

Roksana Bahramitash, *Liberation from Liberalization*, New York, Zed Books, 2005. 211pp.

Roksana Bahramitash has written a carefully researched and detailed consideration of how domestic and international policies of economic globalization have affected the lives of women in three South-East Asian countries: Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines. Her aim is to provide “a gender perspective on globalization...enriched by regional case studies”. Her research also highlights the extent to which women’s work has been harnessed, by both states and international organizations such as the World Bank, in order to fill the void left by national governments’ failure to provide funds and other measures to support the social welfare of their citizens.

Liberation from Liberalization is divided into six chapters. The first two examine the concept of market fundamentalism, its development and its effects. She briefly describes how the post WWII development effort, which emphasized government involvement in orienting the market and social affairs, gave way to neoliberalism, and a concomitant reduction of government contribution to bettering the lives of citizens. She demonstrates how state cutbacks in areas such as welfare, health and education have resulted in more work for women. When governments in developing countries cut vital services in order to meet domestic and international neoliberal policies, it is women who have had to take up the slack and provide these services: “state cutbacks on basic care translate into an increase in the burden on women’s reproductive work”. In many cases, this is in addition to women’s work in the productive market. She refers to empirical data that supports her conclusion that women are more likely than men to spend their time and their earnings on family and community. As she notes in Chapter 2, the global value of women’s unpaid work is estimated to be worth \$11 trillion.

Bahramitash’s book examines women’s productive, reproductive and communal (i.e. volunteer) work, with a brief explanation of how she defines each of these three categories of women’s work. Throughout her book she documents ways in which state governments and international organizations, such as the IMF, have encouraged women’s volunteer groups’ initiatives to deal with poverty in their communities; this increases women’s burden of reproductive and communal work. The contribution of

women's groups can either lead to greater or less governmental accountability, depending on political involvement and government commitment to those groups. She argues that when these groups become part of the political process and can influence state policy-making bodies, they provide "an important initial step to overcome the negative forces of globalization". However, when women's groups provide welfare services with no involvement in the political process, the result is that the burden on women is increased and that government's lack of commitment to the welfare of its citizens is legitimized.

Chapter 3 examines the economic history of Taiwan, one of the 'Asian tigers' frequently referenced as proof of the success of neoliberal policies and theories. Bahramitash summarizes the colonial history of Taiwan and the making of modern Taiwan. The economic policies implemented during Japanese colonial rule, in particular comprehensive land reform, laid the seed for an economy that has been guided by state intervention both during the colonial period and after independence. The Taiwanese economy "managed to become incorporated into the international market whilst simultaneously remaining controlled by the state". She illustrates both how women's participation in the formal Taiwanese labour force has increased significantly since 1960, and how state-funded initiatives have also remained a vital part of life in Taiwan. These two factors – increased participation of women in the labour force and a highly interventionist policy of the government – have contributed to a decrease in the fertility rate in Taiwan. Moreover, her data demonstrates that the combination of these two factors has had positive effects on life conditions such as infant mortality, educational attainment and life expectancy, thus improving human life quality.

The result is that Taiwan has enjoyed great economic growth due to "high female employment in jobs requiring cheap flexible labour". The availability of this type of labour has not yielded similar levels of economic growth in Indonesia and the Philippines.

Bahramitash examines the colonial history and present social and economic conditions in Indonesia in Chapter 4. She notes that the data for Indonesia is not as extensive as for Taiwan, and is garnered mostly from international sources. However, she is able to provide comparison analysis on the relationship between increased women's employment and the fertility rate, as

well as general statistics on life expectancy, infant mortality rates and literacy rates. Indonesia is a state which offers little in the way of social programs for its citizens. Her analysis demonstrates that, while life expectancy, literacy rates and infant mortality rates improved significantly from the 1970s to the late 1980s, the rate of improvement slows quite perceptibly in the 1990s. She concludes that rising female employment rates in Indonesia do not, in and of themselves, improve life conditions without state commitment to providing social programs. Unlike the situation in Taiwan, women's organizations in Indonesia have not been able to mobilize support from the state and therefore have not been able to bring about remedial measures on important social issues, such as unequal pay.

Women's work in the Philippines is the subject of Chapter 5. The Philippines is a country that shares a similar colonial history with many countries in Latin America and that presents life quality statistics and issues that are also similar to those in Latin American countries. As with Indonesia, Bahramitash relies mostly on statistics gathered by international organizations in the absence of the detailed domestically produced statistics that are available for Taiwan. The Philippines is neither an interventionist state nor a minimalist state. Ironically, during the period of the Marcos dictatorship, the state was intensively involved in the economy, but this was not based on an ideological notion of the public good, rather, this intervention was generally to serve the interests of Marcos' cronies. Thus, state intervention in the economy is associated with corruption in the Philippines. Political instability has also affected the ability of the state to manage the economy. The result is that Philippine governments eschew interventionist economic policies.

The Philippines has one of the highest fertility rates in the world. Bahramitash documents how Philippine women's participation in the labour force has increased much more in the informal economy than in the formal economy. This increased participation of women in the labour force has not had the same effect on fertility rates as it has in other countries. Nevertheless, increased participation by women in the labour force has resulted in improving rates of literacy (which have always been relatively high in the Philippines), life expectancy and infant mortality. As with Indonesia, the improvement is marked up until the 1990s and thereafter the rate of improvement slows. The Philippines

continues to be much afflicted by poverty and a huge disparity in income between the poor and the wealthy; the rate of child labour is among the highest of the countries in the region.

Due to these enduring conditions, the Philippines is also a country that exports a very large number of migrant workers, mostly female. While Philippine migrant workers have created some of the strongest migrant worker organizations in the world, “[i]n general, however, women’s organizations from inside the country or outside have been able to bring little change to women in the Philippines”. This is no doubt partially due to the fact that there has been little effort by the state to mobilize women’s groups in policy implementation.

Bahramitash’s concluding chapter is a little unfocused, and therefore the weakest in this otherwise meticulously researched book. In it she briefly discusses matters such as Washington’s “attempt to seek control of oil resources in the Middle East”. Coming after the carefully detailed and rigorous analysis in the previous chapters, this final chapter appears a bit slapdash.

My very minor critique of the last chapter does not in any way diminish the quality of Bahramitash’s contribution to gender and globalization studies. *Liberation from Liberalization* provides a vital and rigorous analysis of the nature and effects of women’s participation in the formal and informal economy, and the results of the imposition of neoliberal policies on women in the developing world.

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Gelien Matthews. *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006. 197pp.

Gelien Matthews examines the impact of slave revolts in the British West Indies on the abolition movement, focusing on the slave uprisings in the colonies of Barbados (1816), Demerara (1823) and Jamaica (1831-1832). She points out that the abolitionists were aware of the important role of slave revolts in strengthening the antislavery campaign.

The historiography on slavery could be separated into two schools of thought. The first argues that economic factors,