship.

1 This is a response to a YouTube video titled 'Jermaine Leong, New Creation Worship: Finished', published on 5 April 2015 by the New Creation Worship wing. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8M73dUPSj0>, accessed 4 April 2019.

> They have such a true and sweet spirit.
> You can feel the anointing in their singing.
> all because of Jesus, we are thoroughly blessed! Hallelujah
> I bless the glorious king who gave you this amazing song.
> Let there be abundance of his grace on your ministry
> and your service to the holy church of the world

New Creation Church's open official Facebook page is no different, with commenters expressing their faith and positive impressions of the church. Examples of such posts are represented in posts and comments on the New Creation Church Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/nccsg/). In a response to the church's post of a quote from the bible: 'May he grant your heart's desires and make all your plans succeed' (Psalm 20:4, NLT). The post received 1400 reactions ('likes' and 'loves'), 136 shares, and 159 comments. The comments that are featured often express faith by praising the Holy Trinity (God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit) particularly for favours done towards them. The first post for instance praises God and Jesus while expressing generic thanks. The second post is more specific about what the commenter is thankful for: business class (airline) tickets.

While the church is becoming increasingly popular, with its admittance now averaging a Sunday attendance of 33,000 worshippers (New Creation Church, 2017a), it accords its success to its larger-than-life Senior Pastor Joseph Prince. Prince, as the church's website explains, is:

> The author of best sellers such as *The Power of Right Believing*, *Destined to Reign*, and *Unmerited Favor*, Pastor Prince is also a highly sought-after conference speaker. He has impacted church leaders worldwide by preaching the unadulterated gospel of Jesus with boldness. He is known for teaching God's Word in a fresh, practical, and revelatory way that always unveils Jesus. His humorous, dynamic and engaging style of preaching has also endeared him to a wide spectrum of viewers who tune in to his daily television programme. His broadcast currently reaches millions of homes across North America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Israel on both secular and Christian networks.
>
> A founding member of New Creation Church, Pastor Prince initially served as an elder and associate pastor. However, his unanimous appointment as senior pastor in 1990 marked a turning point in the history of the church, which started experiencing phenomenal growth. Under Pastor Prince's leadership, the church has grown by more than a hundredfold — from

> about 150 to an average Sunday attendance of 33,000. He currently serves as the senior pastor of the church on a voluntary basis (New Creation Church, 2017b).

To understand the appeal of New Creation Church, we need to look at their larger-than-life Senior Pastor Joseph Prince, who is the face of the church.

Brand Joseph Prince: The Rock Star Pastor

Joseph Prince's success as a pastor is not only confined to New Creation Church. This success is despite his not having much, or indeed any, formal training in theology. While his roots as a pastor may have started at the the New Creation Church, Prince has been consciously developing his brand for mass appeal. We see this in his reconstruction of his identity (e.g. through his name change), his dominance on digital media, and his founding of another new church based on his brand of Christianity, which he brands 'the Grace Revolution' outside his base of Singapore. All the while, Prince uses visual cues that integrate wealth and glamour with his teachings of Christianity.

Prince was born Xenonamandar Jegahusiee Singh, but later changed his name to the Anglicized Joseph Prince. While critics of Prince point out that the name change may have been because 'Joseph Prince' is easier to remember and, more significantly, is reminiscent of Joseph, the Hebrew Prince of Egypt (e.g. Goddall, 2013; Empowered by Christ, n.d) in Genesis 42:6–8, Prince's neutralizing of his name to erase his biracial heritage (Sikh father and ethnic Chinese mother) may have made him more palatable, particularly to ethnic Chinese Singaporeans. Three quarters of Singapore's population is ethnic Chinese and proselytizing would be more effective in terms of mass appeal. Increasing this appeal further is Prince's marriage to an ethnic Chinese Singaporean. Having an Anglicized name perhaps also allowed Prince to appeal to an international audience outside of Asia. He states on his website:

> Joseph has also seen doors open supernaturally for his broadcast program, which currently reaches millions of homes across North America, Europe, Africa, Australia and Israel on both secular and Christian networks (Joseph Prince Ministries, 2017).

A name change, however, is not the only way in which Prince appeals to his congregation. Recognizing the power of digital media, Prince dominates

cable television and the internet, where broadcast television is also finding a home. Currently, he is featured prominently on the New Creation Church official website and its social media platforms (e.g. Facebook and Twitter). Prince also has his own personal website *Joseph Prince Ministries* (see http://www.josephprince.org/), a comprehensive collection of Prince's teachings that take the form of podcasts of his prayers and sermons. This website has an online store where the faithful can purchase his books and his DVDs, some of which have fixed prices or prices based on the purchaser's preference. Prince also has a YouTube channel (see https://www.youtube.com/user/JosephPrinceOnline), which has 213,007 subscribers, a public Facebook profile with 3,777,320 followers, and a Twitter account with an estimated 334,000 followers. While Prince may have a large media profile, the image he conveys is always controlled, where he and his family always look slick and glamorous and what he says officially points to the intersection between wealth and religiosity. Doing so, Prince creates an unbreakable link between his brand of Christianity and himself, which marries wealth and faith seamlessly together.

A Google Image search of Joseph Prince, for instance, reveals professionally-taken images of him preaching on a lavish stage or portraitures in a studio (see Google Images 2017). All the images always show him as nothing less than well-groomed. His portraits show him to have a friendly demeanour, while the action shots of him preaching show a commanding albeit friendly figure. The images no doubt convey a financially successful man. This success is evident in media reports that he is one of the world's richest pastors (Singh, 2014). While New Creation Church has stated that he had stopped drawing a salary from them since 2009 (Carmichael, 2016; Singh, 2014), his wealth could well easily be made from the selling of his merchandise (at least 20 books, including special editions and translations, as well as DVDs) and from speaking arrangements. His book, *The Power of Right Believing, 100 Days of Right Believing*, for instance, was No. 2 on the *New York Times* bestseller list under the advice and 'how to' section (Feng, 2014).

The image of wealth and success, however, is drawn from Prince's interpretation of Christian teachings, which he names 'The Grace Revolution'. On his website (Joseph Prince Ministries, 2017) he explains that God spoke to him directly, while he was holidaying in the Swiss Alps, and that his calling was to spread The Grace Revolution:

> 'If you don't preach pure, unadulterated grace, people's lives will never be gloriously blessed and gloriously transformed'. This one statement

> that God made to Joseph Prince in 1997 completely transformed the way Joseph preached and taught the gospel.
> And thus began the Grace Revolution.
> Joseph had been holidaying with his wife Wendy in the Swiss Alps and there, amid the majestic landscape, God told him that he had not been preaching grace, and gave him the mandate to preach grace – pure and unadulterated. This meant preaching about God's grace without attempting to balance, or mix, it with the law. Desiring to see his congregation liberated, empowered and blessed by the Lord, Joseph fully embraced the mandate from God and has not looked back since.

The passage above reveals two things: a) that he was chosen by God to facilitate this 'divine' message of The Grace Revolution, and b) that Prince is a wealthy and successful man, as manifested by his choice of holiday locations. Prince claims that God spoke to him in 1997 when the Swiss Alps would have been – whether real or imagined – considered a luxury holiday by Singaporeans or anyone travelling internationally from outside Europe. God speaking to Prince in, as Prince himself states, a 'majestic landscape' gives the impression that God approves of this luxurious, if not opulent, lifestyle.

Prince's The Grace Revolution has resulted in the New Creation Church growing from 2000 members in 1997 to 31,000 at present, but has also increased his transnational mobility to the point where he has preached in Israel, Norway, the Netherlands, the UK, the US, Canada, Australia, and in various part of Asia (Joseph Prince Ministries, 2017). Moreover, he has found fame and wealth through the communication of The Grace Revolution (books, DVDs, television, radio and internet broadcasts, and speaking engagements), resulting in his social and religious cache increasing due to his association with fellow well-known pastor and televangelist Joel Osteen. In 2014, Prince opened The Grace Revolution Church in Texas, which shares identical beliefs with those of New Creation Church, but which is not financially supported by the Singapore church.

Fall from Grace: Kong Hee and the Mismanagement of City Harvest Church Funds

Joseph Prince's cult-like figure among the faithful who go to New Creation Church is aided primarily by the rock-star image of the wealthy and glamorous preacher he has carved out for himself. This intersectionality works well in Singapore because it fits into the national discourse, which

values the rewards of material goods through hard work. Likewise, with the prosperity gospel that Prince both personifies and preaches, wealth and fame do come to those who work hard at being faithful to God through what Prince calls The Grace Revolution. Wealth, in other words, is the reward from God for complete loyalty and devotion. However, what happens when wealth is seen to corrupt?

In October 2015 the Singapore courts convicted Senior Pastor Kong Hee, together with five other leaders of the City Harvest Church, of misusing S$50 million from church funds 'as part of a plot to further the music career of Kong's wife, pastor-singer Ho Yeow Sun. They funnelled $24 million into sham bonds to bankroll her career, and used a further $26 million to cover their tracks' (Cheong 2016). The reason for funding her career was for evangelistic purposes, as reported in the Singapore media: 'This was a situation which [...] involved no personal gain on the appellants' part', Judge Chao Hick Tin said. 'They believed that their acts [...] would ultimately advance the interests of City Harvest Church' (Reuters, 2017). At the time of writing, Kong Hee was sentenced to 3.5 years' jail. While Kong Hee has asked for forgiveness from members of his church, attendance has dropped by a third since his conviction. Numbers started to fall in 2010 when criminal investigations into the mismanagement of funds began. In 2009, the church attracted 23,565 people, but by the end of 2015 only 16,482 people worshipped there. At the time of the investigation, New Creation Church took the opportunity to distance itself from the investigation and to assure its members that their commercial ventures were legitimate. Before the finance scandal hit, City Harvest and New Creation followed an almost identical formula for success. Drawing large crowds of Singaporeans, both churches started out as the result of a small group of friends deciding to form a new church that grew in size, venue, and reach (through live webcasts), and was based around the personality cult of their respective leaders.

Kong Hee and his wife Sun Ho founded City Harvest in 1989, running it out of a single-storey terraced house with a congregation of just twenty teenagers in attendance (Zaccheus, 2017). While they have had different venues since then, they now have a permanent place of worship in a 2300-seater complex while broadcasting simultaneously to various halls in Suntec City. Kong's teachings combine worship with making money. Like Prince's Grace Revolution, Kong uses another term, which he calls 'Cultural Mandate', to explain how the worship of God leads to material rewards. He states on his website:

> Through the message of the Cultural Mandate, many Christian professionals functioning within secular industries such as business and

> entertainment have been inspired to harness their platforms, positively influencing their communities for Christ and furthering the kingdom of God (City Harvest Church, 2017b).

However, netizens in Singapore have taken to social media to express their disgust and displeasure at Kong Hee's misappropriation of funds as well as his religious mandate. Facebook pages of official and alternative news websites in Singapore, for instance, have been inundated with criticisms of him. Singaporeans responded critically to news reports appearing in the Facebook pages of *The Straits Times* (Singapore's flagship English-language newspaper) and *The Mothership* (an online alternate news site based in Singapore) of the sentencing of Kong and his associates, which was reported on 9 April 2017.[2]

These reports reveal that Singaporeans are not supportive of Kong, but rather see him as a criminal who defrauded the church and its devotees. Moreover, they critique Kong as being money-minded and a squanderer of church funds in the failed bid to promote his wife's singing career. Netizens, like those commenting in *The Straits Times*, question the validity of Kong to still continue preaching despite his conviction and sentencing, while those commenting in *The Mothership* doubt his sincerity. A search of both sites also reveals that netizens have coined the term 'konvict' – an amalgamation between Kong and convict – to describe Kong or to use the term to identify him.

While the numbers of the faithful attending City Harvest Church have been reduced by a third over the period of the investigation and conviction, those who still consider themselves part of the church appear to be supportive of Kong, at least on the City Harvest Church Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/cityharvestchurch/). In the comments section of City Harvest Church's post titled 'CHC Trial: Statement from the City Harvest Church Management Board', 7 April 2017, worshippers of the church are supportive and forgiving of their pastor, with a number of posts expressing relief at a reduced sentence while others equate the reduced sentencing to divine interference. While this particular City Harvest Church post revealed a very small number who question Kong's actions (e.g. 'He who digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone; it will come back to him'), others

2 Both news agencies have high circulations, with *The Straits Times* being the premier English-language news agency in both print and digital and *The Mothership* claiming a monthly viewership of 3.8 million people (<http://mothership.sg/about-us/>). At the time of writing, the Facebook page for *The Straits Times* has 1,036,716 people subscribing to the page through likes, while *The Mothership*'s Facebook page has 183,244 likes.

see that he and his church leaders have done no criminal wrongdoing as the following comment shows:

> My understanding on the definitions in Sec 23, Sec 24 and Sec 405 illustration (d) of Chapter 224 Penal Code, my opinion is no case for Criminal Breach of Trust when:
> No criminal intention. No dishonest or wrongful gain. No dishonest or wrongful lost.

City Harvest Church members arguably seem to equate faith in Kong with faith in both the church and in God.

Conclusion

In many respects, the rise of megachurches in Singapore parallels the rise of megachurches in North America. With the economic growth engendered by the economic policies under the leadership of the late Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his People's Action Party, Singaporeans have been socialized to expect growth at all levels of society, the church included, as a mark of success and a sign of achievement. It comes as no surprise that megachurches in Singapore are able to capitalize on this mark of growth as a milestone of success to attract a membership desiring such growth and success in both their spiritual and physical lives.

While there are certainly large Catholic and mainline Protestant churches in Singapore with mega-sized congregations by North American standards (e.g., Wesley Methodist Church, St. Andrew's Cathedral [Anglican], the Jesuit-run St. Ignatius Church, and the Franciscan-administered Church of Saint Mary of the Angels), what sets megachurches apart from their Catholic and mainline Protestant counterparts in Singapore is not merely their huge numbers, but also the megachurches' near complete reliance on capitalism's language of business growth and marketing strategies in their operational structure and day-to-day operations. This can be seen in the savvy use of advertising campaigns and social media outreach campaigns (as discussed in the case studies above) and the megachurches' investment in Singapore's commercial real estate ventures (e.g., New Creation Church's Star Performing Arts Centre and its investment in the One North shopping mall, and City Harvest Church's investment in Suntec International Convention and Exhibition Centre), all of which seek to generate income and fund further growth in a virtuous cycle of more growth.

The prosperity gospel that emerges from the strategic blending of the Christian gospel with capitalism and its business and marketplace-centric emphasis on material success is alluring to 'English only' elites in Singapore. It should come as no surprise that young, upwardly mobile, affluent, and aspirational Singaporeans are therefore becoming attracted to megachurches in their droves. This affinity is driven in part by Singaporean Christians seeking a Christianity that also empowers their personal, material, and spiritual growth. However, this prosperity gospel is as far removed as one can get from the social gospel of historic mainline Protestant and Catholic churches that focus on addressing the ills of social injustice.

On the one hand, megachurches in Singapore represent a therapeutic turn in Christianity away from a counter-cultural religious faith that challenges its members to live out the gospel ideals to care for the underprivileged, toward a personalist and entrepreneurial religious faith that seeks to fulfil their members' quest for socio-economic mobility, accumulation of wealth, and attainment of upward social class. Indeed, the principal attraction of megachurches for the emergent middle class in Singapore lies in their appeal to the quintessential Singaporean sense of agency, entailing a quest for upward mobility within the meritocratic and achievement-oriented culture promoted by the Singapore government. This can be seen in the sermons of Kong Hee and Joseph Prince, who both seek to appeal to the 'can do' entrepreneurial ethos and achievement-oriented spirit of Singaporeans, and who have themselves made socio-economic class transitions in order to tap into the enthusiastic energy and economic wealth of these Singaporeans to undergird their churches' investments in various commercial real estate ventures and other growth projects.

On the other hand, the prosperity gospel that drives these megachurches and their theological and organizational innovations is rooted in the paradoxical secularization of Christianity, marking the triumph of capitalism and market forces as shaping the future of Christianity and Christian churches. Indeed, capitalism's faith in the 'invisible' hand of market forces has reshaped the interpretation of the Christian Gospel and led to the promotion of a Christian faith that dwells on personal growth and empowerment rather than societal transformation.

Furthermore, in the context of a contemporary Singaporean society where income inequality and the gap between the wealthy and the working poor is increasing, one should not be surprised that the prosperity gospel of the megachurches like New Creation Church and City Harvest Church provides the ultimate *theological justification* not just for wealth acquisition, but also for flaunting one's wealth as a sign of God's blessings in direct correlation to

one's faith (Maddox, 2012, 2013). In this regard, the New Creation Church and City Harvest Church join other megachurches like Hillsong in Australia in advancing the perspective that 'wealth, like salvation, is available to all who have faith enough to receive it' (Maddox, 2013, p. 110), thereby reinterpreting the fullness of salvation and a new life in Jesus Christ to encompass both the spiritual and also *material* blessings, i.e., prosperity and success in daily life. This is achieved not through the traditional Christian teachings of community, solidarity, social justice, or ethical living, as commonly identified with traditional Catholic social teaching, the mainline Protestant social gospel, or Latin American liberation theologies, but rather through the more individualistic quest for aspiration, self-improvement, and self-growth that would lead to the acquisition of wealth and successful living as signs of God's blessings and grace.

Nevertheless, because megachurches extend their operations well beyond simply being providers of worship services into non-religious aspects that generate income and profit for these churches and their leadership, they exist in a grey area with overlapping religious interests on the one hand, and economic, business, and profit-making interests on the other hand. The uncritical reliance on the metrics of numerical membership and income growth, the unfettered use of marketing discourse, and the unrestrained investments in commercial property investments could result in difficulties and challenges as lines are crossed and conflicts of interests arise, with opportunities for fraudulent and other financial shenanigans, e.g., embezzlement, tax evasion, criminal breach of trust, etc. by the church leaders, as can be seen in City Harvest Church and Pastor Kong Hee and his accomplices, as well as in the largest megachurch in the world, the Seoul-based Yoido Full Gospel Church, led by Pastor David Yonggi Cho, who was convicted of tax evasion and given a suspended sentence.

In conclusion, in the case of megachurches in Singapore, rather than the Gospel of Jesus Christ prophetically critiquing and challenging the socio-economic inequalities caused by capitalism and market forces, one finds ironically that capitalism, market forces, consumerism, and hyperconsumption are themselves shaping how the Gospel is understood and appropriated by contemporary Singaporean Christians. Likewise, rather than the Christian Gospel shaping how Singaporean Christians respond to the world of contemporary Singapore with its increasing socio-economic inequalities, megachurches turn that equation on its head where the values and discourses of capitalism shape the way the Christian Gospel is interpreted, understood, and lived out by Singaporean Christians.

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10. Cash, Women, and the Nation

Tales of Morality about Lao Banknotes in Times of Rapid Change

Roy Huijsmans

Abstract
Banknotes constitute a productive lens for exploring some of the frictions and shifts in moralities brought about by rapid change characterizing the post-socialist condition in Southeast Asia. This chapter discusses how cash-related moralities emerge from the loose relation between national currencies and national territory, through the moral tales of the banknotes' iconography, and its contested role in the politico-economic project of post-socialism. Drawing on articles and commentaries published in the English language and government censored newspaper, *Vientiane Times*, the chapter explores two moral tales surrounding the Lao currency *kip*. These cases shed light on the importance of morality in the infrastructure of intimacy that money constitutes and its contested, gendered, nature in times of rapid change.

Keywords: gender, infrastructure, Laos, modernity, money, nationhood

> A nation's currency represents much more than just money. It says something about who we are as a society and what is important to us (Pansivongsay, 2008).

Monetary systems are complex infrastructures of which the currency is often the most visible part, especially in its tangible form as coins and banknotes. That money and monetary infrastructures cannot be reduced to financial and economic discourses is well-established in the literature on the social life of money (e.g. Zelizer, 1989; Truitt, 2013). In this chapter I

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH10

build on this literature and bring this into dialogue with Ara Wilson's (2016) work on 'infrastructures of intimacy'.

Just like other infrastructures such as roads and communication networks, monetary systems are assemblages comprising physical (bankcards, buildings, cash), non-material (exchange rates, electronic banking), and immaterial elements (trust, norms) designed to operate in the background in order to 'facilitate living and activity' (Wilson, 2016, p. 273). A monetary system, however, is more than just a technical infrastructure; it is also deeply intimate. Bank account details are often kept private and cash is kept close to our bodies or stacked away in secret places. The intimacy of monetary systems also transpires from the role of currencies in relation to imagined communities of either a national or a regional kind. Both dynamics are illustrated by ongoing and often highly emotional debates about the Euro and former national currencies in the Eurozone. Furthermore, whilst money may be designed to enhance its normative use (as a medium of exchange, to store wealth and to measure value), yet, in a manner similar to the public latrine and the mobile phone discussed by Wilson (2016), it is by attending to its deviant uses (such as in merit-making ceremonies) that we see the broader moral discourses associated with money.

These examples illustrate that treating money as part of an infrastructure of intimacy enables a post-structural queering of money. This means taking seriously the materiality of money but also the discourses it is imbued with. This allows for an understanding of the 'intimate operations of power' (Wilson, 2016, p. 273) through the everyday and often mundane presence and use of money. I do so by focusing on tales of morality around banknotes in the Lao People's Democratic Republic ('Laos' hereafter) in the period 2006–2012.

Banknotes, I argue, are imbued with morality by the post-socialist Lao state but they also trigger moral dilemmas in times of rapid socio-economic change. For young post-colonial states like Laos, national currencies are deeply ambiguous projects of progress and modernisation. Newly independent nations are often quick to issue a national currency as it stands as a symbol 'of independence and sovereignty'. However, these new and at times 'revolutionary' currencies are typically 'designed on the model developed for European and North American economic cultures' (Truitt, 2013, p. 11). An additional complexity in post-socialist contexts is that banknotes are pawns in the morally complex terrain of a transition into 'cash-based forms of exchange' (Wanner, 2005, p. 515) while hanging on to a socialist rhetoric of equality.

Morality is also mediated through money in other ways, evoking both history and modernity. Banknotes, just like stamps and coins, are official state objects. Through money, state-centred ideas of morality are conveyed. As money is an important symbol of modernity (Truitt, 2013, p. 11), modern money needs to be disassociated from traditional or uncivilized practices. This can be recognized when Lao state officials remind citizens to refrain 'from dirtying it by writing on the banknote or crumpling it' (Vientiane Times, 2006b), or using money in traditional merit-making ceremonies (Phouthonesy, 2012). Morality is also mediated through the iconography of banknotes which often feature important moral tales about the nation (Tappe, 2007). Precisely because the handling of money is so much part and parcel of everyday life, attending to the moral tales and implications of banknotes illuminates the mundane ways in which some of the frictions and shifts in moralities are negotiated that are brought about by rapid change characterizing the post-socialist condition in Southeast Asia.

The analysis presented in this chapter is largely based on a close reading of *Vientiane Times* news reporting about the introduction of new and redesigned banknotes. In the next section I first discuss the *Vientiane Times* as a source of data. I then proceed with empirical sections exploring two moral dilemmas surrounding the *kip*, the Lao currency. These involve firstly, the navigation of the politico-economic moralities of transition illustrated through the reporting surrounding the introduction of two large denomination notes (50,000 and 100,000 *kip*). Secondly, I discuss the gendered moralities of the nation underpinning the removal (after some weeks) of a newly introduced 1000 *kip* note in 2008. I conclude by arguing that tales about banknotes constitute a productive lens to explore some of the frictions and shifts in moralities brought about by rapid change characterizing the post-socialist condition in Southeast Asia.

Context and Data

In its current form and political organization, Laos is a relatively young nation-state. Following years of French colonial rule (as part of French Indochina) and violent conflict during the Indochinese Wars, the communist *Pathet Lao* proclaimed the current Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) on 2 December 1975. To date, Laos has remained a one-party state ruled by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. However, party-political continuity has gone hand in hand with significant changes in other dimensions. Most notably, the economy has gradually been liberalized following a brief period

of high socialism in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, the Lao government has come to embrace a politics of regional and global integration following the collapse of the Communist bloc.

In her work on Vietnam, Allison Truitt (2013, p. 35) describes the currency as an infrastructure and explains that the revolutionary struggle in Vietnam involved 'dismantling the infrastructure of the defeated regime'. Such an analysis also applies to the case of Laos. The *kip* was first introduced in 1954 by the then Royal Lao Government, replacing the *piastre* of French Indochina (Tappe, 2007, p. 89). Viengthong Keomanisy (2003), writing about the history of the Bank of the Lao PDR on its website, explains that during the civil war period prior to the proclamation of the Lao PDR various *kip* currencies circulated in the country. In the communist controlled areas, the 'liberation *kip*' was introduced in the late 1960s. This became the national currency in June 1976 following what is described as a 'battlefield of currencies' (*ibid*., 2003). In the late 1970s, the liberation *kip* was replaced by the Lao *kip*, which is the currency still in use today.

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on a series of stories about the introduction of new and redesigned *kip* banknotes. For this I draw on the *Vientiane Times* articles summarized in Table 10.1 below. The *Vientiane Times* is an English language newspaper that falls under the responsibility of the Lao Ministry of Information and Culture. It was initially launched as a weekly newspaper in 1994. Since then, it has gradually increased its frequency until it became a daily newspaper in 2004. To date the *Vientiane Times* is the only English language daily in Laos.

Table 10.1 Vientiane Times articles analyzed

Date of publication	Banknote concerned	Title of article	Newspaper section
17 January 2006	50,000	New Banknote Hits Street	Front page
18 January 2006	50,000	Is the New 50,000 Kip Banknote a Precursor to Inflation?	Opinion
19 January 2006	50,000	Larger Banknotes Won't Drive Prices Up	Business
19 January 2006	50,000	What Do People Think about the New 50,000 Banknote?	Opinion
24 January 2006	50,000	Kip Gains Strength Against Dollar	Business
3 November 2008	1000	Central Bank Issues New 1,000 Kip Note	Business
7 November 2008	1000	Should the New 1,000 Kip Note Carry Pictures of Real Women?	Opinion
13 November 2008	1000	Central Bank Criticized Over New Banknote	Home news

Date of publication	Banknote concerned	Title of article	Newspaper section
22 November 2008	1000	Banknotes Symbolize National Values	Opinion
16 November 2010	100,000	Central Bank Issues Memorial 100,000 Kip Note	Front page
17 November 2010	100,000	Central Bank Defends Issue of 100,000 Kip Note	Business
18 November 2010	100,000	What Do People Think of the New 100,000 Kip Banknote?	Opinion
29 November 2011	2000	Central Bank to Release New 2,000 Kip Note	Business
26 January 2012	100,000	Central Bank to Issue 100,000 Kip Note	Front page
27 January 2012	100,000	What Do You Think of the New 100,000 Kip Banknote?	Opinion
30 January 2012	100,000	Widespread Distribution of Small Banknotes Can Ease Inflation	Opinion
8 February 2012	100,000	Circulation of 100,000 Kip Note Remains Limited	Business

Vientiane Times articles need to be read with care (see also: Huijsmans, 2018, p. 633–634). Martin Stuart-Fox (2008, p. 374) explains the relation between party politics and media in Laos as follows:

> The MIC [Ministry of Information and Culture] controls all media in Laos. There is no freedom of the press and no legal protection for Lao journalists who fail to reflect the party line. In fact, most Lao journalists are party members attached to the MIC.

Concern about the relation between politics and media is also echoed by Freedom House, which has continued to rate Laos as 'not free' next to raising concern about the 'freedom of expression' in Laos. In its latest (2015) report on the situation in Laos, Freedom House further added that 'self-censorship is extremely prevalent, as authorities use legal intimidation tactics against critics of the state'.[1] This means that even articles published in the 'opinion' section of the *Vientiane Times*, which are at times based on direct responses from the general public, need to be understood as situated commentary.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that the *Vientiane Times* reports rather than seeking to foster public debate. This can be illustrated

1 Source: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/laos>, accessed 6 July 2017.

by looking closely at the publication dates of the articles listed in Table 10.1. These dates illustrate that the *Vientiane Times* only reports about the issuing of new or redesigned banknotes around the dates that these notes are launched, which is when decisions are already made. Such a first reporting is typically followed by an opinion piece soon after the launch. It rarely reports about matters still under discussion.

Given the particularities of how the press works in Laos, the stories about banknotes that make it into the *Vientiane Times* express something that is considered important by, and often to, the state.[2] Thus, these articles are often of moral significance because they communicate what is valued more so than providing factual information (although there is some of that). In sum, attending to what does and doesn't get printed about the Lao currency, as well as how things get framed in such a state-owned newspaper, constitutes a rich resource for understanding the moral significance of the Lao currency from the vantage point of the Lao state.

Money and Morality in the Lao Context

In this section I tease out issues of morality in *Vientiane Times*' reporting about the Lao *kip*. I do so by focusing on the period 2006–2012. This timeframe is chosen since it covers the introduction of two new large denomination banknotes (50,000 and 100,000 *kip*) and saw the introduction of two redesigned small denomination banknotes (1000 and 2000 *kip*). Over the period studied (2006–2012), broadly five interrelated themes can be identified in the newspaper articles studied: 1) the detailed reporting of the technical properties of the new banknotes; 2) the introduction of new banknotes is linked to national events; 3) the promotion of the use of the national currency; 4) the issuing of new large denomination notes is linked to concerns about inflation and an apparent shortage of low denomination notes; and 5) modernization of the banknotes.

2 This is not to say that the *Vientiane Times* can be reduced to a mouthpiece of the Lao state. Lao news production is not just a state-orchestrated affair. The *Vientiane Times* works with foreign, native English-speaking volunteers and advisers who no doubt also influence the production of news. Further, its journalists often participate in training programmes organized and/or funded by foreign organizations with the aim of improving the quality of journalism (e.g. Chandara, 2008). Lastly, what becomes news and how it is framed is also influenced by non-state parties, such as the private sector and international NGOs (IGOs), as well as Lao not-for profit organizations. Such actors often invite *Vientiane Times* journalists to report on particular activities, often with some financial gain for the journalists.

'In Laos, Use Kip Currency Only'

The currency situation in Laos can be described as one of monetary pluralism. Various currencies are in circulation and Lao citizens use a number of modern currencies interchangeably. This includes predominantly the Lao *kip*, the Thai *baht*, and the US dollar, while gold is also often used in financial transactions. Given the low exchange value of the Lao *kip* and to a lesser extent the Thai *baht*, US dollars are commonly used for large transactions. Furthermore, in most markets in Laos one can easily make purchases in Thai *baht*. Both vendors and customers will know the exchange rate by heart and any change will be given in either Thai *baht* or Lao *kip*, whatever is most convenient.

The Thai *baht* circulates widely in Laos. This is only in part because Thailand neighbours Laos and rather because many Lao nationals work in Thailand earning Thai *baht*, many Lao traders and business people are dependent on imports from Thailand (which they need to pay for in Thai *baht*), and again others frequent markets on the Thai side of the long Lao–Thai border for everyday shopping, for which they also rely on *baht* (Huijsmans, 2019). The widespread presence of the US dollar has somewhat different reasons. Just as is the case for Vietnam, the widespread circulation of the US dollar needs to be understood in relation to the American presence in Laos during the 1950s and 1960s in particular. Moreover, the victory of the communist *Pathet Lao* led to a large refugee movement out of Laos – many of these refugees eventually settled in the USA. This USA-based diaspora continues to ensure a regular flow of US dollars into Laos.

For savings, many Lao nationals do not rely on the Lao *kip* but turn to precious metals (often in the form of jewellery), US dollars, livestock, and investment in property. The dramatic drop in value of both the Lao *kip* and Thai *baht* during the Asian crisis in the late 1990s probably goes some way towards explaining this behaviour, or at least has reinforced it. Yet, there are also other non-economic issues at stake. For example, currencies differ in their moral status (Lemon, 1998), making some currencies more appropriate for saving for particular purposes. Bill Maurer (2005, p. 140) describes how the perceived morally cleaner status of gold versus that of the Indonesian Rupiah is drawn on by a national Indonesian pawnbroker to promote its specially minted gold coins as an 'Islamic pure form of saving for the pilgrimage [*haj*]'. Allison Truitt (2013) makes a similar argument in relation to the US dollar. She argues that in the context of post-reform Vietnam, US dollars not only signal financial power, but also 'a social power that eluded the Vietnamese đồng' (Truitt, 2013, p. 63). The same can be

observed in Laos. Cash envelopes, which are common gifts at weddings, often contain US dollars. The amount and certainly also the currency in which the gift is made signal the social status of the giver. Indeed, giving US dollars instead of Lao *kip* must be seen as 'a powerful form of self-making' (Truitt, 2013, p. 65).

The circulation of foreign currencies in the domestic economy signals 'the limits of sovereign authority' (Truitt, 2013, p. 76). This is a delicate issue at any rate and in the Lao case even more sensitive because of the complex historical relations with the states whose currencies it concerns (Thai *baht* and US dollar). Monetary pluralism, has thus been a thorn in the side of the Lao state. To this end, a Presidential Decree (Lao PDR, 2008) was issued that sought to move from a situation of monetary pluralism to a near exclusive use of the national currency on Lao national territory. The Decree, entitled *Governing the Management of Foreign Exchange and Precious Metals*, stipulates in Article 3 that:

> A person, a legal person shall not directly pay nor receive in foreign exchange for the goods and services rendered to them or by them, nor settle the debts in foreign exchange within the Lao territory except for the case where the Bank of the Lao PDR has proposed and approved by the Government [...] The price mark-up of a good and a service including the value of financial obligations to the Government shall be made in Kip except for the case where the bank of the Lao PDR has proposed and approved by the Government.

Elaborating on the rationality underpinning the new Decree, the *Vientiane Times* quotes Mr. Phouphet, the governor of the Bank of Lao PDR (hereafter the 'Central Bank'): 'if everyone used the kip, the national currency would acquire greater value – one of the conditions necessary for socio-economic development. He also said that it was generally important for Lao people to use their own currency' (Phouthonesy, 2008a). The quote is illustrative of official commentary on the Lao monetary issues and banknotes: economic rationale and moral discourse are constantly intertwined. The first part of the quote stresses the importance of using the national currency in order to boost its exchange value and strengthen the Lao national economy. Yet, in the latter part of the quote the use of the national currency is linked to a moral discourse on Lao citizenship ('Lao people' are meant to use 'their own currency').

A similar intertwining of morality and economic rationality can be detected in an originally Lao language article published in the *Pathet Lao* that was reprinted in English in the *Vientiane Times*. The article engages with

a public campaign launched by the Central Bank with the dubious economic motto 'inflation will appear if we don't all use our kip' (Phaymanivong, 2008). Yet, the article does not elaborate on this economic proposition but develops an argument for using the national currency on moral grounds by referring to social cohesion and patriotism. The article does so by drawing on the case of Malaysia which is described as 'a good model for Laos' and 'one of the strongest economies in Southeast Asia'. It proceeds by describing how 'even on aeroplanes. Air hostesses always ask passengers to use ringgit', which is interpreted as showing 'the love that air hostesses have for their national currency' (Ibid). While using the ringgit is said to have kept 'the currency strong', it is stressed that it has also 'promoted solidarity between people of different races, ethnicities and religions' (Phaymanivong, 2008).

Referring to capitalist Malaysia as 'a model' is uncommon in Lao state media. More commonly, Lao news reporting draws parallels with neighbouring Vietnam, a country with which it has a 'special relation' rooted in the shared revolutionary struggle. This special relation is carefully cultivated to date through official visits and joint events. Moreover, Vietnamese policies and politics often function as a model for Laos's policy making. With this in mind, the atypicality of referring to Malaysia becomes more interesting, especially since the very same policies set out in the new decree have already been tried and tested in Vietnam in the 1990s and considered 'ineffective' (Truitt, 2013, p. 80). Given the close ties between Laos and Vietnam, the failure of these Vietnamese policies must be known to the Lao authorities. Yet, by referring to the Malaysian case this Vietnamese truth can be left unacknowledged. In addition, knowingly implementing measures that have been proven ineffective elsewhere emphasizes that these policies must in the first place be read as moral guidelines on good Lao citizenship rather than economic or political objectives.

That using the national currency is indeed a moral issue, and something that is an important part of official Lao citizenship, can also be discerned from the ways the new policy is promoted. More so than through enforcement by police (although there was some of this too), the policy is popularized through social advertisement. For this purpose, around the time of the issuing of the Presidential Decree billboards arose across the country. These billboards featured the obverse image of a 50,000 *kip* banknote, carrying the image of Kaysone Phomvihane, the revolutionary hero and first president of the Lao PDR. A simple text in large font is added, reading: '*you mueang Lao, sai te ngeun kip*' ('In Laos, use *kip* currency only') (see Image 10.1).

The slogan is similar to one used in Vietnam post-1945: 'Vietnamese people use Vietnamese money' (Truitt, 2013, p. 62). The difference is that the Lao

Image 10.1 Social advertisement

Photo: Julian Nieman/Alamy Stock Photo, Pakse, Laos 2009

slogan refers to the Lao polity (*mueang Lao*) rather than the Lao people. The difference in slogan I suggest is due to differences in the historical time in which the respective slogans were launched. Lao newspaper articles stress that foreign tourists must also be encouraged to use the Lao *kip* when in Laos (e.g. Phaymanivong, 2008; Vientiane Times, 2011b), something that was hardly a concern in Vietnam post-1945. The discourse of morality is thereby extended to tourists, by pointing out that abiding to Lao law and respecting Lao culture includes using the Lao national currency when in Laos.

The Moral Conundrum of Introducing Large Notes in a Post-Socialist, Low-Income Country

A quick glance at the banknotes currently in use and their year of introduction tells two stories (see Table 10.2). First, the exchange value of the Lao *kip* is relatively low.[3] The largest denomination (100,000 *kip*) has an exchange rate

3 This is also true in relation to neighbouring countries. In Vietnam, which is also governed by a one-party system and where the cost of living is arguably lower than in Laos, the largest denomination is VND500,000 (nearly US$22, introduced in 2003) and in Thailand, which never had a communist regime, it is 1000 *baht* (just over US$29, and already introduced in 1992).

of just over US$12. Second, over the past three decades, approximately every five years a new banknote is introduced that has about twice the value of the previous largest denomination. As a result, over a period of twenty-two years the *kip* amount of the largest denomination note has increased by a factor of 200 (from 500 *kip* in 1988 to 100,000 *kip* in 2010).

Table 10.2 Overview of Lao banknotes currently in use

Banknote (US$ equivalence June 2017)	Year of introduction	Brief description of banknote image
500 *kip* (US$0.06)	1988	Obverse: Hydro-electric power industry, mechanized agriculture, national coat of arms. Reverse: Women harvesting coffee on plantation.
1000 *kip* (US$0.12)	1992 (attempted renewal in 2008)	Obverse: Three women in traditional dress of three ethnic groups, Pha That Luang, Vientiane [stupa], and national coat of arms. Reverse: Cattle grazing in field and overhead power lines.
2000 *kip* (US$0.24)	1997 (renewed in 2011)	Obverse: Kaysone Phomvihane [former president], Pha That Luang, Vientiane [stupa], and national coat of arms (in renewed version the image of Pha That Luang is replaced by that of Vat Xiengthong (Luang Prabang) [temple]). Reverse: Hydropower dam.
5000 *kip* (US$0.61)	1997	Obverse: Kaysone Phomvihane [former president], Pha That Luang, Vientiane [stupa], and national coat of arms. Reverse: Cement factory.
10,000 *kip* (US$1.22)	2002	Obverse: Kaysone Phomvihane [former president], Pha That Luang, Vientiane [stupa], and national coat of arms. Reverse: Bridge across the Mekong at Pakse.
20,000 *kip* (US$2.43)	2002	Obverse: Kaysone Phomvihane [former president], Ho Pha Keo [temple], national coat of arms. Reverse: Hydropower dam (Theun-Hinboun).
50,000 *kip* (US$6.08)	2006	Obverse: Kaysone Phomvihane [former president], Pha That Luang, Vientiane [temple], and national coat of arms. Reverse: Presidential palace, Vientiane.
100,000 *kip* (US$12.16)	2010 (memorial note)	Obverse: King Sethathirath statue, Pha That Luang, Vientiane [stupa], Dok Champa (national) flower and Naga dragon. Reverse: Ho Pha Keo [temple], Vientiane, Dok Champa (national) flower.
100,000 *kip* (US$12.16)	2012	Obverse: Kaysone Phomvihane [former president], Pha That Luang, Vientiane [stupa], and national coat of arms. Reverse: Kaysone Phomvihane Museum, Vientiane.

In a country in which the ruling party, at least at a rhetorical level, associates itself with socialism, the introduction of new large denomination banknotes is a delicate matter. On the one hand, it works to legitimize the politico-economic project of the Lao state because the introduction of such notes indicates that the economy has grown and become stronger under the leadership of the party. However, economic growth and rising prosperity have been very uneven experiences in Laos. Hence, while the wealthier urban-based traders welcome such new notes (e.g. Phaymanivong, 2012), for the majority of the population that lives in villages in the countryside these banknotes will remain out of reach. Similar to what Catherine Wanner (2005) argues in the case of Ukraine, the presence or absence of money in exchange and consumption accentuates growing and new forms of inequalities. Everyday encounters with new large denomination banknotes therefore raise the moral question emerging in many a post-socialist state of whether 'burgeoning inequality is a fair price to pay for economic growth and the "bright future" that market capitalism promises' (Wanner, 2005, p. 515).

It is worth noting that the largest banknote (100,000 *kip*) was introduced twice. It appeared first as a special and limited edition (memorial note) marking the 450th anniversary of Vientiane as the Lao capital and the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the Lao PDR (Vientiane Times, 2010). Only two years later it appeared as a regular banknote. Also, other newly introduced banknotes have been released in relation to national events. This places these new banknotes in the discursive frame of the nation and renders the introduction of new banknotes more than just a monetary matter. Furthermore, the policy choice of initially opting for a limited edition can be read as a way of testing the waters – finding out whether it would indeed lead to an articulation of the moral dilemma sketched above.

In the *Vientiane Times*' reporting on the introductions of new large denomination banknotes, the sensitive issue of inequality is largely left unaddressed. This can partly be explained by the urban bias of the *Vientiane Times*. In the Lao context, socio-economic inequalities map to a large extent onto the rural–urban divide. Yet, most news generation is capital city-based and is therefore hardly informative about how the majority, and poorer part, of the population (i.e. those living in villages) experience the introduction of new large denomination banknotes. Consequently, the closest the *Vientiane Times* gets to the issue of inequality is in an opinion piece in which an urban-based petty trader is quoted as saying: '… it is difficult to give change because sometimes I don't have enough money in my pocket' (Phoonsab and Souksavanh, 2006).

The moral conundrum of inequality is also evaded by treating the shift in economic orientation, from a closed, centrally-planned economy to an

open, market-based economy, as a given from which the introduction of a new banknote logically follows. This is well articulated by Mr. Aksone, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of a Lao-based commercial bank (BCEL), in an opinion article about the introduction of the 50,000 *kip* note: 'if we calculate the value of our money in comparison to other currencies, our denominations are still small. A 50,000 kip note only equals just under US$5 [...] I think because of this we needed a higher denomination to facilitate traders and investors in running their businesses' (Vientiane Times, 2006a). The issue of inequality is also sidestepped by framing the introduction of new large denomination banknotes as in line with the already existing policy of promoting the national currency. Mr. Aksone, thus, is quoted as saying that the new large denomination note 'would help reduce the use of foreign currencies such as *baht* and dollar' (Vientiane Times, 2006a). A similar rationale was also expressed by Mr. Souphat, the Currency Issuing Department Director General, following the introduction of the 100,000 note in 2012: 'this higher value will encourage more Lao people to use their national currency' (Phouthonesy, 2012).

Small Notes and Moral Theories of Inflation

The closest *Vientiane Times* articles get to discussing the introduction of new large denomination banknotes in relation to growing inequality is through the issue of 'inflation', a point of concern that came up repeatedly in the articles analyzed. World Bank data show that in Laos inflation peaked in the wake of the Asian crisis in the late 1990s (nearly 128 per cent in 1999), yet in the years thereafter the inflation rate has remained relatively stable and for most years below ten per cent.[4]

In the *Vientiane Times* commentaries, the introduction of new large denomination banknotes is never presented as a response to inflation, but consistently as possibly leading to inflation (e.g. Times Reporters, 2010; Vientiane Times, 2006a). In responding to these concerns the Central Bank emphasizes that through careful monetary management the introduction of new large denomination notes will not affect inflation (e.g. Phouthonesy, 2012; Vientiane Times, 2010).

The opinion pieces suggest that concern about inflation is also prevalent among the general public. Unsurprisingly, these lay people refrain from challenging the competency of authorities, and instead moral theories of

4 Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.DEFL.KD.ZG.AD?end=2015&locations=LA&start=1985&view=chart>, accessed 9 July 2017.

inflation emerge. One common theme is putting the blame on traders. For example, a 38-year-old female market rice seller is quoted as saying that:

> Vendors might find it hard to give the change because too many banknotes will be needed, so they might put up prices of goods for no other reason than that (Phoonsab and Souksavanh, 2006).

Quotes like this suggest that market traders simply set the price of their ware in line with the nomination of currencies. Such moral folk theories of inflation are rarely directly challenged in the *Vientiane Times* (for an exception see: Editorial Desk, 2012). More commonly, they are reproduced in an uncritical fashion (e.g. Phouthonesy, 2012).[5] Suggestions that the amoral behaviour of traders is the cause of economic problems like inflation need to be understood in relation to the ambiguous position of traders under post-socialism. As Ann Marie Leshkowich (2011) has argued in the context of Vietnam, traders were condemned under socialism as the amoral exploitative class. In the post-socialist era entrepreneurial qualities may be celebrated as key to national development, yet the moral evaluation of traders has remained highly fragile, as the quote above illustrates (see also Horat, Chapter Four in this volume).

Each introduction of a new large denomination banknote has also sparked discussion about an apparent shortage of small denomination notes. This may be due to inflation. For example, a 35-year-old female resident of Vientiane who was interviewed about the introduction of the new 50,000 *kip* note expressed a fear that 'in the near future smaller banknotes such as 500 kip and 1,000 kip may disappear as the value of money will reduce in the future' (Phoonsab and Souksavanh, 2006). However, also alternative theories are launched. An editorial opinion piece following the introduction of the 100,000 *kip* note states the following:

> The introduction of the 100,000 kip note has some people wondering whether the central bank wants to encourage the use of larger denomination notes over smaller ones as part of efforts to save on operating costs (Editorial Desk, 2012).

This efficiency argument was also used around the introduction of the 50,000 kip note some years earlier. Lao economist Dr. Liber Libuapao highlighted

5 It should be mentioned that in articles on inflation that are not linked to large denomination banknotes the *Vientiane Times* presents more convincing arguments for inflation, by pointing at the effect of rising oil prices for example (Phouthonesy, 2008c).

the cost-saving dimension of introducing new large denomination notes in 2006 as one of the 'positive aspects'.[6] He explained that the cost of printing small denomination notes does not differ from printing large denomination banknotes. Thus, the Central Bank is able to meet its target for the monetary amount of new currency it is obliged to bring into circulation more efficiently by printing relatively few large denomination notes instead of numerous small denomination notes (Vientiane Times, 2006a).

The Central Bank confirms the efficiency argument (Phouthonesy, 2012). Yet, it rejects the associated moral accusation of being more concerned with reducing its operating costs and serving the wealthy part of the nation than with the financial needs of the ordinary citizens. Instead, it puts the blame for an apparent shortage of small denomination notes onto commercial banks and ordinary citizens. In two articles from 2012, Central Bank officials argue that they do not have the mandate nor the capacity to affect the distribution of small denomination notes (Editorial Desk, 2012; Vientiane Times, 2012). Echoing the critique of Lao traders who are said to mark-up their prices in relation to the banknotes in circulation, commercial banks are also accused of not having the public interest at heart as they are said to 'require only 50,000 kip and 100,000 kip notes because this makes it easier when paying cash withdrawals and dispensing money through ATMs' (Vientiane Times, 2012).

Finally, the Central Bank also puts blame on ordinary citizens for an apparent shortage of small denomination notes because of improper use of modern money in 'traditional' practices:

> … traditional merit-making ceremonies are partly to blame, because so many notes are damaged in the process that it is impossible for the bank to ensure a constant supply of small denomination notes (Phouthonesy, 2012).

By calling into question the moral standards of commercial actors, ranging from traders to commercial banks, and by framing the morality guiding the behaviour of ordinary villagers as archaic and in conflict with the modernizing project of the Central Bank, the Central Bank in effect puts itself on a moral high ground. This is done by presenting a self-image of a competent and all-overseeing agency that carries out a modernization project that is in the interest of all Lao people.

6 This is also underscored by the fact that a new 500 *kip* banknote has long and repeatedly been announced, yet has not appeared to date (Phouthonesy, 2008b; Vientiane Times, 2011a).

Image 10.2 1000 kip banknote, 2003 and 2008 editions[7]

Original version	Renewed version
	
	

Modernization Backfires: The Introduction and Disappearance of the 1000 Kip Note

In November 2008 something curious happened. On 3 November a modernized version of the 1000 *kip* banknote was introduced. Yet, the distribution of the note was already halted by 13 November. What had happened? As the images above illustrate, the redesigned 1000 *kip* note featured only minor changes in the iconography compared to the original 1000 *kip* note (see Image 10.2).

The main differences between the original and the renewed version of the banknote are the following: the new note contains a photographic image of three young women representing the idea of the multi-ethnic nation-state instead of the pen-drawn image that appears on the original; the new note is printed on better quality paper and contains new security elements; and it is the first banknote to be printed in Laos.[8] The critique of the redesigned 1000 *kip* note was directed at the image of the three women on the verso site of the note. However, before getting into the debate, let us first consider the iconography. The three women are dressed in ethnic attire and, as Oliver Tappe (2007, p. 98) explains, this image:

7 Reproduced from <https://www.banknoteworld.com/laos>, accessed 11 July 2017.

8 This fact was not mentioned in the initial reporting, but only announced when the new 2000 *kip* note was introduced in 2011 (Vientiane Times, 2011a). Other banknotes, including the later introduced 100,000 *kip* note, are printed by Goznak in Russia, a company that also prints for the Bank of Russia and various other national banks.

> [...] was probably chosen as the most suitable representation of the 'multi-ethnic Lao people' (Lao: *pasason lao banda phao*). This icon visualises ethnic solidarity from the joint revolutionary struggle up to the present task of building the Lao nation.

Representing the idea of unity with ethnic diversity through banknote iconography is not new in the Southeast Asian region, and neither is its particular gendered form. For example, in her work on Vietnam, Allison Truitt (2013, p. 30) discusses a 100-*piastre* note issued by the Indochinese Currency Commission, which was briefly in circulation before 1954. This note features pen-drawings of women (ethnic majority) representing Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

The 1000 *kip* banknote represents an ethnic categorization that was introduced in the 1950s under the then Royal Lao Government: '"Lao Lum" (valley Lao), "Lao Theung" (Lao of the mountain slopes) and "Lao Sung" (Laos of the mountaintops)' (Pholsena, 2002, p. 180). In the post-1975 era, the communist leaders attempted to discard this gross ethnic categorization among other things by banning from official communication the terminology of *Lao Lum*, *Lao Theung*, and *Lao Sung* and by recognising the great ethnic diversity found on Lao soil with the current number of officially recognized ethnic groups put at fifty. Yet, in everyday speech the highly simplistic and problematic *lum/theung/soung* categorization has remained widespread, perhaps in part because of its representation on 1000 *kip* banknotes.

Vatthana Pholsena (2002, p. 180) has pointed out that the *Lao Lum*, *Lao Theung*, *Lao Sung* categorization is not only a problematically simplified and ahistorical representation of ethnic differences in Laos, it also misleadingly suggests 'the integration of the non-ethnic Lao peoples into the ethnic Lao cultural mainstream' through the use of the prefix 'Lao' (see also Tappe, 2007, p. 97). This Lao-centricity is also reflected through the composition on the 1000 *kip* banknote. The woman dressed in ethnic Lao attire (representing the category of *Lao Lum*) is placed in the centre, on both sides flanked by a woman in ethnic minority dress.

Commentary from the Central Bank indicates that the introduction of the redesigned 1000 *kip* note (and subsequently the renewed 2000 *kip* note in 2011) stemmed from a desire to modernize the Lao banknotes and bring them in line with international standards. A senior Central Bank official who is quoted in the first *Vientiane Times* article making mention of the new banknote explains: 'we wanted to improve the 1000 kip banknote to make it the same quality as the [more recently designed] 10,000, 20,000 and 50,000 notes' (Phouthonesy, 2008b). An emphasis on improving the technical properties of banknotes is not specific to the 1000 *kip* note. In fact, each introduction of a new large denomination

note is accompanied by a detailed discussion of its modern, anti-counterfeiting elements; the durability of these new, better quality notes; and their physical attractiveness (e.g. Phouthonesy, 2012; Vientiane Times, 2006b).

The sudden halt in circulation of the redesigned banknote is put down in the *Vientiane Times* to concern about using photographic images of actual women instead of the original pen-drawn images. The *Vientiane Times* (2008) writes that there was a 'public backlash' triggered by this particular element in the newly designed note. However, given the workings of the press in Laos it is equally plausible that it was a backlash from within the state.

The critique leading up to the halt in circulation was slowly built up. It started with the usual 'Streetwise' feature in the opinion section of the 7 November edition of the *Vientiane Times* with the suggestive title: 'Should the New 1,000 Kip Note Carry Pictures of Real Women?' (Pimmata, 2008). Here, four people from the general (Vientiane) public express their opinion. The result is carefully balanced, with two people saying that they are pleased with the redesigned note, echoing reasons mentioned in the *Vientiane Times* article (Phouthonesy, 2008b) first introducing the note, such as its improved security properties and its more attractive appearance, and two expressing concern about it, which both focus on the issue of photographs of real women:

> I think it was easier for counterfeiters to copy the old 1000 kip note because the pictures of women were drawn by hand. But the new note has pictures of real people, which will make it more difficult for criminals to make forgeries (female trader).
>
> I think the picture of three real women on the note helps to promote our rich culture (male bank employee).
>
> I think they should have considered whether or not this [using pictures of real women] was really appropriate before making the decision to issue the new note. If visitors see a picture of three women on a banknote, they may wonder who they are and whether they are important people in Laos (male office worker).
>
> If the three women pictured on the new note do something bad in the future, this could affect the image of our currency (male office worker).
>
> (Pimmata, 2008)

The next article, entitled 'Central Bank Criticised over New Banknote', appeared on 13 November in the 'Home news' section. It starts with the

announcement that the Central Bank has stopped the distribution of the new note until further notice. The article builds up the critique further. It does so by stating that 'Vientiane residents' and the National Assembly have contacted the Central Bank with concerns and requests for further explanation. In addition, the article also gives voice to a senior Central Bank official, who defended the redesigned banknotes by explaining: 'People should not concentrate on who the ladies actually are but see them as representatives of Lao ethnic groups' (Vientiane Times, 2008).

With the final decision of the Lao government and National Assembly still pending, the *Vientiane Times* published on 22 November a concluding editorial piece in its opinion section (Pansivongsay, 2008). Importantly, in this article the debate is shifted from a critique of the national bank as the responsible body for the design of the banknote to a focus on the banknote's iconography and its moral significance to the nation. This shift was achieved in two ways. Firstly, all involved are praised. The 'public backlash' is appreciated as well justified, the Central Bank is acknowledged to have had the right motivations for redesigning the note – that is, in promoting the use of *kip* and modernizing the note – and to have been right in suspending further distribution, and the government and National Assembly are seen to be correct in working on a final decision on the matter. Second, the article is written in an unusual style. As indicated in Table 10.3, on two occasions the author strongly expresses his own personal opinion by writing in the first person singular.[9] More commonly, though, the author asserts a collective voice, suggesting he speaks for a homogenous Lao nation. This style gives the article a strong moral tone. The featuring of photographic images of ordinary women on banknotes is thereby turned into a national disgrace and effectively put beyond question.

The moral concern with photographic images of actual, living people on national banknotes is twofold. First, unlike revolutionary heroes or other national figures, ordinary people lack the larger story that would justify their presence on a key symbol of nationhood. Second, their past and future lives are lived and not reconstructed as model citizens, as is typically the case with 'national heroes'. For example, around the figure of Kaysone Phomvihane, who appears on nearly all *kip* notes, the Lao state has created a cult since his death in 1992 amongst other things through the designated Kaysone Memorial museum (Evans, 1998, pp. 31–33).

9 The author, Mr. Manichanh Pansivongsay, appears to be a senior journalist. He is listed as 'number 1' of the 'feature' section on the *Vientiane Times* website: <http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/About_us.htm>, accessed 12 July 2017.

Table 10.3 Stylistic analysis of Vientiane Times article 'Banknotes Symbolise National Values'[10]

	Authorial style			
	'I'	**'We'**	**'Our'**	**'Us'**
Actual in text appearances	'I believe this is the right course of action…	'…who we are as a society…'	'…our heroes…'	'…what is important to us'.
	'I don't think so'.	'We have used…'	'…our currency…'	'…is significant to us'.
		'…we are endorsing…'	'…our national heroes…'	'…will reflect on us…'
		'…we would be proud…'	'…our goals for the future'.	
			'…our national currency…'	
			'…representing our country…'	
			'…on our national currency'.	
Total count	2	4	7	3

The three young women whose photographs adorn the face of the redesigned banknote live their lives outside of the confines of such moral sanitization that the glorification of national heroes typically entails. This, then, is precisely the concern. Their actual lives may well fall short of the moral standards of the nation and thereby disgrace the nation. Or, as the author of the *Vientiane Times* article expresses worryingly, 'the way they act will reflect on us as a people' (Pansivongsay, 2008).

To appreciate the moral concerns about the 1000 *kip* note more fully, it is important to acknowledge that the photographs are not just images of 'real people', but of *young women*. Thus, the moral concern must be appreciated as a distinctly gendered one. Unpacking this concern starts by asking why it is that we see women, and not men on the banknote, and why in ethnic dress? Lao women's moral obligations to the nation are officially still guided by the 'Three goods and two duties'[11] framework introduced in 1984 by the Lao Women's Association Central Committee 'to

10 Each instance of the words 'I', 'we', 'our', or 'us' used in the article is presented here.

11 This refers to 'being a good citizen, a good mother, and a good wife', and the duties refer to women's contribution to national defence and socialist construction as well as women's emancipation (Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black, 2004, p. 27).

clarify the rights, responsibilities, and capabilities of good socialist women' (Ireson-Doolittle and Moreno-Black, 2004, p. 27). Yet in practice women's moral responsibilities are increasingly framed in nationalist terms. A good example is the *Vientiane Times* articles entitled 'Traditional Dress Key to Preserving Culture' (Sangsomboun, 2008). It renders the preservation of Lao culture through the wearing of traditional dress solely a moral responsibility of women, bringing back to mind pre-revolutionary essentializing moral discourses about Lao women found in, for example, Lao proverbs such as this: 'To be a woman you should behave nicely. Your hair should be combed tidily, and when you wear *sinh* [traditional skirt] adjust the hem trimly' (Nanthavongdouangsy, 2006, p. 23).

The concern raised by the photographic images is rooted in a moral panic which is not just gendered, however, but also 'generationed'. The women depicted on the 1000 *kip* banknote are young. Their youthfulness is associated with beauty, yet it also triggers a moral panic about their sexuality. This is particularly true in contemporary Laos, in which young women's heightened involvement in internal and cross-border migration has been met with considerable concerns about their sexuality, without that ever being a concern in relation to mobile young men (Huijsmans, 2011, p. 79).

Eventually, the Central Bank revealed that the women whose photographic image appears on the redesigned 1000 *kip* note were simply employees of the Central Bank (Pansivongsay, 2008). Most probably these women were ethnically Lao who for the occasion dressed up in ethnic attire. Reflecting on the gendered dimension of the 1000 *kip* saga, I suggest, explains why criticizers wanted 'to know who the three ladies on the note were' (Vientiane Times, 2008). Given the relation between moral discourses of gendered personhood and the nation, women's deeds have a greater capacity to disgrace the nation than those of men. The idea of such a disgrace is always very close to the public imagination as it feeds on widespread moral panic about the sexuality of young Lao women in contemporary Laos (compare with DeFillipo's chapter on Thailand, Chapter 6, this volume).

Conclusion

In building on research about the social life of money and treating monetary systems as infrastructures of intimacy, this chapter has illuminated how money mediates morality. I have done so on the basis of a close reading of a set of *Vientiane Times* articles about the Lao *kip* banknotes. As a state-owned

newspaper, I have treated *Vientiane Times* articles as state-centric tales of morality.

The *Vientiane Times* articles analyzed illuminate some of the moral discourses that the Lao state seeks to convey through its national currency. This includes advice on how Lao citizens are expected to handle modern money. Similarly, reminders to not dirty money or use it in traditional merit-making ceremonies need to be read as techniques of governmentality in the making of modern Lao citizenship. Furthermore, the moral appeal to Lao citizens to use the national currency frames the use of foreign currencies on Lao soil as unpatriotic practices. In addition, the representation of three women dressed in ethnic attire on the 1000 *kip* banknote illustrates a shift in morality assigned to Lao women, which in the post-socialist era is increasingly about preserving nationalist cultural values rather than furthering socialist ideals. These empirical examples illustrate how the ideas conveyed through the design of money and its proper handling come to act upon the intimacy of everyday life.

I have further argued that banknotes constitute a productive lens for exploring some of the frictions and shifts in moralities brought about by the rapid change characterizing the post-socialist condition in Southeast Asia. This is firstly illustrated on the basis of an analysis of the reporting of the introduction of new large denomination banknotes. This shows how the Lao state manoeuvres through the morally delicate situation in which large denomination banknotes are eagerly welcomed by the wealthy few, yet virtually out of reach for most of the population. In addition, the saga of the failed attempt at the first-ever *kip* banknote printed on Lao soil expresses an important tale about the gendered moralities of the modernizing Lao nation. Modern photographic images better convey the beauty of the Lao nation as embodied by these three young women, yet this was ultimately countered by deep-seated gendered concerns about the morality of young women living in the fast-changing society of contemporary Laos.

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Epilogue

11. Engendering Money and Morality in Asia

Cheryll Alipio and Lan Anh Hoang

Abstract
The epilogue provides a summary of the overarching theme of the volume – money and morality – and its connections to neoliberal globalization and localization in contemporary Asia. The main findings from the chapters are summarized and discussed with respect to the emergence of a new moral regime of economy, work, and labour. Through this regime, three key contributions of the volume are highlighted in relationship to market economies and self-governance, money as 'social currencies', and the encroachment of money and morality on intimate relations.

Keywords: money, morality, Asia, neoliberalism, market economies, intimacy

As the Asian region experiences an extraordinary period of wealth differentials, migration flows, gender and class conflicts, racial tensions, interethnic relations, and intergenerational frictions all as a result of neoliberal globalization's encroachment into both public and private lives, this volume offers rich insight into the local practices and situated experiences of these phenomena. The nine chapters across South and Southeast Asia draw upon qualitative methods, including ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, longitudinal studies, digital ethnography, and analysis of news reports, to provide a compelling backdrop in which to examine the rapidly changing economic and social landscape of the region. Together, the volume challenges conventional ideas about the locations and placements of contemporary Asia as a geographical given by foregrounding the circulation and manifestation of Western neoliberal doctrines. The chapters, thereby, emphasize how the region is part of a larger, interconnected, and interdependent world, where

Hoang, L.A. and C. Alipio (eds.), *Money and Moralities in Contemporary Asia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.
DOI: 10.5117/9789463723107_CH11

individual competition, entrepreneurship, and free markets are becoming valorized ever more and stimulating the transnational movement and diasporic settlement of people.

At the same time, the chapters present the different ways that neoliberalism has been localized in their particular country settings as well as its appropriation by a range of individuals, families, communities, markets, cities, and states. From the new moral regime of economy, work, and labour that is enacted, three key contributions of the volume arise. First is the recognition that the new market economies of Asia are infused with neoliberal policies and ideals that increasingly underscore the importance of self-governance and place responsibility on individuals for their own well-being. For instance, from Singapore's cosmopolitan leisure economy of the casino resort to the economy of prosperity in megachurches, these profitable markets and business models are able to reshape people's moral attitudes and behaviours towards what constitutes 'good work' by drawing upon the promises of economic development and growth.

In comparison, while the unpredictable nature of the unregulated markets in the Vietnamese diaspora in Russia and of petty trade in Vietnam induces traders to second-guess moral personhood, it concurrently creates a space for resilience and flexibility as economic and social practices are adjusted accordingly to survive. This notion of flexibility extends to the marriage market of mainland Chinese migrants in Singapore and the commercial sex market in Thailand, where the quest for higher social and economic status has necessitated the adoption of strategic gendered roles, along with moral codes that still hold great importance. This is likewise the case with the India–Australia migration corridor and the overseas labour market of the Philippines in which the desire to care for the family and self by going abroad is still tied to the observance of such things as cultural values, socioeconomic positions, and available material resources. In detailing the various market economies of Asia, the authors suggest that money mediates ideals of morality and modernity as seen in the context of Laos.

The second key contribution of the volume is the authors' attention to new conjunctures and discourses of money as 'social currencies' that have the potential to shape and transform gender and family relations, especially as they relate to employment and work at home. As the authors have shown, these social currencies take on myriad forms. In Chapter Two, Juan Zhang addresses money as a new logic of governance that structures the professional behaviour and decision-making of migrant workers, who 'downplay the morally ambiguous nature of casino work' and instead, 'stress that they are doing this [work] for the family, for loved ones, and for a better

future'. In justifying particular kinds of work as morally acceptable in order to fulfil family responsibilities and personal aspirations, the casino workers illustrate the practice of 'making exception'. In a similar fashion, in Chapter Nine, Catherine Gomes and Jonathan Tan explain that the megachurches in their study also make exception in the pursuit of upwards mobility. Rather, than holding their members to the tenets of Christian faith, specifically to the belief that people should use their wealth to help those who have less or are in need, the megachurches in Singapore support and even challenge their members to accumulate wealth and attain higher social classes. In this 'entrepreneurial religious faith', the megachurches seemingly subscribe to a logic of governance that mirrors the 'meritocratic and achievement-oriented culture promoted by the Singapore government'.

Lan Anh Hoang in Chapter Three and Esther Horat in Chapter Four further observe the rigidity of the settings in their case studies. In the post-communist Russian markets of her study, Hoang describes a precarious, volatile work-life situation, where Vietnamese migrants face both restrictions and hostility from the host country and scrutiny from co-ethnics. As a result, money becomes an 'anchor' for social relationships and an important form of making moral claims of belonging. Similarly, Horat's study of petty traders in Vietnam reveals the class divisions and paradoxical economic and political situations they find themselves in. While these traders were considered entrepreneurial on the one hand through their business savvy and ability to seize opportunities made available by economic reforms, they were also deemed 'uncivilized', less cultured, wasteful, and immoral. Consequently, money also acts as a form of making a moral claim of belonging – that is, of asserting their right to citizenship and their place amidst the social hierarchies and modernizing projects of Vietnamese society. Moreover, the individuals discussed in Sylvia Ang's Chapter Five and Cassie DeFillipo's Chapter Six make moral claims of belonging but in a slightly different way. In Ang's case study of mainland Chinese migrant men in Singapore and DeFillipo's case study of women in commercial sex establishments in Thailand, money is to a greater extent used as a structuring device for expressions of masculinities and femininities, respectively. For higher-wage Chinese migrants, the expression of one's citizenship or permanent residency status in online personal ads is a way to strategically demonstrate hegemonic ideals of Chinese masculinity. However, in doing so, they inadvertently reproduce their national non-belonging and stigmatization. For Thai women, sex is used as a way to express hegemonic femininities and enact moral commitments and cultural obligations as a 'caretaker', who financially and physically supports the family. Yet, the irony is that the performance of

this hegemonic femininity is relational, meaning that it cannot take place without men and even preserves their hegemonic masculinity.

Building from the discourses of money as expressions of gender in chapters by Ang and DeFillipo, Supriya Singh in Chapter Seven considers the changing gender dynamics between early and recent Indian migrants to Australia as a result of migrant remittances. Singh finds that remittances remain 'male' due to the Indian patrilineal system, traditional beliefs of intergenerational reciprocity, and the preference of parents for receiving remittances from 'good sons'. Yet, with women migrating more, 'male ownership and control of money is also now subject to discussion' by wives and the 'good daughter' has become part of the narrative of transnational filial piety and care. Correspondingly, in Chapter Eight, Cheryll Alipio notes the feminization of migrant labour in the Philippines and how parental obligations towards children and families 'left behind' contribute to the translation of absent love, care, and intimacy into monetary and commodified terms, especially in the form of migrant remittances. In return, children and young adults are morally compelled to negotiate their own familial and financial responsibility at home and in school, even experimenting with money as a form of mobile or migrant aspiration. This kind of experimentation is also found at the national level in Chapter Ten. Here, Roy Huijsmans attends to money as a form of national currency in which the Lao *kip* banknotes become a 'productive lens to explore some of the frictions and shifts in moralities' that are brought about by rapid change in the post-socialist society. In particular, the depiction of three real-life young women in ethnic dress on the 1000 *kip* banknote simultaneously illustrates an enduring essentialization of women, in which the work of preserving traditional or nationalist culture becomes their moral responsibility, as well as denoting the public moral panic around gender, sexuality, and generations that can ensue when women come to represent the nation.

As money takes on an expanding role in the many facets of people's everyday lives, this volume makes evident that it is accompanied by an array of moral discourses, values, and judgements. Consequently, the third key contribution of the volume lies in the tensions that emerge from money and morality, which most significantly manifest in the encroachment upon intimate relations, such as between employers and workers, parents and children, husbands and wives, potential girlfriends and boyfriends, sex workers and clients, pastors and followers, as well as co-ethnics and citizens. As can poignantly be seen across South and Southeast Asia, many families rely on the labour of their migrant members even though this work may keep parents away from children – as in the case of overseas Filipino workers

in the Philippines – and may perpetuate an intergenerational cycle and culture of migration. In Singapore, the lives of casino workers, and hence their families, are intertwined with the successes and failings of the casino development. Thus, many are obliged to suppress emotions and detach from internal struggles and conflicts. Indian migrant women and wives, however, are beginning to find their voice against men and husbands, and disrupt age-old beliefs and practices, especially as they relate to the predominantly male duty of care, management of money, and inheritance of property. Thai women, wives, and sex workers are also actively engaging in the global market economy, leading them 'to perform femininities in new and novel ways', primarily through their sexual practices and relationships as a way to achieve economic upward mobility.

In contrast to the changing dynamics of gender roles in India and Thailand, mainland Chinese men in Singapore are responding to a greater need for adaptation and 'repositioning' in terms of gender roles as they pursue potential partners. This repositioning in relationship to uncertainty and the unknown is additionally noted in other contexts. In dealing with an uncertain 'radius of trust', Vietnamese migrants in Russia turn to money as it offers a steadier 'anchor' in regulating social relationships amongst co-ethnics and fellow kinsmen. Back in Vietnam, traders attempt to allay government fears that they lack knowledge and civility by performing specific moral identities as 'good citizens', who are well-mannered and possess strong morals. In Laos, the state expects 'modern' citizens to also act in a similar fashion, even 'remind[ing] [them] of not dirtying [modern] money or using it in traditional merit-making ceremonies'. Juxtaposed to the austere Lao discipline of money, the charismatic megachurch pastors of Singapore are able to gain the loyalty and devotion of mass followers by the flaunting of and appealing to aspirations of wealth, glamour, and success.

Through these empirical case studies of contemporary Asia, the volume delves deep into the economic, political, social, and religious developments and dynamics engendered by the moneyed transactions and moral transformations arising from neoliberal globalization. In so doing, the authors consider how Asia and ideas about its place in the world emerge from people and various entities making 'money' and moral claims of identity, commonality, difference, and inequality. The volume as a whole, therefore, reveals that the economies, work, and labour involved with money and morality prompt a reordering of social reality, a restructuring of human activity, and a rethinking of our identities and intimate relations as they contend with a contemporary, modern Asia still attuned to traditional cultural values and beliefs.

About the Authors

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