

UNDERGROUND LIVES: THE UNTOLD STORIES OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN TAIWAN

移工築起的地下社會：跨國 勞動在臺灣

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Taiwan's economic growth owes much to foreign migrant workers, but few know of their toil or difficult lives. Freelance journalist Chien Yung-Ta spent seven years conducting in-depth field research into how this foreign community really lives.

The spread of globalization led to Taiwan's industrial transformation of the late 1980s and brought a surge of foreign migrant workers to fill the lowest ranks of the labor force. More recently, industrial upgrading, an aging population, and increased demand for caretakers has swelled Taiwan's migrant worker population, which now approaches 800,000.

Most of these overseas workers are from Southeast Asia. Most work in low-level, labor-intensive jobs in fishing, construction, and the traditional and technology industries. They have made major contributions to Taiwan's economic growth; they also provide long-term care and caretaking in many households, filling the need for these services in an aging society. Yet they have also long been subject to an inflexible system and laws, their hardships and helplessness largely invisible to the public. With this book, the author captures the beauty and sorrow in the lives of Taiwan's foreign migrant workers.

The book is divided into four parts. Part one describes how the author gained access to the migrant worker community, discusses



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the development of an ethnic economy, and examines shifts in Taiwan's migrant worker policy, from viewing labor as a commodity to valuing human rights. Part two examines occupational injury risks for migrant workers and mechanisms for compensation. Part three focuses on how this group has integrated into life in Taiwan and the subsequent impact of this adjustment on identity, self-actualization, and building new social relationships. The final part examines how competition has changed overseas recruiting and the labor brokerage industry, thus changing the situation of migrant workers for the better.

Chien Yung-Ta, a journalist long committed to reporting on the disadvantaged and human rights issues, brings the stories of migrant workers into vivid focus in this book. His comprehensive and critical investigative reporting, which also covers international brand labor rights from the perspective of international political economy, provides readers with crucial insights into Taiwan's migrant workers and recent labor issues.

Chien Yung-Ta 簡永達

Chien Yung-Ta, a native of Nantou, graduated from the Graduate Institute of Journalism at National Taiwan University. He previously worked full-time for *The Reporter* and as a contributor to *Mirror Media's* People section. A former Fulbright Scholar as well as a visiting scholar at Harvard University and Academia Sinica's Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies, he has received numerous awards, including the Taiwan Excellent Journalism Award, the SOPA Award for Editorial Excellence, a Hong Kong Human Rights Press Award, and first prize in the Taiwan Press Photographer Association's annual photo contest.