

Workshop Report

Date and Time: 16 January 2016, 13:00 -18:30

Place: Yotsuya Campus Sophia University, Building 10, 301

Title: Uprooting, Redefining, Resettling: A Graduate Student Workshop on Women Migrants' Lives in Japan

Title of each presentation, presenter's name & affiliation

1. Dukin Lim (Ph.D. Candidate, University of Tokyo)

“Newcomer Korean Marriage Migrants in Urban Japan: An Analysis of Community Involvement”

2. Jie Zhang (Ph.D. Candidate, Waseda University)

“Looking for Better Lives: Social Standing and Subjective Well-Being of Chinese Female Immigrants in Japan”

3. Jocelyn O. Celero (Ph.D. Candidate, Waseda University)

“Finding the Way In: Filipino Migrant Women's Integration in Urban Japan”

4. Megha Wadhwa (Ph.D. Candidate, Sophia University)

“Striking a Balance in Negotiating Identities: Indian Migrant Women Creating New Spaces in Tokyo, Japan

5. Dipesh Kharel (Ph.D. Candidate, University of Tokyo)

“The Nepalis Villagers in the Japanese Restaurant Trade” followed by Documentary “Playing with Nan: A film about Nepali migrant workers in Japan and their family in rural Nepal”

Summary of the workshop (aim of the workshop, summary of each presentation, comments by discussants, and result of the workshop etc.)

This interdisciplinary panel aimed at exploring the quests of immigrant women in transnational social spaces. Uprooting from their respective countries as they migrate to a new social space, reconstructing their identities by redefining them and integrating to their new environment and resettling yet again. These three social phenomena which are also the

key themes of this workshop reflect on the lives of immigrant women from Philippines, China, Korea, Nepal and India, explaining their engagement in uprooting and redefining their selfhood, cultures and responsibilities as they are transmigrating in contemporary Japanese society. The four papers in this panel scrutinized the different perspectives and experiences of the immigrant women of four different nationalities in contemporary Japanese society from the economic, social and cultural aspects. This panel drew focus on life histories, interviews and mixed methods; these papers reaffirm the significance of gender.

1. Finding the Way In: Filipino Migrant Women's Social Integration in Urban Japan
- Jocelyn O. Celero, Ph.D Candidate, Waseda University

Filipino women comprise one of the four largest groups of migrants in Japan, whose migration peaked in the mid- 1980s was fill both labor demand in Japan's entertainment and sex industries and bride shortage in the rural villages. Over the last 30 years, Filipinas have widened visibility in various sectors of Japanese society, through its roles as workers, wives, and mothers. Unlike temporary labor migrant women in Japan and elsewhere, leading a Japanese-Filipino family constitutes a key dimension in their social integration (conceived both as a process and an outcome) and settlement in Japan. This qualitative research draws on (70) in-depth interviews with Filipino migrant women residing in Tokyo to examine and discuss the trajectories of their social integration. This paper aims to explore the concept of "integration from below" through Filipino women's life experiences, highlighting the multiple processes of integration they have and are continuously going through. It also looks into the changes in the way have adapted to urban life in Tokyo, and how the presence of Japanese-Filipino children inform their everyday negotiation for social acceptance. Finally, it considers their aspirations (as well as dilemmas) as permanent settlers in Japan, which includes thoughts of return migration to the Philippines and (re) constructing a socio-cultural integration path they desire to influence Japanese-Filipino children. The case of Filipino migrant women provides a micro-level context for understanding the gendered context of social integration in Japan from the perspective of Filipino immigrant members whose understandings of immigrant incorporation lies in their assimilability towards the host society and flexible negotiation of their socio-cultural dispositions and behaviors.

2. Newcomer Korean Marriage Migrants in Urban Japan: An Analysis of Community Involvement - Dukin Lim, Ph.D Candidate, University of Tokyo

Marriage statistics show a significant rise in international marriage in Japan in recent years. Foreign wives, originating mainly from China, South Korea, and the

Philippines, face significant lifestyle challenges related to their marriages in Japan. This qualitative study seeks to understand the challenges faced by married Korean migrants when participating in the Korean and Japanese communities, and the influence of these communities on the women's lives. This analysis utilizes a 'snowball sampling' method, with introductions from personal contacts and the online community. This study focuses on the following issues: the ways in which immigrant women are involved in Japanese society, why they choose to become involved or not involved in the communities from their own perspectives, and what community involvement means for them. Women who choose to participate in the Japanese community rather than the Korean community tends to do so in order to avoid prejudice, facilitate integration into Japanese society, and gain useful information about raising children in Japan. On the other hand, there are some women who are not involved in either community. These women face difficulties in integrating into both communities, because within the Korean community they are treated as special cases that have chosen to live away from their country, friends, and family. Conversely, within the Japanese community, women tend to feel isolated since they lack an understanding of Japanese language and culture. Through participating in communities, women can have a sense of security and increase their prospects in Japan. However, without community involvement, women usually feel distant from people and life in Japan and struggle with overcoming loneliness.

3. Looking for Better Lives: Social Standing and Subjective Well-Being of Chinese Female Immigrants in Japan – Jie Zhang, Ph.D Candidate, Waseda University

During recent decades, Chinese women among newcomers in Japan tend to pursue higher quality life and social status independently rather than old comers. This study aims to examine the level of social standing among Chinese female immigrants in Japan, and discuss the predictors of subjective well-being by compare with the situation in China. This study addresses the central question, "how does social standing affect Chinese women's subjective well-being in Japan and China?", and tests the location of Chinese female immigrants' references groups. This research also investigates the relevance of social comparison theory and theories of life satisfaction. This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Using quantitative method, it will examine the level of status among Chinese female immigrants by comparing with other six immigrant groups in Japan, and test the predictors of their life satisfaction. Moreover, qualitative method is utilized to discuss whether Chinese female immigrants' social standing in the host country is more strongly related to their subjective well-being than in home country. Interviews are focused on their consciousness of social comparisons, and evaluation of their migrant lives in Japan

and China, including life satisfaction, perceived discrimination and anxiety. This study gives nuanced understanding on how Chinese female immigrants in Japan compare themselves through making social comparisons, shows the different outcomes under chosen reference groups, and analyzes how these choices impact on their subjective well-being and assimilation trajectories in Japan.

4. Striking a Balance in Negotiating Identities – Indian Migrant Women Creating New Spaces in Tokyo, Japan - Megha Wadhwa, Ph.D Candidate, Sophia University

Most Indian women who immigrate to Japan do so as dependents of male immigrants, and besides, there is a small percentage of those who move to Japan on their own, either to study, work, or motivated by some other factor. As per official statistics the number of Indians in Japan in 2014 was 24,524, of which about 70% are male and 30% female. This paper would focus on the lives of Indian women living in Japan. Under this I cover two main categories. The first category that is also the majority is that of married Indian women who are homemakers and those who are workingwomen. It refers to the Indian women married to the Indian men who had been in Japan. The second category is of those women who urged by brighter career prospects travel on their own to Tokyo. The women in this category who stay in Japan for long are less in number. The reasons for which would be explained in this paper. This research paper based on qualitative interviewing of Indian women migrants in Tokyo seeks to address the lives of migrant women of Indian origin in Tokyo who cope with a diversity of situations, while at the same time maintaining their Indian identities. It explores their fears, problems and expectations from their family as well as their new social space as they negotiate with their selfhood, motherhood and wifehood. It also focuses on the advantages and differences of their life in Tokyo in comparison to life in India.

5. The Nepalis Villagers in the Japanese Restaurant Trade

This research focused on Nepali cooks working in restaurants, the largest group of Nepalese immigrant community in Japan but has not been discussed much. Utilizing a camera as a research tool, my multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Japan and in Nepal from 2008 to 2015 demonstrates how the informal networks and the transnational ties developed by the immigrants themselves has resulted in ‘chain migration’ and sustained the flow of Nepalese migration to Japan.

As of 2014, there are officially 42,346 Nepali immigrants living in Japan, making them the largest South Asian community in the country. Judging from the Japanese immigration Bureau data 2014 and data collected during my fieldwork, I estimate that the vast majority of Nepali immigrants in Japan are associated with the Nepali restaurant trade. They serve Indian curry and naan and are spread throughout Japan’s urban

neighborhoods, suburbs, and small towns. The Nepali immigrants working as cooks in Nepali and Indian restaurants in Japan are classified for immigration purposes as “skilled labor”. The inclusion of the category of “skilled labor” in Japanese immigration law provided the grounds for Nepali to work legally at Nepali restaurants in Japan. There are already more than 500 Nepali restaurants in Tokyo alone, and that number is still increasing. Recently, Nepali restaurants have been spreading to smaller towns in Japan, creating more spaces for Nepali migrants to enter. During my fieldwork, I was surprised to learn that from a small rural Nepali village, Malma (a village of 6,400 residents and located in Baglung district, Nepal), more than 1800 Nepalis had migrated to Japan to work in Nepali restaurants. Nowadays the local people have nicknamed their village "Little Japan," as so many people from the village are working in Japan. Furthermore, I was surprised to know that each of these immigrants paid 15 *Jakha* Nepali rupees (15,000 USD) to the restaurant owners to get work visas to enter Japan. It further examined the following questions: How have so many Nepalis from Malma village been able to migrate in Japan? Why did they decide to migrate to Japan even though they had to pay US\$15,000, and how could they afford to pay this money? How do social networks and other transnational ties develop between the village and Japan, providing prospective migrants with information, means of travel and the possibility of entry?

Comments from the Commentators: All the three commentators appreciated the workshops and gave several advices for further improvement.

Prof. Roberts – As per her suggestion all the presenters should publish the work and try to find a common point of discussion amongst all the women migrants. Also she mentioned to focus on the actual interaction of the migrants with the locals. And to further focus on their similarities and differences.

Prof. Inaba – As per her suggestion she mentioned about slight focus and comparison with the situation of men and to elaborate the changes in the gender issues if any in comparison to their home countries.

Mr. Jotaro Kato - As per his suggestion he questioned about the focus of the presenters on the use of the word ‘sabishi’. He questioned the reasons behind their sadness and after all why they still prefer to stay in Japan despite of them being sad.

Outcome of the workshop: We believe the workshop was overall a success. We received

positive response not only from the commentators but also from the audience. The questions asked by the commentators and the audience has further helped us in improving our respective papers. We really hope that we can publish them in the near future keeping in mind the suggestion given by Prof. Roberts and all the others.