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### [Review of: S. Campbell (2022) Along the Integral Margin: Uneven Development in a Myanmar Squatter Settlement]

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**Campbell, Stephen. 2022. *Along the Integral Margin: Uneven Development in a Myanmar Squatter Settlement*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 210 pp. Hb.: US\$51.95, ISBN: 9781501764882.**

In the footsteps of J. K. Gibson-Graham, there continues to be a persistent current within anthropology of discovering practices that defy capitalist reason and are thereby interpreted as being ‘outside’ of capitalism. In this book, Stephen Campbell provides gripping ethnographic stories from fieldwork with residents of a squatter settlement on the outskirts of Yangon (Myanmar) that, in combination with powerful analytical insights, make it difficult not to become convinced that such ‘ontologically autonomous’ phenomena are better seen as ‘coconstituted through the reciprocal relations in which they are embedded’ (p. 145). The book provides an excellent demonstration of the methodology involved in practising relational anthropology, whereby objects of anthropological investigation can never be understood outside of their changing social and political context and whereby dichotomies are taken not as mutually exclusive elements but as a unity of opposites. In this way, it arrives at a powerful argument about how unfree, informal and otherwise ‘non-normative’ labour arrangements are in fact capitalism’s ‘integral margin’, the ground on which liberal political order stands.

Following a critique of the transition narrative of Myanmar’s famous ‘democratic opening’ in 2011 (lasting until 2021), the book delivers its main analytical critique in a series of chapters that each focus on different case studies of working-life trajectories of people in the slum. A chapter on the labour involved in the slum’s making powerfully exposes the longer-term contradictions of squatting – and of ‘guerrilla gardening’ – whereby what is initially a challenge to existing property regimes over time also can become the basis for establishing relations of extraction, exploitation and rule. These political alternatives are thus exposed as a mere fetish when abstracted from their constitutive context.

Other chapters feature the production of foodstuffs in small ‘home factories’, workers loading and unloading commodities, people collecting waste and, of course, young women working in the transnationally owned garment factories. Every time, we see unregulated forms of labour closely tied to official circuits of capital accumulation and moreover find that people’s choice for one over the other type of labour is always context-dependent and ambiguous. In discussion with Kathleen Millar’s work on informal waste collection, for instance, Campbell argues that indeed we may acknowledge that desire – rather than narrow economic motivations – can lead one to opt either for waste collection or garment work, but that such desire is in fact always inextricably intertwined with scarcity. In similar methodological vein, a chapter focusing on workers in the horrifically violent raft shrimp-fishing industry convincingly argues that slave and other forms of extremely coerced labour are best conceptualised not as disconnected from so-called ‘free labour’ – nor as being merely more overt forms of the kind of subjugation that determines any form of labour – but rather as being co-constitutive in that Myanmar’s raft fishing industry is part of the unfree ground subsidising certain degrees of liberal freedom elsewhere.

The chapter ‘Debt collection as labor discipline’ is particularly interesting because it adds an original line of argument to Campbell’s general critique of too narrow, liberal conceptions of capitalism and connects well to the larger *Frontlines of Value* project that the book is part of. Here, Campbell provides rich ethnographic substantiation of the argument that financialisation – rather than being a shift away from labour as the basis of profits – in fact is closely interrelated to the multiplication of informal and precarious (‘nonnormative’) forms of labour and that it is precisely the proliferation of household indebtedness that continues to fuel the extraction of value from labour in these nonnormative labour arrangements. Financial capital may thus be ‘fictitious’ but as an ‘anticipatory relation’ it remains tied to labour in production.

The book thus cuts through various complicated debates on the nature of changing capitalist relations today, each time with great precision and clarity. Methodological emphasis is on the interconnectedness of supposedly distinct realms and forms of surplus extraction. Contradictions are the catalysts of social change and ambiguity is inherent in people’s everyday choices. We get beautiful ethnographic insights into working lives and struggles in Myanmar but also analyses that are of relevance far beyond that case. The book is moreover a delightful proof that it is still possible to avoid conceptual self-aggrandisement and polemic, to criticise other anthropologists with nuance and respect, and to just *not* needlessly write oneself into the ethnographic narrative. Part of me fears that considering the way academia works today, these qualities of the book will in fact prevent it from gaining the prominence that it should. But I very much hope to be proven wrong because this book is radically inspiring for political anthropologists, exceptionally useful for teaching and deserving of a large readership.

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