

Personal Geography, Floating Identities and Inter-Asian Migration in Stories by Migrant Workers in Taiwan

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Abstract:

In her article "Personal Geography, floating Identities and Inter-Asian Migration in Stories by Migrant Workers in Taiwan," I-Chun Wang discusses narratives by migrant workers with the purpose of looking into their personal geographies, their possibilities of integration, their floating identities and their dreams of settlement and possible success. This paper stresses the stories of migration show not only common human values, shared across cultures and creolization, but also sad stories of human-rights violations, injustices, discrimination, and even human trafficking. In these fictional stories or witness literature, cross-cultural conflicts, cultural in-betweenness and cultural hybridity are intertwined with the migrants' ways to map their own personal geographies.

Keywords: Migrant workers, Personal Geography, Floating Identities, Inter-Asian Migration, diaspora

I-Chun WANG

Title: Personal Geography, Floating Identities, Inter-Asian Migration, Stories by Migrant Workers in Taiwan

The One Asia Foundation conducts activities and provides research, networking and educational opportunities to teachers and university students, future citizens who can create new ways of peaceful co-existence in the world. Among the topics explored under the One Asia programs is that of migration, as such displacements may be the source of cultural conflicts.

Human migration refers to the movement of people from one place to another. Geographically, migration may refer to internal movements as well as border crossing. In terms of process, it may involve planned relocation, forced displacement and subsequent settlement away from home. As Swiss Confederation State Secretariat reports, the pull factors of migration include higher employment, more wealth, better services, good climate,

safer and less crime environment, political stability, lower risk from natural hazards, and political problems, etc. ("Reasons for migration", 31 August 2017). Migration and displacement are oftentimes intertwined. The concepts of these two words involve not merely traumatic experiences and diaspora, but also the motivations for the migrants to leave their countries of origin as well as the possible supporting mechanism that could help the migrants to integrate into new communities and cultural systems. With the rapid increase of migrant workers, cross-cultural marriage, and the change of economic relations in Asia, inter-Asia cultural studies has been an important topic for research in the past two decades.

Anthony Giddens in his influential book *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives* (2002) refers to our contemporary world as one undergoing transformations. As he suggests, globalization in terms of crossing borders concerns various systems and tremendously influence in "the very texture of our lives". Such influences include the relationship between people as well as the configuration of spaces where people live in (11-15), and the issues as related to increasing pressures caused by migration, imbalance of domestic and care responsibilities, as well as intergenerational relations for various kinds of migration (Cangiano 1-16). In the ageing societies in Asia countries when the societies have more aged seniors, more families are taking in more migrant workers for the "frail aged" (Lai 1). On-Kwok Lai questions, in the home countries of these workers, who takes care of their aged parents? By Mobile phone? Which gender is the mostly involved with health care? (10-12). Due to the fact that elderly population rapidly increases, the demand of domestic workers from foreign countries has been an important issue. Among the migrants, female migrant workers are especially vulnerable because when they leave home, they leave behind their families, earning limited wages.

To secure the human right of migrant workers in this rapid changing society, the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) was established in 2013 for the purpose of protecting the right of the domestic workers. As Susan Forbes Martin in *Women, Migration and Conflict: Breaking a Deadly Circle*, contends that women who are forced to flee from conflicts present many challenges to the international community, because a number of them during flight had fallen into the hands of border guards, gangs or sexual exploiters (1). It has now 59 affiliates located in 47 countries, including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, South Korea etc. Migrant Forum in Asia has also launched a network of support for migrant workers in domestic sphere.

Within the past twenty years, rapid changes in economic and political factors have generated various transformations in Asia. China has emerged as one of the giants in world trades, and South Korea has become the fourth largest economy in Asia. Due to the change of labor markets, inter-Asian migration has involved 75 million people in 2015, according to 2015 "International Migration Report" by the United Nations (goo.gl/1cvu7q). Among them, foreign workers on the Chinese Mainland reached to 240.000, excluding those from Hong Kong and Macau (Durmin, BBC July 18, 2017). Jojje Olsson's factual report highlights even more regional migration trends when he provides the figure of 900.000 foreign workers in China (August 11, 2017).

The flow of migration from Asian countries looking for jobs in Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong increases every year. The numbers of migrant workers have respectively reached 603.000, 1305.000, and 330.000 in 2016 (Work Force Development Agency, 200 "Foreign Workers in Productive Industries and Social Welfare by Nationality," 200, Dec. 12, 2017; Miquiabas, March 31, 2015). The ratio of women has been significantly higher. These female migrants serve as domestic helpers and try to improve the economic situations of their families in their home countries. Their cross-cultural experiences have received the attention of researchers and social workers, not merely in their ways to mediate the cultural obstacles and confront their diaspora, but also in the issues that highlight their emotional attachments and love relations during their stays, as well as their situations of distress.

Although a few of settlers find stable jobs, records show that there are illegal workers and those who find it hard to fit in their surroundings. In Taiwan, illegal workers reached the figure of fifty thousand in 2017; that is, one out of twelve migrant workers turn out to be the so-called runaway workers. In Singapore, 3000 foreigners were tracked working illegally between 2014 and August 2016 ("Number of foreigners caught working illegally in Singapore going down" 10 Oct 2016)

Japan, with one of the largest ageing populations in Asia, has been confronted with an increasing labor shortage. According to the International Labor Organization, one in every four migrant workers in Asia may have an illegal status (Castles and Miller, "Migration in the Asia-Pacific region," 2009). Even though Japan has raised the number of immigration permits and the import of foreign labors from South Asian countries and China, illegal workers continue to increase.

Although the experiences of legal and illegal migrant workers exhibit their dreams and fears, they share legal problems as related to their identities and job contents as well as lack of facilities to accommodate and culturally integrate them. This is shown in many of their testimonies. In the past twenty years, writings by and about migrant workers have constituted a literary trend in Taiwan. The first generation of works on the topic of migrant workers were mostly written by Taiwanese writers, based on interviews or reports which were then adapted into stories. This is the case of Yuling Gu's (顧玉玲) *Wo Men: Yi Dong Yu Lao Dong de Sheng Ming Ji Shi* (The Life Narrative of the Migrant Workers [我們: 移動與勞動的生命記事]) and Liu-pei Wu's (吳柳蓓) *Yi Dong de Qun Bai* (The Moving Skirts [移動的裙襬]). These two books were respectively published in 2008 and 2010, when importation of migrant workers became a phenomenon in Taiwan.

The Taiwan Literature Award for Migrants was launched particularly for migrants and immigrants in Taiwan in 2014. Until 2016, more than thirty writers were awarded. In present-day Taiwan, there are many migrant workers who settle in the country, constituting over one million people. A large work force are South Asian migrant workers, who have provided the major workforce for Taiwan's construction and manufacturing industries, as well as household care and domestic nursing. Many female workers have become the mothers of young Taiwanese, and without doubt, the cultural and living experiences of these migrants have enriched Taiwan's cultures.

Life writings and fiction by migrant workers have also become an inseparable part of Taiwan (Editorial Office, *NPOst*, Dec 8, 2014). This paper discusses some of the migrant workers's narratives with the purpose of looking into their personal geographies, their possibilities of integration, their floating identities and their dreams of settlement and possible success. Although their diasporic experiences connote their yearning for home, each of them reveals the flows of economic, political and social across one of the most populous areas in the continent. Their experiences of migration, thematized in Taiwanese literature, reveal a shared global phenomenon, but also the flow of capital, communication, services along with mobility of population (Van Arsdol 11). Their stories of migration show not only common human values, shared across cultures, but also sad stories of human-rights violations, injustices, discrimination, and even human trafficking.

Diaspora and creolization are two major motifs in the narratives written by and about migrant workers. In them, cross-cultural conflicts, cultural in-betweenness and cultural hybridity are intertwined with the migrants' ways to map their own personal geographies. Diaspora refers to the people who settled far from their ancestral homelands, and they tend to miss their family and attach to their cultural heritage after having migrated to another place. The diasporic experience involved in interregional connections still reveals that it is difficult for migrant workers to fit into the new environment (Amrith 2-5). Creolization, however, refers to the process of "fusion" when transculturation develops during settlement (Hall 186). Migrant workers tend to develop skills or take pains to get recognized in the new environment, enlarging their capacities of personal geographies. The stories selected for

discussion are examples of diasporic experiences, conflicts as well as friendship which attract much attention by quite a few Taiwanese communities on the bases that migrant workers may have provided valid suggestions for governmental policies.

In some of the best stories, the transcultural experiences of migrants engage their memories and perceptions embedded within philosophical underpinnings that unveil their voices and double visions which incorporate Taiwanese culture as well as their home cultures. The First Prize of the Taiwan 2016 Literature Award was given to Justto Lasoo, a migrant worker from Indonesia, for his short story "Hai Lang Zhi Ge" ("Song of the waves" [海浪之歌]). It tells the story of a young man called Yadi who works on a fishing boat. Yadi's father was also a fisherman, but one day he went fishing and never came back. Struggling with his family economic situation, Yadi joined a small fishing company and started to support his family with very limited wages. First Yadi finds difficult to tolerate the abuses of the captain of the boat, Liu, a man of hot temper. Gradually they develop a father-son relationship. Yadi learns that Liu's son was imprisoned for drugs and his wife was paralyzed with a stroke, and the captain tells him that his companionship has helped him to look into the future with hope. The story concludes with Yadi hospitalized in a comma, later waking to find that Liu has arranged Yadi's family to visit him (30).

Writer Justto Lasoo served as a clerk in his home country and was once the owner of a chicken farm. Due to the chicken flu, he became bankrupt and came to Taiwan as a migrant worker and a part-time writer. In the short story, his main character projects his own memories and experiences from the past onto this story where the ocean figures prominently. Taiwan appears as an unfriendly place where Yadi feels he does not belong. Yadi's mental map focuses on the ocean as a place of tragedy (based on the experience of his father's death). However, his father-son relationship with Liu allows Yadi to eventually realize that the ocean is part of nature (30).

Similar to Lasoo, Rahayu Wulansari, the author of "Yi Wan Hong Dan Zhu de Si Nian" ("Missing about A Bowl of Red Round Marbles" [一碗紅彈珠的思念]) as well as Umirah Ramata (pen name Kha Alme), the author of "Yi Wang Yu Hui Yi" (The Forgotten and Memories [遺忘與回憶]) both write about faithful migrant workers and their lives as domestic workers in Taiwan. Both writers chose writing as a hobby, and their stories deal with personal experiences and problems of local Taiwanese communities where ageing has changed the status of the elderly and the patterns of migrant workers. The community in "Missing about a Bowl of Red Round Rice Balls" is a neglected space where an elderly lady seeks warmth from an unknown stranger and later her caretaker. She gives her domestic help the name of Mei-Mei. With the occasion of the Winter Solstice Festival, Mei-Mei buys a lot of rice flour and the old lady is busy preparing the red-colored rice balls for the visit of her son and daughter. Unfortunately, the both have excuses not to visit her, and the old lady brings the rice balls to people who work in a nearby temple. The old lady and her domestic help exchange confidences while looking at family pictures. The narrator Mei-Mei realizes the sense of loneliness of the old woman and thinks about how she projects her motherly love elsewhere by offering food to a stranger who has a job nearby the temple.

Kha Alme's story, "The Forgotten and Memories," written by Kha Alme has an intertwining structure in which a local councilor and a migrant nurse express their perspectives. To the young nurse, her employer provides only a very limited wage that hardly allows her to maintain her eighty-five-year-old mother (n/p). She learns e-commerce skills and starts her own small business, neglecting her nursing duties and living the old woman alone. Like Rahayu Wulansari's story, Kha Alme's focuses not just on the topic of migrant workers but also on the problems of an ageing society in Taiwan.

Many migrant writers choose to set their stories in such domestic settings and in an atmosphere of psychological coercion and geographical isolation, using village scenes for instance. However, although Taiwan is known for its scenic attractions, but in their writings, the natural landscape is rarely seen. Their realistic stories revolve around the realm of their

work, including production plants, fishing boats, quarries, construction spaces and various kinds of farms. News reporters sometimes catch the images of migrant workers with the elderly in parks, or idealized images of migrant workers who sacrifice their time and personal liberty in order to find financial security for their families at home. Such reports rarely penetrate into the psychological and social status behind cultural disparities, debts and adverse experiences. In the short stories by and about migrant workers, descriptions about bed-ridden and disabled patients exhibit the difficulties that migrant workers encounter.

Etty Diallova's "Hong Se" (Red Color [紅色]) is one of the most shocking stories about young migrant workers in an unfamiliar environment, overcome with emotional exhaustion and physical pain, to the point of endangering their lives and those of other people. The narrator is a young woman called Lili who has a disabled husband and a young daughter. Although her husband's legs are amputated and he needs constant care, Lili's financial needs push her away from her family to take care of an old man, a veteran who is still capable of moving around. The young narrator unexpectedly falls into love with the old man she calls "Yeh," meaning grandpa. Yeh is humorous and a socially experienced man who knows how to capture a young woman in need of warmth and endearment. The first part of the story is a process of seduction for which the narrator is obviously unprepared. Their life together is happy, and she feels a member of the family. She learns Chinese with his help and their companionship gives way to emotional attachment on her part. Monetary assistance is provided to alleviate Lili's economic problems as well as her loneliness and nostalgia. "Beautiful Lily" as he calls her, finds herself pregnant, with a sense of committing unforgettable sins. Eventually she collapses in the blood of a forced abortion: "I cried. I found myself filthy, for money and living...the outsiders only knew migrant workers are better paid here and they saw our beautiful and happy smiles...without knowing that the dark part of the things exist in the paths we have chosen for ourselves" (197)

Migrants' stories, like other literary genres, are shaped by social worlds produced through human relations, political and economic circumstances, as well as physical environments and cultural factors. These real inputs mix with the writer's dreams and hopes, carrying meanings to various levels. Stories by and about migrant workers help us understand their personal predicaments, having to do with their shifting and floating identities, as they settle into a new culture, as well as their relationships and responses to the new environment, including situations of exclusion, discrimination and labor exploitation. This is the case of Tania Roo's "Lai Zi Zha Lan Hou De Si Nian Xin" (A Letter from behind the Bars [來自鐵柵欄後的思念信]), the story of a female social worker whose obligation is to help imprisoned migrants. At Taipei Prison, the narrator visits Wasto who had once served in a fishing boat but is now serving a twenty year prison sentence for murder, while his family are trying to detect his whereabouts. Wasto reveals that during the last six years of imprisonment he has been hiding and concealing his identity because of the shame he created unto his family name. He dared not write a letter to his mother and wife to request forgiveness. The social worker also learns the story behind Wasto's murder case, and his unjust imprisonment (168-169). At the end of the story, Wasto requests the narrator to send out a letter to his mother and wife. The story reveals very deep conflicts, not just between the self and the other, but also the difficulties of social relations, identity formation, how material issues impact people's lives, and obscure topics such as the abuse of migrant workers. "A Letter from behind the Bars" is a local tale with global vision, in which a young fisherman together with the other several fishermen accidentally kill the captain of a fishing boat. Like the other stories about migrant workers in fisheries, this story involves transnational cultural conflicts and the pressures related to illegal border entries. Ironically, in the absence of their families, migrants are easily led astray, and commit crimes.

It is notorious that forced labor and human trafficking in the fisheries sector has been a severe problem throughout the whole world. This has been recognized by the International Labor Organization, which has stated that "Migrant workers in particular are vulnerable to being deceived and coerced by brokers and recruitment agencies and forced to work on board vessels under the threat of force or by means of debt bondage....Lack of training, inadequate language skills, and lack of enforcement of safety and labor standards make these fishers particularly vulnerable to forced labor and human trafficking." ("Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking in Fisheries," International Labour Organization)

Many of the stories by migrants stage such problems. For example, in "Lai Zi Zha Lan Hou De Si Nian Xin" ("Letters from behind the Bars" [來自鐵柵欄後的思念信]) the character Watso suggests that whenever the catch is not satisfactory, the captain gets more tensed and the wage of the fishermen tends to be lower than the legal minimum wage (165). The author Tania Roos visited six fishermen in jail for her story during the time when she served as a news reporter of *Radar Taiwan*, and her story "A Letter from behind the Bars" is based on real stories that show the social inequalities and labor migration under economic capitalism.

In "Dai Bu Ji" (Assistive Mobility Device, [代步機]), author Riris Sirius portrays a young woman called Lily who is psychologically unprepared for her job as a domestic caretaker, first to a poor couple who maintain a farm, and later to a middle-aged woman who lost both her legs in a car accident. Lily cannot tolerate her mistress's complaints and nor endure the indifference of the teenage daughter toward her mother's situation. But most of all, she feels nauseated every time she has to massage her mistress. In a frantic situation, she accidentally throws her mistress's daughter against a wall (149-150). In this story, it is difficult to trace if acculturation is the cause of her mental distress, or her stress reflects her economic hardship, overworked situation and lack of a supportive social network. Thus, "A Letter from behind the Bars" and "Assistive Mobility Device" not only reflect the social, emotional and psychological tensions of migrant workers, but also represent their limited personal geography which does not provide an outlet to their problems.

Sansha Wu's "Wu Ti" (Without a Title [無題]), is a story collected in the collection of 2016 awarded stories. It tells the story of a drug addict who has been imprisoned. This story starts with episodes that narrate his previous life of good jobs, high salaries and tedious life style; a numbing and exhausting work routines that gradually draw him away from his rational interpretation of life, being easily introduced to drugs by his local friends (191). This situation changes when he receives the information of his father's death in Thailand. It is a self-narrative of confession where the flow of myriad emotions that inform his remorse and painful memories of his wanton past are shared with readers. This story examines the relationship of a migrant worker who lacks of psychological support and stable friendship in his working community and gets involved with men of drug peddling. When his loneliness is replaced by drowsiness, it is already too late for him to identify his capacity for a healthy life.

Migration, as a movement between places, results in various forms of diasporas, but in this globalized world more and more people are experiencing different forms of transnational and ideological formations, both territorial and the deterritorialized (Jackson, Crang and Dwyer 2-5). Many of the stories by migrant workers presented in this paper show their fragmented and floating identities. Because of their cultural differences and their need of financial support, many migrants become marginalized others. When they resist violence and abuse from the targeted center, they learn to be submissive or become rioted in high tension.

International Organization for Migration also reports domestic run-away cases, sometimes involving exploitation and slave-like work conditions, lacking of food or suffering from physical or sexual abuse (31). Yuling Gu (顧玉玲), for instance, describes cases of

young migrant women who are forced into early marriage and eventually run away from their husbands. Other cases involve young maids incited by some false information about easy money and fall into unpredictable fates (1-5). The financial problems that migrant workers face are very important. IN Hong Kong, brokers charge employers for service fees. In Taiwan, service fees are charged not just to the employers but also to the migrant workers, even if most of them have financial problems. This has become an issue for debate in the past several years. To renew contracts of employment, migrant workers still need to return to their home countries in order to apply for a re-entry. Although Taiwan's Legislative Yuan passed an amendment to the Employment Service Act on April 10, 2017, that "migrants can now be rehired without having to leave Taiwan. Brokers were previously allowed to charge up to NT\$1,800 per month in the first contract year, up to NT\$1,700 per month in the second year and up to NT\$1,500 per month in the third" ("Brokers' service fees reduced for migrant workers" April 10, 2017), monthly brokerage service fee during the extension of application remains a questionable rule to migrant workers. Yet, most brokers refer the service fees as necessary expenses for processing translation and hiring someone to accompany the workers for health check.

Besides familiarizing themselves with the environment, female migrant workers need to resist temptations that lurk behind many dark corners. For example, "Win" is an interesting short story by a migrant worker Keyzia Chan, focusing on human trafficking. It tells the story of a foreign migrant worker named Win who was hired to take care of an old paralyzed woman from a middle-class family. Her grandson is particularly fond of Win, and promised to marry her after his graduation from college. However, the frantic mistress of this family took a lover and smothered the old woman, the mistress's mother-in-law. Win became trapped in an ambiguous situation; being afraid that she would be involved with the case of murder, she ran away. Without money, she requested help from a couple she met. They took her in but eventually she was sold into prostitution. Confined in small rooms where she had to wear cosmetics and short skirts to please men. At the very end of the story, however, she was traced by the young man of the employer's family and eventually the human trafficking gang was captured. The young man rescued Win and the other victims who shared similar experiences, enslaved by human traffickers. The narrator starts her self-narration, "Black is black and white is white. In my world, there is not a grey area. Want to fight? Bang!"(249).

This short story by Keyzia Chan may not be a real story but the personal experience of the female protagonist reflects quite a few cases reported in local presses. The core issue of human trafficking is not limited to foreign workers. Where there is migration, there is always human trafficking. In her studies on prostitution of the Nanshan District in China, Min Liu found that women who do not tolerate slavery-like work environments in factories, or when they are surrounded by poverty and illness in their family, they might fall into the pits of prostitution (151). Liu's research found that six out of forty were trafficking victims (ix). The book edited by Trude Jacobsen, *Sex Trafficking in Southeast Asia: A History of Desire, Duty, and Debt*, also refers to trafficking as one of the most extreme forms of violation of human rights. The most horrible form of trafficking is sex trafficking, which uses coercion, abduction, deception or force for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Humanitarian intervention and governmental force are the only way to fight this modern form of slavery (1-3).

Keyzia Chan's short story reminds of Patricia McCormick's famous short novel *Sold*, published in 2006 and adapted into a film in 2014 by Oscar-winning director Jeffrey D. Brown. McCormick's story is about a thirteen-year-old girl Lakshmi who enjoys her simple life growing cucumbers. She is supposed to be sent to work as maid in a wealthy family known as the Happy House; but the truth is that her stepfather has sold her into prostitution during the season of famine. There she learns what the Happy House is, where the girls wore heavy silver bangles and colorful dresses. Eventually Lakshmi meets an American man who is collecting evidence and successfully prosecutes the evil doers (258).

While Lakshmi migrates from Nepal to India, Win migrates from Indonesia to Taiwan. Both two stories reveal their map making with pain and suffrage as well as threats and evilness embedded in dark corners. Without giving hope, they both develop their psychological journeys in their painful personal geographies which only they themselves can understand.

"Ta Xiang Zhi Meng" (Dreams of Home [他鄉之夢]) won the first place award of 2016 Taiwan Literature Award for Migrants. The author intermingles her own experiences and the stories of the other migrant workers who married Taiwanese men. Cao Xiang Mang (pen name) tells about a young migrant woman in Taiwan in the hope of assisting her family's financial problems. Out of need, she marries without love. The story reminds of the microcosm of migrant women as foreign bride, yearning to develop bonding with their husbands (22-27). For quite a few years, migrant brides or mail-order brides were a phenomenon in Taiwan. Lacking of cultural recognition, these foreign brides tried hard to cope with the generalized idea that they were their husbands' merchandise. The mobilization and daily struggle remains a problem.

Other tales such as "Zhu Yu Long Zhou" (Chu and Dragon Boat [珠與龍舟]), "Yu de Qi Wei" (Smell of the Rain [雨的氣味]), or "The Forgotten and Memory" (遺忘與回憶) etc., are stories of success, and depict positive human relations and personal geographies that migrants courageously build in foreign lands. For example, Chu Tien-hsin (朱天心) compares the life experience of migrant workers to the mirrors which reflect the communities of our own (6). She describes the migrant worker Ah Mei who looks after her grandfather and his grand mansion after his death. The mansion is enlightened when Ah Mei takes care of the garden and the chickens, creating a homely atmosphere, treating her friends to coffee and sharing cross-cultural experiences.

However, most of the stories show the distress and vulnerability of migrants. Their cultural conflicts, floating identities and diasporic feelings are represented as 'lived spaces' by means of chartered displacements, where human conflict is always at the center. Conflicts originated in war, death and migration encompass not just physical suffering but also psychological traumas. Many cultural differences are the consequence of a lack of trust in habits, belief systems and ways of life which are alien to us. In migration, a clash of cultural views frequently occurs for both sides, the migrant and the receiving territory. Conflicts take even more forms, and in their personal narratives, each migrant mentioned in this paper is willingly or unwillingly drawing a tentative personal geography.

The examination of these stories can help unveil the needs regarding the problems of migrant workers in Asia. According to the report of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "in 2020, 48% of the world's people aged 80+ will reside in Asia, as compared to the present 39%" (Chan 8). This figure indeed highlights the difficulties of health care and the demand of migrant workers. In Taiwan alone, the number of migrant workers has reached six hundred thousand. Governments continue to focus on cases of illegality, where migrant use counterfeit documents. But there are many other problems that need to be taken care of. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations (OHCHR) has indicated that international borders are not zones of exclusion, and that the human rights of all persons "must be respected in the pursuit of border control, law enforcement and other State objectives, regardless of which authorities perform border governance measures and where such measures take place." ("Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights at International Borders". Indeed, Asian countries need to work together to develop and implement policies that benefit each other. The stories written by migrant workers, such as the ones discussed in this paper, can help to understand their needs as well as identity development and encourage actions by governments and institutions to solve their problems.

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