



WORKSHOP TITLE

Distant Divides and Intimate Connections: Migrant Domestic Workers in Asia

WORKSHOP DIRECTOR

Nicole Constable
University of Pittsburgh, USA
ncgrad@pitt.edu

Over the past two decades, “Inter-Asian” connections have become more distant and more intimate. Hundreds of thousands of women from far flung regions of South and Southeast Asia (especially the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka) migrate each year to work as domestic workers in the private homes of employers in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East (especially Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other regions). Each host and sending country has its unique history and trajectory of migration and the patterns of labor migration are propelled by a variety factors. One main factor is the shortage of domestic labor in wealthier and more developed regions of the so-called “global north,” and the high rates of unemployment and underemployment in the poorer and less developed countries of the so-called “global south.”

Many scholars have studied migrant domestic workers within the social and recent historical context of a single host region, and most have focused mainly on a single group or nationality of migrant worker. Others have focused on two regions: the sending and the receiving country. A growing number of researchers have examined the impact of migrant workers’ remittances and their absence on their place of origin and on the family members who are left behind. Much less scholarly attention has been paid, however, to comparisons between the same or different groups of migrant domestic workers in different host countries, to the interconnections between domestic workers of different nationalities within and beyond state boundaries, or to the ways in which different receiving locations impact the work and life experiences of different nationalities of migrant workers.

This workshop solicits papers from researchers from a wide range of social science and related disciplines (e.g., Anthropology, Cultural Geography, Sociology, Women’s Studies, etc.), as well as from activists or policy makers, who have conducted first hand ethnographic research among migrant domestic workers in one or more regions of Asia broadly defined. Although individual papers might focus primarily on one region or one nationality of domestic workers, collectively they will allow us to compare a range of political, socioeconomic, religious, personal and/or cultural themes that define and structure the work and life experiences of migrant domestic workers.

International Conference on Inter-Asian Connections
Dubai, UAE: February 21-24, 2008
CALL FOR PAPERS

Of particular interest are papers that will do one or more of the following:

- illuminate instances and possibilities (or impossibilities) of affiliations, collaborations, or connections between different nationalities of domestic workers within one geographical region of Asia;
- analyze connections between workers and others (e.g., family members, recruiters, advocates, or other workers) in different geographic regions of Asia;
- point to a complex of factors that promote or inhibit various forms of formal or informal advocacy or activism on issues of relevance to domestic workers within and between different Asian locations;
- illustrate the geographical trajectories and multi-sited experiences of domestic workers in Asia and the influence of these experiences on their own lives and those of others.

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