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**Among Women:
Migrant Domestic workers and their Taiwanese Employers across Generations**

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Abstract

Increasing numbers of middle-class dual-earner households in Taiwan have hired low-cost migrant women from the Philippines and Indonesia to handle the tasks of housework, childcare, and elder care. They seek domestic help not only because of the time bind between work and family, but also to retrieve some autonomy from the authority of their mothers-in-law. Domestic employment in this case reveals inequalities between maids and madams along class and racial lines as well as hierarchy between women across generations. This paper examines how contemporary Taiwanese daughters-in-law hire migrant domestic workers to negotiate their relationships with their mothers-in-law. Four modes of triangular relationship among the three women are presented: (1) The daughter-in-law seeks market transfer of the filial duty and develops comradeship with the workers vis-à-vis the authority of the mother-in-law. (2) The daughter-in-law maneuvers domestic employment to resist the mother-in-law's intervention in the conjugal family and may become another authoritative figure reproducing oppression over the migrant worker. (3) The daughter-in-law manages to smooth tensions between the mother-in-law and the migrant worker on a daily basis. (4) The elder living apart from her children develops personal bonds with the migrant caregiver, who becomes fictive kin across ethnic boundaries.

Judith Rollins in her book, *Between Women*, points out a unique feature of domestic employment that presents a painful truth for feminist politics: “In no other work arrangement is it typical for both employer and employee to be female” (1985: 6-7). Mary Romero (1992) describes the relationship between madam and maid, marked by their class and racial divides, as not “a bond of sisterhood” but “a bond of exploitation.” In this article, I further examine a dimension that has been overlooked in the literature of domestic employment: domination and resistance between women across generations. The relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is often described as tension-laden, especially in ethnic Chinese societies. With the employment of paid domestic workers, the intergenerational domestic politics turns into a triangular relationship that may involve alliance or antagonism among the three women.

Since the early 1990s, increasing numbers of middle-class dual-earner Taiwanese households have hired migrant women, largely from the Philippines and Indonesia, to perform childcare, housework, and elder care. Taiwan, one of the East Asian tigers that experienced a rapid economic growth in the last few decades, has become a popular destination for migrant labor from Southeast Asian countries. Taiwanese have built their wealth based on the integration of the national export economy into the capitalist world system, and they now advance their status and lifestyles through the consumption of imported goods and migrant labor. Younger generations of Taiwanese women seek domestic employment not only to ease the time bind between work and family (Hochschild 1997), but also to negotiate intergenerational relations and the cultural tradition of filial piety. They hire migrant workers to outsource the duty of caring for their aging parents-in-law, or to perform housework and childcare so they can retrieve some autonomy from their mothers-in-law.

Between Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law

The opposition between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law has long been a popular soap opera scenario as well as a real-life family drama in Taiwan and other societies. Anthropologist Deniz Kandiyoti (1991) found its historical existence in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia. She also explains why the relationship between women across generations may be contentious. In a patrilocally extended household, a young bride becomes subordinate not only to

her husband and other men but also to senior women, especially her mother-in-law. Because a woman's well-being in old age is guarded only by her sons, she has a vested interest in suppressing romantic love between her sons and daughters-in-law as a means to secure the married sons' loyalty. In short, the mother-in-law may internalize patriarchy as a rational strategy to maximize her interests within structural constraints.

The relationship between Chinese mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is situated in the cultural traditions of filial piety and patriarchal authority. The parents-children relations are governed by an implicit moral contract. Child rearing is viewed as a process of social investment with an expectation of delayed repayment, in the Chinese term, *'bau-da'* (payback). Parents undergo economic and emotional costs in bearing and raising children, so children, especially sons, are obligated to return the debts through the provision of care for their aging parents. *San-dai-tone-tang* (three-generation cohabitation) is viewed as the ideal arrangement for elders and an embodiment of filial piety.

According to the Han-Chinese tradition, family membership, inheritance of property, and distribution of authority are defined through the main axis of father and son. A daughter is considered "spilled water," given away after marriage to another family headed by her husband's father. In contrast, giving birth to sons assures more security for the future welfare of parents (Thornton and Lin 1994). As a Chinese proverb says: "To protect yourself at old ages, raise a son." The elder married sons are obligated to reside with and take care of the aging parents; placing parents in a nursing home is stigmatized as an immoral act of children who disregard their filial obligation. Yet the actual duty of serving aging parents is performed mostly by the daughter-in-law. The son, the major breadwinner, mainly provides economic support for his parents while his wife serves as his filial surrogate to offer care and service on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, intergenerational power dynamics in Taiwan have been transformed during the last few decades of economic development. Taiwanese women served as a cheap labor force for the labor-intensive, export-oriented manufacturing industries in the 1960s and 1970s (Hsiung 1996). The service sector, whose employment has surpassed its manufacturing counterpart since the mid-1980s, further opens job opportunities for Taiwanese women. In 2000, about 46 percent of Taiwanese women aged above 15 were employed. The rate of labor participation becomes

more substantial among women who are younger, highly-educated, urban residents. Dual-earner households have become a social norm as well as an economic necessity under rising housing prices and living expenses in urban areas.

In parallel with the growth of women's employment in the process of modernization, the conjugal or nuclear household has become the predominant residential structure in contemporary Taiwan. Current generations of young married couples have expressed the expectation of living separately from their parents, especially among educated couples who have arranged their own marriages. Today adult children who resist three-generation cohabitation may still be blamed for their violation of filial norms but face less financial punishment than before. As young family members' wages now constitute the major source of household income, the loss of family property resulting from disobeying their parents has lessened (Hu 1984; Thornton and Lin 1994).

The decline of parental authority is uneven for Taiwanese families of varied class backgrounds. Rita Gallin observed different life chances among Taiwanese mothers-in-law with varying economic resources. Mothers-in-law in wealthy families still enjoy the power to distribute properties and hence maintain traditional family authority; by contrast, poorer mothers-in-law have to "strive to make themselves dependable sources in order to ensure a measure of security" (Gallin 1994: 138). The poverty of elders is exacerbated by the policy of Taiwan's government, which did not introduce a comprehensive social security system until very recently. The means-tested elder benefits are available to only a small segment of the elderly population, and nearly half of Taiwanese elders are financially dependent on their adult children (Ministry of Interior 1996). The government also actively promotes the privatization of elder care by favoring three-generation households with tax cuts, public housing subsidy, and moral education that favors family as the unit of filial care (Hu 1995).

Although the proportion of parents living alone has been increasing, the social ideology remains to pressure sons to take care of their elderly parents. Almost 60 percent of Taiwanese households nowadays are nuclear units, three-generation cohabitation, mostly on a patrilocal principle, still describes about one-third of the households. Over half of Taiwanese elders live with their sons and only three percent are placed in care facilities (DGBAS 1996). In place of co-residence, young generations balance the social norm of filial piety and a desire for autonomy

and privacy through other arrangements, including living in different flats of the same building, living apart yet having meals together or making frequent visits, and hiring non-family care workers. The recently available migrant labor force, which costs less than half the wage of a local caregiver and offers live-in stand-by service,¹ has become a popular arrangement for elder care in Taiwan.

The Maid Trade in the Global South

Taiwan's government officially opened the gate for migrant domestic workers in 1992, although there had been significant numbers of undocumented migrants working in private households since the early 1980s. The government first granted work permits to "domestic caretakers" employed to take care of the severely ill or disabled, and later released a limited number of quotas for the employment of "domestic helpers" to households with children under the age of 12 or elderly members above the age of 70.² This policy is viewed as a solution to the growing demands for paid care work among the expanding nuclear households and aging population in contemporary Taiwan. Despite the regulation on employer qualification and quota control, the number of Taiwanese households hiring migrant domestic workers has rapidly increased within a decade. Currently, over 100,000 foreigners are legally employed as domestic workers in the country. Women from the Philippines and Indonesia constitute 90 percent of migrant domestic workers in Taiwan, and the rest are from Thailand and Vietnam (CLA 2001).

Taiwan is not a single case but indicates a regional pattern. The increasing prosperity of East Asia and the Gulf countries since the mid-1970s has stimulated substantial international migratory flows within this region. Most migrant women in Asia are concentrated in particular occupations, such as the entertainment industry, health services, and especially domestic service. It is estimated that over one million women from countries like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines are employed as domestic workers, with or without legal documents, in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, and the Middle East. Scholars have named this significant regional migration flow the "trade in maids" in Asia (Heyzer et al. 1994).

Globalization has simplified the gendered household burdens for more privileged women while complicating the racial and class stratification of domestic work. The supply of Third World women for paid domestic work in the West is historically and structurally linked to the uneven development of the global economy, the legacy of colonialism, and the increasing indebtedness of Third World countries (England and Stiell 1997). In the emerging “new domestic world order” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001), migrant women not only work in the households in postindustrial societies like the United States, Canada, and Western and Southern Europe, but also offer paid domestic service in the oil-rich nations of the Middle East and the “newly industrialized countries” (NICs) of Asia.

According to the official data, the majority of Taiwanese employers are dual-income middle-class households formed by couples between the ages of 25 and 44, and over 30 percent of them reside in metropolitan Taipei (CLA 1999). Most domestic employers in Taiwan are first-generation employers—they grew up without a maid or babysitter at home. They are the so-called “new middle class” made up of professionals and owners of small and medium-sized businesses (Chu 1996). The employment of foreign domestic workers has become a means for them to upgrade lifestyles and to confirm their newly achieved social status.

Many Taiwanese female employers are also the first generation of career women. Their mothers and mothers-in-law quit their jobs after marriage or giving birth, but the daughters and daughters-in-law yearn for career achievement and “couple egalitarianism” in the performance of household labor (Hertz 1986). Caught between the traditional ideals and modern values, younger generations of Taiwanese women seek market labor forces to transfer their gendered domestic duties and kin work. The recently available low-cost migrant workers thus become a vital lever for them to negotiate intergenerational relations in their pursuits of gender equality and career womanhood.

Triangular Relationship Among Women

The following analysis is based on data collected for a broader project on transnational domestic employment in Taiwan. I conducted open-ended, in-depth interviews with 46 Taiwanese employers, mostly women of younger generations, and 58 Filipina migrant domestic

workers.³ To analyze the triangular relationship among the mother-in-law, the daughter-in-law, and the migrant worker, I present four different modes of employment relations: 1) the daughter-in-law hires migrant workers to subcontract the filial duty of serving her mother-in-law. 2) The daughter-in-law maneuvers domestic employment to minimize the intervention of her mother-in-law in the conjugal family. 3) The daughter-in-law attempts to lubricate the relationship between the mother-in-law and the migrant worker on a daily basis. 4) The mother-in-law may develop strong personal bonds with her migrant caregiver in the absence of adult children.

Subcontracting Filial Duty

Mrs. Chang⁴ is a 58-year-old retired high school teacher. She and her husband, also a teacher, own a moderate three-bedroom apartment in Taipei. The husband's mother moved from the province to reside with Mr. Chang, her eldest son, after his father's death. Mrs. and Mr. Chang later rented the apartment across the hallway to accommodate the mother-in-law, so they could remain the ideal of three-generation cohabitation yet keep enough rooms and privacy for their two grown-up daughters and themselves. Two years ago Mrs. Chang convinced her husband to hire a Filipina worker to take care of his mother, who had grown frail and needed daily assistance and personal care. Mrs. Chang then transferred most of her previous duties like preparing meals, bathing, and changing diapers to the Filipina worker. More than once during our interview, Mrs. Chang felt compelled to legitimize her decision of hiring someone to take care of her mother-in-law, given the traditional ideal of the filial daughter-in-law:

I may sound like I have no sense of filial piety to you, but I have been serving her for 20 years! If you want to be a good daughter-in-law, you can no longer be yourself. Fortunately, it doesn't cost that much to hire a Filipina maid these days.... After I retired from school, I'm still doing some part-time work. I don't want to stay home, not a single day. And I can make some money. But all the money goes to the Filipina maid [*smiles*].

Mrs. Chang points out the conflict between performing the traditional gender role subordinate to family authority ("to be a good daughter-in-law" "serving" the mother-in-law) and

seeking individual autonomy and self-achievement (to “be yourself”). Zhong-Dong Liu (1998) has argued that the traditional ideal of caregiving in Chinese societies is associated with the hierarchical concept of “serving” rather than the more egalitarian notion of “caring.” The typical image of caregivers in Chinese families is female kin in subordinate positions, such as a wife serving her husband and a daughter-in-law serving her parents-in-law. The act of caregiving is strongly tied to the ideal of womanhood, and the failure of these gendered responsibilities incurs social stigma. Mrs. Chang continues working even after retirement in order to avoid the full-time duty of “serving” her mother-in-law. She volunteers to contribute the wage of her part-time job to hire another woman to be her filial agent, but the employment is opposed by both her mother-in-law and her husband:

What did amah⁵ say when you first wanted to hire a Filipina maid?

She always says bad things about the Filipina maid because she wishes we could stop the employment so she could live with us.

How about your husband? He objected, too?

Of course. First, it costs money. Second, in this way, it doesn’t seem that we are a family, and he won’t be able to make the ideal of a filial son.

The mother-in-law considers a care worker as a barrier to her tie to the son’s family. The son is also concerned that the employment may ruin the image of family union and his filial reputation. However, it is the daughter-in-law’s unpaid labor that sustains the social myth of a “big happy family.” Mrs. Chang expressed anguish about the unequal division of filial labor between her and her husband:

I worked as hard as he did, but he said taking care of children is women’s business; serving the mother-in-law is women’s business. I feel this is really unfair. I am also an educated person; I cannot accept this. If you want to be a dutiful son, then you should be the one who serves your mother-in-law, not me! My mother brought me up. I should take care of my mother, not yours. She is the mother of you and your six siblings, not mine. You cannot just leave her to the daughter-in-law.

To bargain with this “unfair” gendered assignment, Mrs. Chang seeks a surrogate worker to perform her filial duty. There is a transfer chain of “filial kin work,”⁶ which I define as care work

to maintain intergenerational ties along patrilineal family lines. This transfer chain consists of two components: *gender transfer* of the filial duty from the son to the daughter-in-law and *market transfer* of elder care from the daughter-in-law to non-family care workers (mostly women). The subcontracting of elder care reveals the transformation of cultural practices in contemporary institutional contexts yet without a radical challenge to the gendered division of filial kin work. As another woman employer described, “Many husbands say women today are luckier than ever because they have Filipina maids to help. But actually, who’s your wife taking care of? She’s taking care of your mother!”

Some young women employers continue doing some portion of housework or elder care to symbolically affirm the ideal of the filial daughter-in-law and avoid negative judgments imposed by their mothers-in-law. Rowena, a Filipina domestic worker, observed the struggle of her employer, a successful coffee shop owner yet a powerless daughter-in-law in her patriarchal extended family. Rowena described in great sympathy how her employer managed to do some housework even though she hired Rowena for exactly that purpose.

My employer works hard during the day, but she still works very hard after she gets home! I don’t understand. I wouldn’t if I were her! If you’ve worked hard all day, you should rest when you get home....When I complained to her I had too much work to do, she told me there was nothing she could do about it. She belongs to another family. She always needed to ask for [the mother-in-law’s] permission to do anything.

The daughters-in-law and the domestic worker may develop sisterhood and comradeship, when facing together the authority of the mother-in-law. Mrs. Chang refreshes her rusty English in order to better communicate with her Filipina worker, Sheila. Their time spent together in grocery shopping and cooking allows Sheila to get away from the mother-in-law and seek emotional support from Mrs. Chang. When I interviewed Sheila in the living room about the renewal of her contract, her interaction with Mrs. Chang clearly expressed the personal bond between the two based on mutual sympathy:

Sheila: I don’t know if I will work here next year. Maybe the husband does not like.

Mrs. Chang: I like! I like! Never mind my husband!

Sheila: I like my ma’am very much, but *amah* is very difficult.

PCL: Why is she difficult?

Sheila: [lowers her voice] I am afraid to talk about his mother [points at the husband in the dining room].

Mrs. Chang: It's okay. He does not understand English.

Sheila: Her husband never talks to me. I am here for two years. Only my ma'am talks to me.

Mrs. Chang [explains to me in Madarin]: He forgot all his English and he feels embarrassed talking to a woman.

Sheila: The husband was good to me before, but *amah* told him bad words about me. So he is not good to me now. Sometimes I am thinking of going back to the Philippines, but I think of my ma'am. If I go back, she will be the one to take care of *amah*! She does not like to. I know that. *Amah* sometimes says bad words to me, but I am always patient. I always talk to my ma'am. She understands me.

Mrs. Chang [nodding]: Yes I understand. I am like you before!

Sheila [smiles at Mrs. Chang]: That's why I can understand you, too.

After the interview, Mrs. Chang invited me to stay for dinner. Her mother-in-law declined Mrs. Chang's dinner invitation, saying she felt sick. (But Mrs. Chang said, "Well, she is still mad at me.") While cooking together in the kitchen, Mrs. Chang and Sheila taught each other the words for cooking tools and materials in English and Chinese, they exchanged complaints about the hardships of serving the grandmother, and they chatted about each other's children and family. During dinner, Mr. Chang asked me about my research topic and mentioned some news report about a crime conducted by a migrant worker: "They cause a lot of problems for our society, don't they? And they are not really that cheap. We have to provide lodging and food and everything...." Without mentioning any personal situation, he viewed the existence of migrant workers more like an abstract social problem than a real person solving the pressing need of care for his mother. Across the dining table, Mrs. Chang threw me a silent look, which seemed to say, "Well, now you understand what I was talking about."

Safeguarding the Nuclear Family

Some daughters-in-law use domestic employment to protect their nuclear families from the intervention of extended kin. The mothers-in-law who are younger and in a good health may not yet become recipients of "filial kin work," but serve as providers of "kin labor" for their sons and daughters-in-law—they offer unpaid or underpaid childcare, cook dinner, and maintain households for dual-earner young couples. These mothers-in-law contribute their labor to request

three-generation cohabitation or to secure personal bonds to the son's family. Their assistances, however, may become a way to intervene or dominate the conjugal family from the perspective of adult children, particularly daughters-in-law.

Childcare is an issue that often incurs conflicts between women across generations. The mother-in-law is traditionally defined as the other primary caregiver in addition to the child's mother. She supervises her daughter-in-law in the care of her son's children and intervenes when the job is not being done in a way she deems proper (Wolf 1970). A common practice in Taiwan is for mothers-in-law to take care of grandchildren if their daughters-in-law are working outside of the home. This happens not only in three-generation households, but also in situations where mothers-in-law live nearby. Catherine and her husband, in their early 30s, have both received MBAs in the United States and work in Taipei as market consultants. After Catherine finished three months of maternal leave, her mother-in-law took over to care for the newborn baby. The couple sent the baby to the grandparents' house every morning and picked her up after work. Without being asked to, Catherine paid the mother-in-law \$18,000 NT (US\$600) per month, an amount equivalent to the lower-end wage of a local caregiver. Although saving herself from the worry of leaving the child with a stranger, Catherine felt difficulty and tension in dealing with her mother-in-law under such a circumstance:

We argued almost every day.

Argued about what?

No big deals. She was just exhausted, unhappy, and then she gave me a poker face. Every time when we picked up our daughter, we didn't know if we should leave or stay. If we left, she would say you guys just want to get your child. If we stayed, she would say I had been working so hard, I took care of your child, and I also had to cook your dinner? She was not saying these to her son, only to her daughter-in-law.

Catherine's mother-in-law was burdened by a feeling of deprivation on top of the physical exhaustion caused by the heavy workload of caring for a newborn baby. She conveyed the message to the young couple that she sacrificed her old-age ease to maintain their family, which was supposed to be the duty of the daughter-in-law. Catherine later hired a migrant live-in worker to care for her daughter, a market arrangement without much emotional drama. In addition, adult children often have generated parenting practices that deviate from how they were brought up. Neophyte parents seek guidance not only from their parents but also through the

purchase of expert guides, many of which are translated from the English world. Young mothers hire nannies to safeguard their autonomy in parenting and avoid confrontations with the older generation. For example, Ann, a 32-year-old bank manager, explained why she preferred a migrant caregiver to her mother-in-law:

When there are different opinions regarding childcare, you somehow have to listen to the elderly. Then you lose your autonomy. I cannot control my mother-in-law, but I can control my Filipina maid, right?

By hiring a foreign maid, women employers not only solve the problem of childcare but also save themselves from arguing with their husbands for sharing laundry and doing dishes. Some Taiwanese husbands, mostly from younger generations, are willing to share some housework but receive objections from their mothers. For example, when I asked Hsiu-Yun, a 43-year-old real estate agent, if her husband helped out with housework, she answered:

More or less. He's a neat person. Once he saw some dirt on the floor and couldn't help mop it. The maid was on vacation or something. Then his mom came to our house and was shocked when she saw this. She must be thinking, "My son never did anything like this in *my* house! Now he is mopping the floor!" So I rushed to ask my husband to stop. I would do that later.

This scenario demonstrates not only a divide between the traditional and modern notions of marriage, but also an implicit competition between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law over the son. The extended family and conjugal family are marked as separate territories dominated by the two women across generations ("my house" vs. "your floor"). The mother-in-law viewed the son's participation in housework as an indicator of his subordination to the wife in the new household and, as the other side of the coin, the weakening of his ties to his mother and extended family. Some daughters-in-law, such as Emily, a 30-year-old financial consultant, hire a maid to avoid potential disputes around the division of housework:

I'm thinking that when my daughter gets married in the future, I'll also hire a Filipina maid for her. That way she can avoid a lot of problems with her mother-in-law. You can't let your mother-in-law do housework like cleaning and cooking, but you also feel reluctant to do it alone—there's no way she'll let her son do it, right?

Some female employers, more assertively, use the employment of domestic workers as a strategy to resist three-generation cohabitation. Hsiao-Li, 36 years old, has a junior college degree and worked as a nurse before giving birth to her son. Her mother-in-law volunteered to move to Taipei to be their live-in caretaker, but this proposal was turned down by Hsiao-Li, saying she would start processing an application for a migrant caretaker. Hsiao-Li described what happened then:

My mother-in-law is a very sharp woman. She said to me, “Your father-in-law thinks hiring a Filipina maid is a bad idea.”—She wouldn’t say it was her who thinks it’s a bad idea. Whoever she ran into—my friends, relatives—she told them, “You talk to Hsiao-Li, tell her to let me watch the child.” Anyway, the main point is that she wants to live with her son. She doesn’t really love the grandson. She loves her son!

And what does your husband think?

He? Of course he likes to live with both his wife and his mother! Then he can be a baby forever. Everything is taken care of by others.

The mother-in-law put social pressures upon Hsiao-Li by proxy, framing her objection in the name of the father-in-law, the patriarchal authority in the extended family. In a story I heard during another interview, the mother-in-law, when making visits to her son’s house, threw out the baggage of the migrant worker to express her anger toward the employment. She thought that if there were no Filipina maid, they would have invited her to live with them and take care of the grandchildren. These mothers-in-law feel anguished not because their grandchildren are “taken away” by the domestic workers, but because they are cut off from the link with their sons in lieu of the arrangement of cohabitation.

Unlike Mrs. Chang, who establishes a comradeship with her Filipina sister, Hsiao-Li has a contentious relationship with her Filipina worker, Julia. Although employed as a maid in Taiwan, Julia has a college degree in the Philippines and plans to pursue a master’s degree after saving enough money from working overseas. Hsiao-Li bluntly admits that she has been “a mean boss” to Julia, but she explains her attitude as more a product of contextual factors than an innate personality clash. She has not yet found a suitable job after quitting her nursing position prior to giving birth. Being a stay-at-home mother has brought her a sense of loss and isolation. Her feeling of insecurity is also aggravated by the confrontation of a well-educated maid and the

pressures from her husband and mother-in-law:

The reason I don't get along with the maid is because of all the pressure my mother-in-law and my husband put on me. They complained, "Why are you not working? What are you are doing at home every day?" Well, every day I watch her [the maid] and I pick on her. She has an advanced degree, so she feels humiliated. If I were working, all this wouldn't have happened. Because you gain nothing at home, so you become picky and cranky all day long.

A Chinese proverb says: "A daughter-in-law must suffer to become a mother-in-law" (*si-fu-au-cheng-po*). It describes that a young bride who experiences hardships in a patriarchal extended family eventually succeeds to authority by controlling the next generation of daughters-in-law. Women offset patriarchal domination by controlling other women in their subordination—daughters-in-law in the case of mothers-in-law and foreign maids in the case of young women employers. Daughters-in-law like Hsiao-Li seek domestic help to lessen the gendered obligations placed upon them, but ironically become an authority figure similar to their mothers-in-law.

Smoothing Tensions and Anxieties at Home

Jessica, by the age of 32, has worked in several international banks and has been promoted to a manager position in her current job. She got married to a fellow worker four years ago and moved in together with her husband's parents. Despite abiding the tradition of three-generational residence, Jessica is more than determined to continue her career after giving birth to her daughter. To solve the thorny problems of childcare and housework, she wishes to hire a Filipina worker like many of her co-workers do. But, as Jessica said, "I went through a revolution to hire my Filipina maid!" She spent half a year convincing her mother-in-law, who objected for various reasons such as "this is a waste of money," "hiring a foreigner at home is not safe," and "maybe it's better for you to quit and stay home."

Jessica is not the only Taiwanese female employer who went through a long process of "revolution" to win the consent of their mothers-in-law for domestic employment. Most elder Taiwanese women stayed home as full-time homemakers and mothers at the age of their

daughters-in-law. They tend to disagree with their “modern” daughters-in-law on the transfer of housework and childcare to live-in foreign maids. Many daughters-in-law have to disassociate themselves from being labelled “irresponsible mothers” and “lazy wives” by their mothers-in-law. The following two employers, Shin-Yi, a homemaker in a nuclear household, and Wan-Ru, an employed woman in an extended household, were both under similar pressure from their mothers-in-law regarding the employment of foreign maids:

My mother-in-law always said that it was kind of “weird” that I don’t work but still hire a maid. “Weird” is the word she used. Of course, I know what she meant by that.
What did she mean?

She thinks I am just lazy and I shouldn’t have hired a maid. [Shin-Yi]

When the Filipina maid came, I brought her to see my mother-in-law right away. We were living together at that time....

Why did you have to show her to your mother-in-law?

Well, you have to let the mother-in-law know about this. You have to let her understand that you hire a maid to help, not because you want to be a *shau-nai-nai* [young mistress in the house]. My mother-in-law had a misunderstanding like this in the beginning. She would say, wow, someone else has done everything for you; you have no work to do; you have such a great fortune. [Wan-Ru]

Behind the objections of mothers-in-law also resides their fear of being “replaced” by the domestic workers. Pei-Chi and her husband, both in their 40s, own and manage a small company that produces and exports computer chips. The husband’s mother moved from the province to live with them in Taipei and help raise the three grandchildren. Five years ago Pei-Chi and her husband decided to hire a Filipina maid to do household chores so the mother-in-law can lower her workload and focus on childcare. However, Pei-Chi’s mother-in-law expresses no sense of relief but a feeling of anxiety about the employment of the Filipina maid:

The first time the Filipina maid moved in, my mother-in-law was really, really upset. She felt that we had deprived her rights of working....

Why does she think housework is her “right”?

Because she gave birth to seven children. Raising children and doing housework are not only her responsibilities, but also her only achievement. She values herself solely based on that. So in the beginning, she was wondering if we didn’t want her anymore, if we wanted to kick her out, if she still had any “surplus value.” We had to

communicate with her again and again, and finally we decided to save one job for her—cooking [*laughs*] !

Why did Pei-Chi's mother-in-law perceive of housework as her "rights of working" of which the domestic worker might deprives her? The first answer is related to the mother-in-law's self-identity grounded in her past. Because she has been a full-time homemaker throughout her life, domestic labor has been the only domain she has mastered and identified with. She interpreted the employment as holding doubts about her professional skills and diminishing her contribution to the family. The second answer is associated with the mother-in-law's economic and social security in the present. She was worried that Pei-Chi and her husband "didn't want her anymore" and "wanted to kick her out" after her work was transferred to the migrant worker. As mentioned earlier, many grandparents today volunteer to offer unpaid or underpaid childcare and housework in order to secure their bonds to adult children. The social norm of three-generation cohabitation has diminished, and the moral ideal of filial piety can no longer guarantee paybacks from children. Enabled parents thus struggle to present their "surplus value" to the son's family to ease their worries about losing economic and emotional support at frail ages.

Jessica's mother-in-law has also shown anxiety and even hostility toward the Filipina maid since her arrival. Similarly, the mother-in-law feels deprived and threatened by a "professional" domestic worker taking over her territory. Moreover, because the older generations of Taiwanese speak little English, the language barrier further exacerbates the tension between mothers-in-law and Filipina domestic workers. Jessica described her mother-in-law:

She feels lost in her life. Her life has no more goals. All her jobs have been taken away by the Filipina maid, and the maid does even a better job than she did.... To her, everything is out of her control now. And she cannot even control the Filipina maid because she doesn't speak English!

Under such circumstances, although a daughter-in-law is able to reduce physical chores of housework, she takes on additional emotional labor to smooth tensions and anxieties at home. One common strategy adopted by young female employers is to confirm the mother-in-law's authority. For example, they intentionally have their mothers-in-law release wages to the migrant

workers even though the money is actually from the young couple. Women employers also manipulate translations to minimize tensions between mothers-in-law and migrant domestic workers. Jessica's mother-in-law felt so anxious about the employment that she tried to outperform the Filipina worker in housework, especially in cooking, a domestic duty with significant cultural and affective meanings. One day, the mother-in-law made an unusual and complicated dish for the family. Jessica interpreted the message behind this dish making:

I have been married into this family for years, and I never saw her cook that dish! She did this on purpose. It's a performance.

Performance for whom?

For the Filipina maid! She was trying to tell the maid: See, it's not that easy to take over my job. This is my territory. I can do a lot of things you cannot. So don't think that you can replace me.

Jessica then took the opportunity of translating the worker's comments to mitigate the anxieties of her mother-in-law. By exaggerating the worker's compliments of the mother-in-law's cooking skills, she validated a hierarchical distinction between the mother-in-law and the maid:

I tried to sugarcoat the words of the Filipina maid when I translated them. I said, "Mama, the maid said it's delicious. Chinese food becomes like magic at your hands. You can compete with those chefs in five star restaurants!" Then my mother-in-law was happy, and she put more food on the plate of the maid!

Yow-Hwey Hu (1995a) found dramatic historical changes in the suicide rates of Taiwanese women over life course. In 1905, young adult women had a high level of suicide rate due to their shift out of the natal family and into the subordination of daughter-in-law. By contrast, senior women had a relatively low suicide rate, coinciding with the empowered status of mother-in-law at that time. In 1984, the suicide rate for young women significantly dropped while the tendency for a woman to commit a suicide increased over age. The suicidal tendency among elder women is partly explained by the decline of their family status and economic security. They are caught in the transformation of gender relations in Taiwan. In their adulthood, they sacrificed career achievement for the welfare of family with the expectation of enjoying a secure and easy old age.

Nevertheless, after surviving the tough days of being daughters-in-law, they do not succeed to the authority seized by their mothers-in-law in the past. Facing modern daughters-in-law who seek self-realization and autonomy grounded in their economic contribution to the dual-earner household, mothers-in-law feel urged to enhance their status in the family or even struggle to contribute their kin labor in exchange for economic security and social support.

Fictive Kin across Ethnic Boundaries

Migrant domestic workers constitute a potential threat for some mothers-in-law, but these foreign workers may also become the primary caregivers and fictive kin for Taiwanese elders when their adult children subcontract the filial duty across ethnic boundaries. I conducted some interviews in a small town in mid-Taiwan, where most residents make a living by working in farms or factories. It contains an aging population because many younger villagers have left their aging parents to seek advanced education and white-collar jobs in cities. This small town is, however, not untouched by globalization. The advertisements for agencies recruiting foreign caretakers are posted all over mailboxes and telephone poles. In the early morning, Filipina or Indonesian women are seen wheeling Taiwanese elders for a walk along the field; in the afternoon, they hang out in front of the temple, with Taiwanese elders sitting in one circle and migrant women chatting to each other in another.

Amah Lin was born to a poor farming family in 1913. She never attended formal school and got married to a farmer's son at the age of 16. She later discovered her infertility and adopted a daughter and a son. The daughter committed a suicide in her early 30s, and the son got married and resided in Taipei. After her husband died, *Amah* Lin lived on her own until she had a bad fall and became half-paralyzed three years ago. She disliked living in Taipei and did not get along well with her daughter-in-law. After the accident, she lived in a nursing home for a year until her son hired a Filipina caretaker and she moved back to her old house. When I met her, she was 86 years old, frail with a clear mind. While talking about her children in tears, *Amah* Lin pointed at her neighbor who has five sons and said with envy: "She had a good fortune. She has a lot of children."

Agricultural grandmothers, who have accumulated only limited economic resources and rely mostly on children's financial support, are located on the bottom of the elder stratification. *Amah* Chen, the neighbor *Amah* Lin described as "having a good fortune," is actually attended by a Filipina caregiver, too. *Amah* Chen has no major illness except diabetes and arthritis; the latter is a common health problem among Taiwanese seniors who used to do heavy farm work. Her two sons live in concrete apartments only a few blocks away from *Amah* Chen's old brick house. When I asked her why she was not living with her sons, she could barely finish her answer, which was frequently interrupted by weeping:

The house is theirs, not mine. Children today don't like to live with elders anyway. I am dying but not dead yet. This is most painful [*rubbing her knees in tears*]... Every day I cry and cry...I don't want to hire someone, but my son said no, nobody is watching you during the day. I'm a useless person, but only cost them a lot of money [*sighs*]. It's better for me to die soon [*weeping*]....

The feelings of being "useless" and "children's burden" are commonly expressed among poor Taiwanese senior women. Statistic numbers have shown that, among the Taiwanese elderly, windowed women have the least access to social security, the heaviest reliance on children's support, and the strongest preference for three-generation cohabitation. The suicide rate among women aged over 65 in rural areas is the second highest in the national population, only next to old men in rural areas (Hu 1995). When I asked *Amah* Lin what she would do after her Filipina caregiver, Sylvia, finished her contract, she answered me with a flat tone, "Me? I don't know. Maybe it's better for me to just die." Sylvia then patted *Amah*'s shoulder, speaking broken Taiwanese words with a heavy Filipino accent: "No say that!"

Sylvia is a 40-year-old high school graduate and a mother of three. She and her husband used to run a small chicken farm and sell eggs in the village. Driven by financial depression at home and drawn by the success stories of migrant villagers, her husband worked in the Middle East for years until the decline of construction and manufacturing jobs during the after the Gulf war. Sylvia then took her turn to work abroad, first in Malaysia and then in Taiwan, as a domestic worker and caregiver. With a pleasant and patient personality, Sylvia has won a reputation in town for being a great caregiver, tolerant with difficult *Amah Lin*. When we were

talking in the living room, Sylvia frequently went to the kitchen to check on the pork stew on the stove, *Amah* Lin's favorite dish. She explained that the meat had to be cooked for more than three hours until tender because *Amah* Lin has lost most of her teeth. In addition to Chinese cooking, Sylvia has also picked up much Taiwanese vocabulary within a short period. When the street vendors pass by the house hawking their food or wares, she diligently asks *Amah* Lin what the vendor was saying and patiently repeats it a few times to memorize the pronunciations.

Compared to *Amah* Lin's children, who visit her only once or twice a month, Sylvia knows a lot about the personal needs and idiosyncrasies of her client. She provides customized care and hand-on assistance of all kinds. Out of concern for *Amah* Lin, Sylvia complains to me about the irresponsibility of her children in the provision of medical care:

Nobody brings *amah* to see the doctor. She doesn't have medicine! During the night, she cried and shout [*sic*]. She had pain, so I gave her my Filipino medicine. I complained to my employer. They bring her medicine only once a month.

To *Amah* Lin, Sylvia is not merely an employee but close to "fictive kin," which refers to "those who provide care like family and do what family does [and] are given the labor of kin with its attendant affection, rights, and obligations" (Karner 1998: 70). In general, kinship analogy works better when elderly clients and care workers share similar ethnic background and cultural knowledge.⁷ In this case, Sylvia transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries by learning Chinese cooking, studying the local language, and even sharing the medicine she brought across the border.

On the one hand, a fictive kinship relationship improves the quality of care and retrieves personal meanings for both care providers and recipients. On the other hand, when employers place kin expectations onto a care worker, they may confuse the distinction between an employee and a family member and assign an extra amount or content of work beyond the contract agreement. For example, Ms. Lai, a 41-year-old widowed employer, hired a Filipina worker to take care of her ill mother-in-law. After one year, the worker ran away and filed an official

complaint for extra work and long working hours. Ms. Lai, however, considered the workload reasonable because she measured it based on the social expectation placed on a daughter-in-law, forgetting that the agent is a non-family employee:

She complained I gave her too much work. Come on, what work? Housework and cooking? What's the big deal? Didn't I have to do all these things before? Which working woman is not like this? Which daughter-in-law doesn't do all these?

In addition, when being adopted into the family of their care recipients, migrant care workers risk the costs of leaving their own family in their home countries. Tied to the responsibility of taking care of *Amah* Lin, Sylvia had forfeited her annual one-week vacation specified in her contract. During her two years in Taiwan, she had had no chance to visit her three children, who were attended by her mother in the Philippines. Sylvia said with a deep sigh: “my son always says, ‘Mom, when are you coming back to the Philippines?’ I keep saying, ‘maybe next year, maybe.’ I will be two years this June, but they don't want me to take a vacation. Nobody can take care of her if I am not here.”

When migrant mothers sell their reproductive labor in the market to maintain their employers' families, they depend on other people's paid or unpaid reproductive labor to fill the void for their own families. Some husbands quit jobs and become full-time homemakers, and some households hire local domestic workers outside the family. The majority of migrant workers rely on female kin—grandmother, aunts, sisters, or other relatives—to take care of their children.⁸ The services of these caregiver relatives are provided in exchange for a secure flow of monthly remittances from the migrant mothers. In contrast to Taiwanese daughters-in-law who use domestic employment to resist three-generation cohabitation or retrieve distance from their mothers-in-law, migrant women strengthen their extended kin networks to maintain their transnational families while they are serving as others' fictive kin overseas.

Conclusion

This article examines the transformation of intergenerational relations among Taiwanese families in the process of globalization. My analysis demonstrates three types of labor involved in the reproduction of kin ties in the nexus of local cultural practices and global labor forces. The first is “filial kin work,” which I define as care work to maintain intergenerational ties in the patrilineal line. The filial duty of serving aging parents is transferred first from the son to the daughter-in-law (gender transfer) and later outsourced to migrant care workers (market transfer). The second is “kin labor,” which is labor provided by extended kin to sustain their ties to other kin members, such as unpaid domestic labor offered by enabled parents to their adult children. Modern daughters-in-law prefer migrant workers to the kin labor offered by their mothers-in-law in order to safeguard the conjugal family from the intervention of extended kin. The third is “fictive kin,” which describes how non-family migrant workers provide family-like care for their elderly clients in lieu of the filial kin work of adult children.

With the addition of migrant domestic workers, the intergenerational domestic politics turns into a triangular relationship that involves alliance or antagonism among the three women. I have identified four modes of triangular relationship: first, some daughters-in-law hire migrant workers to subcontract the filial duty and develop comradeship with the workers vis-à-vis the authority of the mother-in-law. Second, some daughters-in-law maneuver domestic employment to resist three-generation cohabitation or to minimize the intervention of their mothers-in-law in domestic affairs. The daughter-in-law may become an authoritative figure similar to her mother-in-law, reproducing an oppressive relationship with the migrant worker. Third, daughters-in-law manage to smooth tensions in the daily interactions between mothers-in-law and migrant workers. Finally, mothers-in-law who live apart from their children may develop strong personal ties with their migrant caregivers, who become fictive kin across ethnic and cultural boundaries.

The dominant model of elder care by living with their children in East Asian countries has been praised by policy makers and academic circles as a culture-bound solution to their aging populations (Hu 1995). The romanticized image of three-generation cohabitation obscures intergenerational power struggles and possible misfortunes of elders under privatized care. A

family-based model of elder care also exacerbates class inequalities among the elderly—the poorer they are, the more dependent they are on their children. The recruitment of migrant care workers is only a global means to the privatization of elder care in relatively privileged societies, which outsource elder care to low-cost migrant women who leave their own families to care for others.

To help senior citizens age with independence and dignity, the government should take on elder care as a collective responsibility by providing public pension and subsidizing care service. Social security and health insurance should be offered on a universal basis to remove the stigma of “living on welfare” and to lessen class disparities among the elderly. As the market transfer of elder care is an unavoidable fact, we should recognize the social values of paid care work and improve institutional regulations on the working conditions of migrant workers.⁹ Thereby personal meanings and emotional ties can be achieved in the relationships between care recipients and providers without reproducing a family-like oppression upon these fictive-kin workers.

Notes

1. The monthly wage of a migrant domestic worker is NT\$15,840 (approximately US\$480) in 2001. A local domestic worker or caregiver working on a full-time basis (9 am to 5 pm) is paid from NT\$35,000 to \$45,000 (US\$1061-1363).
2. Taiwan's government has stopped releasing quotas for the employment of domestic helpers, but places no quota restriction on the employment of foreign caretakers. Many households thus applied for caretakers with forged medical documents but in fact assign them household chores or childcare.
3. The research was conducted from July 1998 to July 1999. I accessed Taiwanese employers through snowball referrals and approached Filipina workers through churches and migrant non-government organizations. The interviews, lasting from one to three hours, were all tape-recorded and fully transcribed. All interviews with Taiwanese employers were done in Mandarin or Taiwanese and translated into English by me when quoted. All interviews with Filipina workers were done in English. For more details of research methods and findings, see Lan (2000).
4. All names are pseudonyms. I use Chinese first names for younger employers and follow the local practice of calling senior women employers by the last names of their husbands. I apply English pseudonyms to those who are employed by multinational companies and use an English first name at work.
5. *Amah*, literally meaning "grandmother" in Taiwanese, is a general term used to refer to senior women. It is also what most foreign caregivers call their Taiwanese elder clients.
6. The concept of "kin work" is borrowed from Di Leonardo (1998: 420), who refers in a broader sense to "the conception, maintenance, and ritual celebration of kin ties," including phone calls, presents, cards, and organizing holiday gathering.
7. In another study (Lan 2001), I found that ethnic Chinese households in the San Francisco Bay Area prefer care workers of the same ethnic cultural background, who are considered closer to the ideal of fictive kin. Chinese adult children employ the kinship metaphor to maintain a cultural sense of filial care; home care workers also understand the cultural significance of kinship analogy and accept the job obligation of being the surrogate children of care recipients.
8. According to a survey conducted in the Philippines, 60 percent of married migrant women entrusted their parents to the care of children, 28 percent reported leaving the children with their husbands, 5 percent asked their husbands' parents or family members, and 7 percent hired caretakers outside of the family (Paz Cruz and Paganoni 1989). Parrenas (2001) also draws on the case of Filipina migrant domestic workers to describe the multi-tier transfers of reproductive labor across borders across national and class divides.

9. A growing body of literature has paid attention to the social organization and policy implication of care work, see, for example, the collections edited by Emily and Nelson (1990) and Meyer (2000).

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• Women migrate as much as men. Migration data must be disaggregated by sex and age, and migration policies must take account of how gender shapes different migrants' needs. • Migration can increase women's access to education and economic resources, and can improve their autonomy and status. • Female migrants and refugees are at greater risk of exploitation and abuse, including trafficking. • Highly skilled women have high rates of migration but many are employed in low-skilled jobs. • Most migrant domestic workers are women and adolescent girls. • Migration creates empowerment trade-offs for individual women and girls, and between different groups of women and girls. From school closures to domestic violence, Asian women are bearing the brunt of the social disruption. • As well as the health battle, the social impact of the virus is significant and across Asia, it is women who are being disproportionately affected. "Crisis always exacerbates gender inequality," says Maria Holtsberg, humanitarian and disaster risk advisor at UN Women Asia and Pacific. Here are five ways that women in Asia are bearing the brunt of the upheaval. • "Migrant workers who stay home on off days because they can't go out are still working," says Ms Sringatin. "They will cook for their employers, babysit or care for the employers' parents, without compensation. Those who insisted on taking a day off were threatened with being dismissed." • "Migrant Women's Bodies as Boundary Markers: Reproductive Crisis and Sexual Control in the New Ethnic Frontiers of Taiwan." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 33(4): 833-861. • "New Global Politics of Reproductive Labor: Gendered Labor and Marriage Migration." Sociology Compass 2(6): 1801-1815. • "Global Cinderellas: Sexuality, Power and Situational Practices across Borders." Pp.1-30 in East Asian Sexualities: Modernities, Gender and New Sexual Cultures, edited by Stevi Jackson, Liu Jieyu and Woo Juhyun. London: Zed Books. • "Among Women: Filipina Domestic Workers and their Taiwanese Employers across Generations." The women's movement, however, with its emphasis on the situation of women, caused some to question the near-invisibility of women as migrants, their presumed passivity in the migration process, and their assumed place in the home. ...the interests of men and women in families do not always coincide and may affect...who manages to migrate. Research in the 1970s and the 1980s began to include women, but did not cause a dramatic shift in thinking about who migrated, how immigration was explained, or the likely consequences. One of the central questions about women during this period was whether their roles in global migration flows and national labour markets, as explained in the existing literature, are examined, followed by case comparison of Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Lebanon and Jordan. Discover the world's research. 17+ million members. • and more, it is women who have been leaving their homelands to toil in sweatshops, as sex workers, as "mail-order" brides and in private households as domestic workers. Modern-day domestics come from a wider array of labour-exporting areas and taken. • European countries have opened their doors to migrant domestic workers via the au. pair system (Britain, Ireland) and others have essentially ignored the need for them. (the Netherlands, Scandinavia) (Lutz, 2008), Mediterranean countries have opted for.

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Chiang, L.H.N., & Kuo, L. (2000). Migrant women are the primary source of paid domestic labor around the world. Since the 1980s, the newly prosperous countries of East Asia have recruited foreign...
Pei-Chia Lan interviewed and spent time with dozens of Filipina and Indonesian domestics working in and around Taipei as well as many of their Taiwanese employers. On the basis of the vivid ethnographic detail she collected, Lan provides a nuanced look at how boundaries between worker and employer are maintained and negotiated in private households. She also sheds light on the fate of the workers, "global Cinderellas" who seek an escape from poverty at home only to find themselves treated as disposable labor abroad. Many migrant domestic workers in Singapore face abysmally long working hours, no weekly rest days, and low wages, areas neglected by Singapore's laws and addressed primarily through non-binding information guides. In many cases, migrant domestic workers in Singapore work thirteen to nineteen hours a day, seven days a week, and are restricted from leaving the workplace. They typically earn less than half the pay that workers earn in similar occupations in Singapore-such as gardening and cleaning-and are forced to relinquish the first four to ten months of their salaries to repay employment

Migrant women are the primary source of paid domestic labor around the world. Since the 1980s, the newly prosperous countries of East Asia have recruited foreign household workers at a rapidly increasing rate. Many come from the Philippines and Indonesia. Pei-Chia Lan interviewed and spent time with dozens of Filipina and Indonesian domestics working in and around Taipei as well as many of their Taiwanese employers. On the basis of the vivid ethnographic detail she collected, Lan provides a nuanced look at how boundaries between worker and employer are maintained and negotiated in private households. She also sheds light on the fate of the workers, "global Cinderellas" who seek an escape from poverty at home only to find themselves treated as disposable labor abroad. Many migrant domestic workers in Singapore face abysmally long working hours, no weekly rest days, and low wages, areas neglected by Singapore's laws and addressed primarily through non-binding information guides. In many cases, migrant domestic workers in Singapore work thirteen to nineteen hours a day, seven days a week, and are restricted from leaving the workplace. They typically earn less than half the pay that workers earn in similar occupations in Singapore—such as gardening and cleaning—and are forced to relinquish the first four to ten months of their salaries to repay employment. Migrant women are the primary source of paid domestic labor around the world. Since the 1980s, the newly prosperous countries of East Asia have recruited foreign household workers at a rapidly increasing rate. Many come from the Philippines and Indonesia. The employers are eager to flex their recently acquired financial muscle; many are first-generation career women as well as first-generation employers. The domestics are recruited from abroad as contract and "guest" workers; restrictive immigration policies prohibit them from seeking permanent residence or transferring from one employer to another. They care for Taiwanese families' children, often having left their own behind. Migrant Domestic Workers Across the World: global and regional estimates. Based on the ILO report on "Global estimates on migrant workers", 2015. By Maria Gallotti, ILO Labour Migration Branch. While migrants (mostly women) represent the vast majority (82 per cent) of domestic workers overall. This is the highest percentage amongst all the broad subregions, showing a direct link between female migration and domestic work in this region. Migrant domestic workers are international migrants who are engaged in their main job as domestic workers in households. They also include migrant domestic workers who are currently unemployed, as well as those who may be engaged in more than one household as an employee or own-account worker.

Migrant domestic workers are, according to the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 189 and the International Organization for Migration, any persons "moving to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospect for themselves or their family," engaged in a work relationship performing "in or for a household or households." Domestic work itself can cover a "wide range of tasks and services that vary from country to country and that can be These multi-tiered flows of global migration have displayed inequalities among women in the South. In the power relations between them, women employers in Taiwan and migrant domestic workers are both bargaining with patriarchies in their own ways. The author demonstrates that the growth of global migration has not weakened the sovereignty of nation-states. Migrant workers are marginalized in the process by a series of legal and political regulations based on the idea of citizenship. The class identity of both migrant domestic workers and employers are shaped by the circumstances of transnational class stratification. 33Across. View Third Party Cookies. Name. cookie name. REPLACE-WITH-DYANMIC-VENDOR-ID. 33Across. 3 Purposes. View Privacy Notice. Taiwanese women employers redefine their domestic. roles as household managers, but struggle with the deep anxieties. 92. tween migrant women workers and their employers. However, the. institutions of both immigration and the labor system support this. affiliated NGO personnel across Taiwan. We conducted fieldwork, using methods of participant obser-. vation and doing in-depth interviews, between September 2006 and. Women migrant workers were less affected by job losses, but the crisis exposed their vulnerability to discrimination, exploitation and abuse. The focus is on those developing countries in Asia where field studies, including focus group discussions with women workers, provided unique data on the. Women and labour markets in Asia | vii.