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編者序
亞洲婦女：性別、遷移及工作

Editorial
Asian Women: Gender, Migration, and Work

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Impetus for this theme issue comes from presentations and discussions at the symposium, “Transnational Lives: Feminist Perspectives on Citizenship, Home, and Belonging” sponsored by the International Geographical Union Commission on Gender and Geography held at the Department of Geography at National Taiwan University, November 23-26, 2007. In the symposium, 24 scholars from 15 countries addressed the lives of women who have moved from their places of birth to another country. These women ranged from those who were asylum seekers to astronaut wives, from domestic workers to international university students, from those in rural settings to those in major metropolitan centers. The range and level of interest is an indication of how research on gender has blossomed in this era of globalization. Twenty-five years ago, such discussions would not have been possible, for although women have long been involved in international and national migration, in earlier decades few scholars paid attention to their existence. The general assumptions in migration research were that men were the primary migrants and that women, if they moved, were dependents, passive migrants or “trailing spouses”.

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The emergence of feminist scholarship across disciplines touched migration research in some significant collections published in the early 1980s. Notable among these were *One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour* (Phizacklea, 1983) and "*Women in Migration*", a special double issue of *International Migration Review* (1984) which the editors characterized as reflecting "the belated but growing scholarly appreciation of the specificity and importance of women in international migration (p. 886)". The Phizacklea volume presented research on women migrating from the peripheral regions of Europe to the more economically advanced countries of Western Europe. Contributors focused on labor issues, especially on the disadvantages faced by women in the workplace, but they also paid attention to diversity among women (for example, comparing West Indian, Asian, and white women in Britain) and to aspects of class as well as to differences related to places of origin. The double-issue of *International Migration Review,* while covering several world regions, also largely addressed labor market themes; it mainly included census-based studies and those using quantitative survey methods. The Asian examples focused on rural-to-urban migration. Geographers also began to address issues of women and migration about this time, a notable international example being the presentations at a meeting of the International Geographical Union Commission on Population Geography held in 1982 in Sardinia. Among contributions at that meeting was the research on rural women migrants to Taipei (Chiang [Huang], 1983; 1984). The 96 case studies based on her interviews illustrate that apart from urban occupations, most of which required unskilled labor, migrants were also motivated by psycho-social reasons. Even though they changed jobs frequently in order to find better terms of jobs and pay, they experienced limited upward mobility. Her work complements earlier studies where male migrants were the subjects of study.

Since those years, the research on gender and migration has widened and flourished within geography, yet certain themes have developed more substantially than others. Here we cannot offer an extensive review, but focus on those themes which have been most elaborated. Particularly evident has been the emphasis on movements of women in domestic and caring work, especially those within and from Asian countries. A significant edited collection (Momsen, 1999), for example, is devoted to domestic service with examples of women moving to Europe, North America, and the Middle East as well as within Asia. In the literature on Asian women, the work of geographers on foreign domestic labor in Singapore has been substantial (e.g. Huang *et al.*, 2005; Huang and Yeoh, 2007; Yeoh *et al*., 2004; Yeoh and Annadhurai, 2008). Emerging in these more recent studies has been attention not so much to "international migration" but to the concept of "transnationalism". Emphasis has also shifted from delineating patterns of migration and exploration of structural issues to ways in which gendered identities are formed and experienced. The emergence of these orientations has been identified as a key theme in research within population geography since the late 1990s. Reviewing the field, Boyle (2002) highlights transnationalism and studies of domestic workers. In contrast to the earlier work, this research commonly employs in-depth qualitative methods. Additionally, the case studies primarily examine life in the places where women are working, and most of the researchers are scholars based in institutions of the countries where the migrant women are employed rather than in the workers'

countries of origin.

Considerably less research has addressed women in other occupational categories or the lives of women beyond the workplace. This gap was identified in a special issue of *Geoforum* (Kofman and Raghuram, 2005), which considered the international migration of professional workers. Attention to the lives of middle-class and professional women who are internationally mobile has recently increased, however, though these studies have mainly dealt with women originating in wealthier countries. Hardill (2002), for example, has examined gender, migration and the dual-career household in her research on professional and managerial couples from Canada, the US, and the UK. She discusses how they navigate the challenges of mobile lives and the blurring of boundaries between home and work. Coles and Fechter (2008) take up the lives of globally-mobile families, mostly of British origin, with studies of professionals in such arenas as the diplomatic service, the military, and international development. Most, but not all, of their cases involve married women who are away from their home country. Finally, we mention a strand of research that has addressed women whose international mobility has often been coerced – those who are sexually trafficked. This mobility is frequently international, but may also involve rural-to-urban moves. A recent example of research on Asian women is the book by Samarasinghe (2008) who compares the situations of women from Cambodia, Nepal, and the Philippines. She identifies contrasting patterns of movement across these countries, analyzing them in relation to issues such as poverty and class, militarism, national development, and globalization.

In creating this theme issue of the journal on “Asian Women, Gender, Migration and Work”, we include papers that overlap with the current literature but which also offer some different perspectives, both topically and methodologically. The opening article, by Rebecca Theobald, provides a comparative analysis of native and foreign-born professionals in academia while simultaneously comparing the experiences and perspectives of women and men. By studying a single profession and of professionals at the same stage in their careers – early career faculty in academic geography in American universities – she is able to reveal intersections of gender, place of origin, and context. Though the paper includes foreign-born faculty of diverse national origins, Theobald documents that increasingly this group consists of the Asian-born, especially of Chinese. Many of these scholars have received their highest degrees in US universities, so that their entry into the workplace is not as a new immigrant. Yet they exhibit cultural differences in their perceptions and adaptation to their situations. While she identifies multiple ways in which gender and national origin play a significant role in the lives of this group of professionals, she also shows that they share some professional challenges across these lines. Theobald’s paper is additionally distinctive in that she combines quantitative analysis of a large-size sample with qualitative interpretations of individual academics, and includes perspectives from supervisors as well as from early-career professionals. In this way, she illustrates the value of “mixed-methods” approaches to research.

The study by Azmi and Lund returns to women who have worked internationally in domestic service, but rather than focusing on their (often urban) lives overseas, in this case in the Middle East, the authors engage with the women in their place of origin, a rural setting in Sri Lanka. Through in-depth dialogue with a

small number of women, they explore the meanings of “home” as it is conceptualized at community and household levels, and in relation to both the “house” and the lived world of the family and community. For these Sri Lankan women, issues of belonging, comfort, control over resources, marital relations and status within the community all come together as they use their migration experience to build the houses they desire. At the same time, the study shows the prices these women pay as mothers and workers as they pursue their goals of “making home”.

Yui turns to an occupational group that has been largely omitted from geographic research, clerical workers, in this case Japanese women in Singapore. As we have noted, though much research has focused on women at the lower levels of the occupational hierarchy, and some on women identified as “professionals”, those working in the “mid-level” service and clerical occupations commonly associated with women have not generally been the subject of migration research. In another paper, Yui and colleagues studied the lives of such women who have sought clerical positions in Japanese corporations in the “global city” of Singapore (Nakazawa *et al.,* 2008) and Yui has also drawn on related research that reports the women’s experiences (Thang *et al*., 2002). In this paper, he turns to questions of why and how women obtain such positions, and why and how Japanese companies hire and use them. He does this primarily by examining the strategies of on-line recruiting firms, opening another methodological approach to gain insights into gendered labor and migration issues. By exploring the changing work opportunities for young, educated women in the labor market at home in Japan, he situates these women’s limited career prospects in Japanese cultural practices and in relation to global, regional, and Japanese economies.

The final paper, by Chiang, brings us to a rethinking of “work” and its place in the lives of women from Taiwan who are living in Canadian cities. Because of language issues, lack of Canadian work experience, and the constraints of their marital and family situation, most face restricted opportunities to engage in the types of paid employment for which they have been prepared as middle-class women. Some of these women, whose husbands often spend most of the year working in Taiwan, have been identified as “astronaut” wives; and bear the primary role of raising their children and integrating into the new society. Chiang examines their participation in volunteering, a sorely neglected aspect of women (and men’s) lives. She studies the meanings the women find in this work, their reasons/motives for undertaking it, and the gratifications and challenges it brings. Most notably, she explores how such activities both support the ethnic community and help to build positive relationships within Canadian society. Similar to other feminist researchers, Chiang engages with in-depth interviews, but her work is distinguished from that of many other researchers in that she has lived for many years in their place of origin (Taiwan), engages in participant observation with these women in her research sites, and has built relationships with some through multiple and multi-year association. This combination of methods fosters empathetic understanding.

We end this issue with a review by Anindita Datta of a book that includes multiple locations in Asia to take a gendered perspective on marriage migration, a topic that feminist geographers have not generally addressed, though some literature on sex-trafficking does take up questions related to mail-order brides. As

her review reveals, changes are occurring in the ways in which migration and marriage are intertwined as women's status and power are constructed in the family and community. Datta identifies how the contributors to the book address many aspects of social change, but notes that they neglect the spatial associations that could be explored. Thus, like the other authors in this journal issue, she opens up new avenues for geographical research.

We wish to acknowledge the Department of Geography at National Taiwan University for producing this special issue in this flagship journal, which is the only TSSCI journal in geography in Taiwan. The encouragements came two years ago from Prof. Jinn-Yuh Hsu, formerly editor-in-chief, and most recently from Prof. Mei-hui Li, the present editor-in-chief. Also thanks to Wen-yu Li for monitoring the printing process. Taiwan geography has benefited a great deal in internationalizing as early as the early 1970s, and we hope that the feminist approach to geographical research would be regarded as an aspect of paradigm change amidst other new challenges in the age of globalization.

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