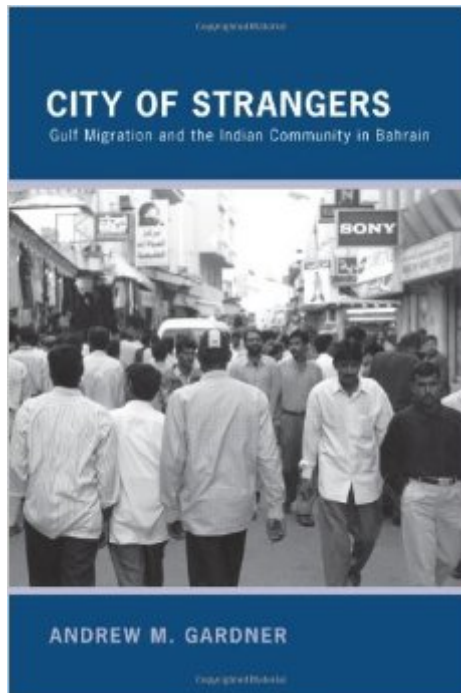


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City Of Strangers: Gulf Migration And The Indian Community In Bahrain



Synopsis

In *City of Strangers*, Andrew M. Gardner explores the everyday experiences of workers from India who have migrated to the Kingdom of Bahrain. Like all the petroleum-rich states of the Persian Gulf, Bahrain hosts an extraordinarily large population of transmigrant laborers. Guest workers, who make up nearly half of the country's population, have long labored under a sponsorship system, the *kafala*, that organizes the flow of migrants from South Asia to the Gulf states and contractually links each laborer to a specific citizen or institution. In order to remain in Bahrain, the worker is almost entirely dependent on his sponsor's goodwill. The nature of this relationship, Gardner contends, often leads to exploitation and sometimes violence. Through extensive observation and interviews Gardner focuses on three groups in Bahrain: the unskilled Indian laborers who make up the most substantial portion of the foreign workforce on the island; the country's entrepreneurial and professional Indian middle class; and Bahraini state and citizenry. He contends that the social segregation and structural violence produced by Bahrain's *kafala* system result from a strategic arrangement by which the state insulates citizens from the global and neoliberal flows that, paradoxically, are central to the nation's intended path to the future. *City of Strangers* contributes significantly to our understanding of politics and society among the states of the Arabian Peninsula and of the migrant labor phenomenon that is an increasingly important aspect of globalization.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read this book a while ago, and so can't remember all the details. This is a good book on a very important matter. However, I remember feeling that Andrew Gardner's assessment of inter-ethnic/nationality relations in the middle east is very typical of a westerner's views about race relations among non-western people. It's disappointing when one is left wondering if such views arise from rosy ideas stemming from an unquestioning belief in the official propaganda about multiculturalism in the West. The reasons for Andrew's conclusions about inter-nationality relations in the middle east are far more complex and require a book in itself. Precisely because all the examples Andrew mentions in his analysis are not uncommon experiences in the allegedly more tolerant and liberal societies. But the book is quite good. Hopefully this is only a beginning by the author, as the subject requires more extensive work. For those who are aware of this huge problem Gardner's book is really a gem, because the author has done decent field work, and raises some important questions. I wish the book, in this digital age where images are not really hard to generate, had better photos showing the plight of the people labouring in the "Gulf". I wish I could say more about this book, but since my memory isn't all that good I can only say buy it or read it, if you've had anything to do with the regimes of the "Gulf".

It gives the history of Bahrain from the perspective of foreign labor concerns. Its very well put together with current issues as well. It gives a great perspective of current conflicts between foreign workers in Bahrain and how they are treated. Very good book.

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