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The Globalization of Householding and Social Reproduction in Pacific Asia

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The Globalization of Householding and Social Reproduction in Pacific Asia

This article focuses on the missing dimension of global studies, the household, in the context of developments in Pacific (East and Southeast) Asia over the past two decades. In this world region, householding—the processes of forming and sustaining households—has been “going global,” not only to seize new opportunities for advancement but equally to compensate for growing crises in householding within the nation-state. Global householding is only partially motivated by and manifested in work and income opportunities, as it encompasses issues of marriages; bearing, raising, and educating children; and caring for the elderly. From a societal level, global householding responds to collapsing population growth below replacement, severe labor shortages, rising dependency ratios, welfare systems going broke, and rapidly aging societies. However, popular attitudes and immigration policies are often inimical to global householding, and tensions with national identity bundled with ethnicity are generating important social and political issues in the region.

KEYWORDS: GLOBALIZATION · HOUSEHOLD · INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION · INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE · INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION · FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS · RETIREMENT MIGRATION

It is remarkable that there has been only limited work on the social dimensions of migration in Asia, and an even greater neglect of the family as a unit of analysis. (Huang et al. 2003, 1)

Research on the global movements of people continues to view it as part of the transnational labor process that is composed of individual decision makers—frequently viewed as members of ethnic “diasporas”—who migrate for work and income. Although migrants send tremendous amounts of money to their households back home, and these households in turn provide many types of support to migrants, the household remains far in the background rather than in the foreground as the principal social institution that is both motive and nexus of support for migrants moving between countries. The following discussion is directed toward bringing this missing dimension of globalization, the household, into the center of analysis of recent trends in transnational migration and social interaction in Pacific (East and Southeast) Asia. Over the past two decades, householding—the processes of forming and sustaining households—has been “going global,” not only to seize new opportunities for advancement, but equally to compensate for growing crises in householding within the nation-state.

“Household” is understood as a basic social institution within which interpersonal relations are linked and revolve around income-pooling, labor divisions, and status and duties that comprise various degrees of privileged access to decision making and household resources among its members.¹ The household is a basic unit of every society, and the foundation of the world economy.² The term “householding” is used to convey the understanding that creating and sustaining a household is an ongoing, dynamic social process that covers all lifecycle stages and extends beyond the family. As a basic unit of social reproduction, the household is a principal locus of social relations not only for the physical reproduction of human life but also for the material and psychological well-being and sociocultural mores of its members.³ At the societal level households act to absorb the consequences of economic turbulences stemming from the globalization of local economies (Smith et al. 1984).

By extension, global householding is viewed as the interactive process of forming and sustaining the household through global transactions. From a global household perspective, transnational population movement is only partially motivated by and manifested in work and income opportunities. Marriage, bearing, raising and educating children, and caring for the el-

derly are among the new motives for transnational movements and linkages among people, and all are integral to householding. From a societal level, global householding is also a response to collapsing population growth below replacement, severe labor shortages, rising dependency ratios, welfare systems going broke, and rapidly aging societies.

In all of its dimensions, global householding, not labor migration *per se*, represents the singularly most important transformative process in Pacific Asia. This is so for at least three reasons. First, when treated as low-wage labor, transnational migrants in this region typically have visas limited to short-term stays of a few years, and they are never afforded opportunities to become either permanent residents or citizens. Second, they are also often forbidden to marry or have children in the host country; families cannot accompany them. Global householding through, for example, crossborder marriage has a quite different outcome that includes long-term residency and possibilities of citizenship. Third, in bearing children they also contribute to intergenerational multicultural linkages within and among societies in the region and beyond.

Although it has been marginal in migration research, the household has not been neglected totally. Over the past decade a loose research paradigm on the “transnational family” has emerged that captures many dimensions of household analysis (Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Pries 1999; Levitt 2001; Jolly 2003; Guarnizo 2003; Levitt et al. 2003; Morawska 2003; Yeoh and Willis 2004; Constable 2005; UNFPA 2006). With the family viewed as an arena of social regulation of individual behavior, transnational family research shows how becoming transnational encounters many new relationships, including identities, that span more than one society and nation-state (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Appadurai 1996; Wilson and Donnan 1998). Intrafamily contestations over roles and power also constitute one of the major themes of transnational family research, adding the important understanding that the family is not a black box but instead has power relations and differential distribution of its resources among its members (UNFPA 2006; Bacas 2006).

The rubric of the transnational family—and “transnational” migration rather than international migration—has become a large umbrella for disparate studies rather than a consistent framework or paradigm for research. What constitutes “family” or “transnational,” for example, has diverse, frequently ambiguous meanings.⁴ Somewhat paradoxically, “family” itself often fades into the background of many transnational family studies, which tend to focus on the plight of individuals, who are challenged to use their agency to overcome limitations or domination by others in the family, rather than

the broader role of the family as an institution in society (UNFPA 2006; Sørensen 2005; Jolly et al. 2003).⁵

The idea of “global householding” is put forth here both to theorize explicitly about the household and its link to larger structural issues, such as demographic and urban transitions and a world system composed of nation-states, as well as questions of human agency (Douglass 2006; Huang 2006). In the past, all of these dimensions of householding were substantially contained within a given society and the nation-state. Now they are being accomplished and negotiated across international space.

A central interest of global householding that is not commonly found in transnational family studies is to explain why the household is “going global.” Why is it now rising out of certain countries and not others? What are the patterns and why do variations arise even among countries at the same levels of per capita income? A major theme in this regard is that the increasing difficulties faced in householding within societies drive a search for new possibilities for householding that reach beyond the nation-state. However, the options available vary from country to country, depending on cultural and social conventions and border policies that filter migration. While, for example, Taiwan imports hundreds of thousands of domestic workers to assist Taiwanese households to reproduce themselves daily, Japan does not allow such workers into the country.

A second set of issues is concerned with the social and political acceptance of global householding. Socially, the extension of the household beyond territorial boundaries confronts deeply held beliefs about such matters as “international marriage,” adoption of children from other ethnic groups, and attitudes about foreigners in general that can be inimical to the acceptance of global householding in practice. Politically, global householding poses a host of challenges to entrenched legal systems surrounding citizenship, basic human rights, entitlements, and rights to collective consumption. In this regard most Pacific Asian countries continue to favor one or a few ethnic groups over all others in their immigration policies. Japan, for example, only allows people of Japanese descent to enter the country legally as low-wage workers. In contrast, Taiwan, contrary to expectations based on ethnic affinities, actively favors immigrants, including foreign spouses, from countries other than China over those that come from China—due to the fear of brides from China beginning to infiltrate society in favor of the mainland.

A third interest of global householding is the role of the household in social reproduction. Households throughout the world are charged with bearing and raising children; nurturing human relationships at very basic levels;

creating an “economy of affection” that can buffer individuals in the household against the vagaries of the world at large, including the global capitalist economy; and sustaining society intergenerationally. In many societies, however, these roles are rapidly contracting and even disappearing, which is partly manifested in the absolute decline in population now beginning or soon to begin in higher income societies.

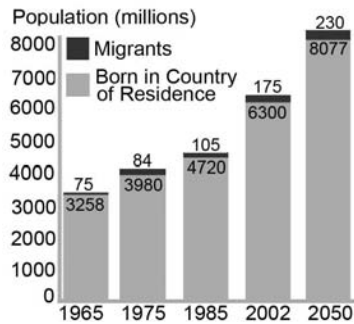
Nowhere are these concerns becoming more apparent than in Pacific Asia. The fastest economically developing area of the world over the past several decades, Pacific Asia now displays the entire panoply of global householding. The higher income economies are now evocative of the experiences in Europe in their accelerated demographic transitions, which are mirrored in increasing difficulties in household formation. Falling fertility rates, the advent of ageing societies, and the changing role of the household with the rise of career women have brought great stress to these countries and territories (including Japan and the four Asian tigers of Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore) in keeping both households and societies thriving. Plummeting birth rates and a shrinking labor force have already created a crisis in filling jobs, covering welfare costs of nonworking populations, and caring for children and the elderly.

In response, the formation and sustenance of households increasingly rely on the transnational movement of and transactions among household members beyond national territorial boundaries. Currently, an estimated 175 million people live outside of their countries of birth (figure 1). Although still a small share of the world's population, this number has been steadily increasing, and by the year 2050 projections show that it will reach at least 230 million. This estimate does not include spouses or children of migrants born in the current country of residence, nor does it include non-resident migrants who make up an increasing share of global migration. To account for nonmigrating household members, these numbers need to be increased by a multiple of four or five to fully capture the extent to which transnational migration is imbedded in global householding. Thus, the 175 million becomes 700 million if only a multiple of four is used.

Asia already accounts for one quarter of global migrants (figure 2), or about 45 million (2000). Again, using a global housing multiplier of four nonmigrants for every migrant, this number swells to 180 million, which is more than the population of any country in the region except China and Indonesia.

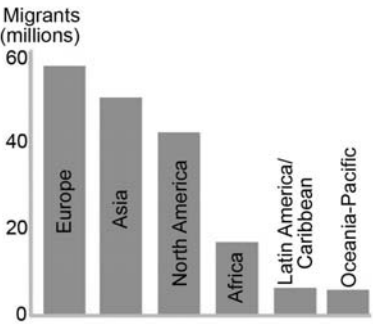
All of these transborder householding relations confront and challenge received notions of identity with a single nation-state, and rights to public

Figure 1. Foreign-born residents, global, 2000



Source: BBC News 2004

Figure 2. Migrant residents, by world region, 2000



Source: BBC News 2004

goods and services in places of residence that attend citizenship. They also bring into stark contrast the intention of most migrant-receiving societies to simply extract labor power from migrants, while migrants themselves have hopes of a fuller life and spend enormous energy to build and nurture households to care for the whole lives of their members (Douglass 1999; Douglass and Roberts 2003). Global householding is nonetheless a risky endeavor that is fraught with dangers, like harsh immigration policies, human trafficking, and exploitation. At the same time, however, it also has positive outcomes that allow for both optimism and hope.

In addition to technological revolutions, the sources of the contemporary shift toward global householding are many. Among the most crucial are the demographic transitions toward below replacement fertility rates in migrant-receiving countries, implicit choices made by women and men to pursue careers instead of marrying or having children during child-bearing ages, and the high costs of living in home countries after retirement.⁶ Most of these factors, particularly below replacement fertility, are just now beginning to occur in the world.

In the case of below replacement fertility, for example, very high burdens will be placed on households by rapidly increasing ratios of nonworking to working populations and the inability of governments to continue to expand social security and welfare funds at a rate commensurate with the pace of the aging of their societies. Such trends amount to deep social, economic, and ultimately political crises that require farsighted policies. By the beginning of this century more than half of the population in the world was

already experiencing below replacement fertility (Harbison and Robinson 2003). Pacific Asia already has a number of societies that are at or soon will be below replacement fertility rates, including Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan.

PACIFIC ASIA IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL MIGRATION AND HOUSEHOLDING

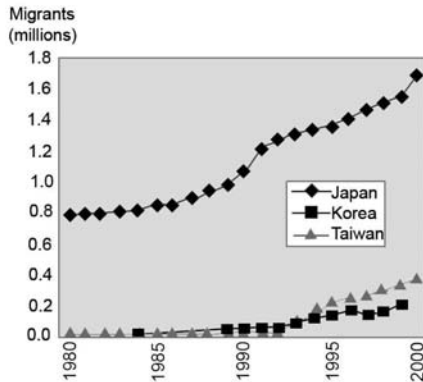
Many returnees were married with children when they migrated abroad, generally between the ages of 20–35 years. In most cases, the husband would help with household work when the wives were away. All female workers earned some income during their time abroad and many remitted money to their parents or family at home. (UNESCO 2001)

Largely unanticipated only two decades ago, international migration has now become a major dimension of local life within Pacific Asia. Figures 3 and 4 indicate the rapid increases in international migration within this region, with migration to key destinations taking off since 1990.⁷ Some countries have become highly dependent on sending migrants abroad to sustain their national economies. In 1993 approximately 3 million people were documented as having moved across national boundaries to other destinations in the Pacific Asia for work, study, marriage, family reunion, retirement, or as political or environmental refugees.⁸ In 2003 the estimated number had risen to 10 million. Because immigration laws declare much of this migration to be illegal, both the 1993 and 2003 figures are thought to underestimate actual numbers significantly. Again, multiplying by four nonmigrants for every migrant household member, even the conservative number of 10 million jumps to 40 million.

By 2001 about 866,000 Filipino migrants were hired or rehired overseas, representing about a third of the annual 2.5 million Pacific Asia peoples who migrate abroad for jobs each year (United Nations 2002). Approximately 20 percent of the entire Philippine labor force is working abroad. Indonesia sent 480,393 migrants abroad via legal channels in 2003 alone. Vietnam is registering very high levels of sponsored and spontaneous migration abroad, motivated by work as well as marriage.

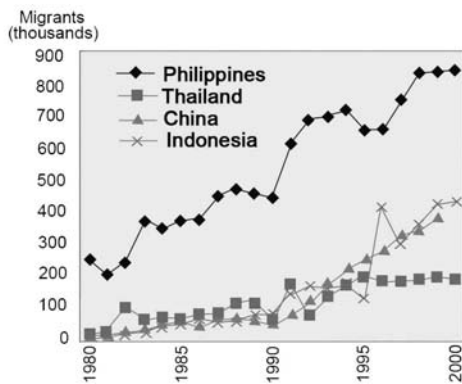
As elsewhere, the sources of the rising levels of migration and global householding in Pacific Asia are multiple, but in the center of almost all of them is the formation and sustenance of households in the home and migrant

Figure 3. Registered foreigners in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, 1980–2001



Source: UNESCAP 2003

Figure 4. Number of emigrants from the Philippines, Thailand, China, and Indonesia, 1980–2000



Source: UNESCAP 2003

host countries.⁹ Nurturing households over global space is promoted by income differences among Pacific Asian countries that are wide, and continue to widen. To facilitate the flow of people, money, goods, and services related to migration, recruiters and middlemen have formed networks to greatly facilitate migration. In key migrant-sending countries, governments and families alike have become dependent upon migrant remittances to sustain their economies. Support groups have appeared in migrant host societies to assist in overcoming legal and other barriers to entry and long-term stay.

As noted above, in addition to these factors, the demographic surprise of the twenty-first century in Pacific Asia is the population decline in several higher income economies, which is already leading to chronic labor shortages and depopulation of nonmetropolitan regions. These societies are all aging rapidly as well, a trend that is having multiple impacts (including the growing need for assisted living and long-term care of the elderly), and heightening stress on public welfare and pension systems, and new forms of poverty that are related to living on fixed or declining income streams. In contrast, population growth remains high in key migrant-sending countries, such as the Philippines, which is providing the growing numbers of international migrant labor.

All of these factors are reflected in expanding processes of global householding. In many cases this process represents a disjuncture in local demographic, social, and economic factors that traditionally work to enable household formation within existing societies. These disjunctures include numerical gender imbalances, changing gender differences in marriage preferences, and near or below replacement fertility within societies. They also follow from economic differences between countries, which enable migrants to engage in global householding through migrant support and remittances to one or more households in the home country and possibly elsewhere. In terms of international adoption, concerns for intergenerational continuity figure into this process as well. Finally, these disjunctures are created by insufficient welfare and social safety nets in societies with increasing shares of aging populations, who look abroad to live more cheaply in their senior years.

As noted, most research on migration continues to assess the data and trends as evidence of globalizing labor processes. Such a view is flawed in several ways. First, it assumes implicitly that the motivation for migration is solely economic. In so doing, it misses not only the extent of migration that is forced due to natural disasters, war, and other calamities, but also migration that is directly driven by other motives imbedded in the global householding trend. Migration for income is not an end in itself but is rather a means for reciprocal support among household members. From this perspective, migration as labor process also fails to uncover the social bases—householding—that promote and sustain the movements of people. These points can be exemplified by a step-by-step consideration of the lifecycles of householding, the principal elements of which include:

- Marriage/partnering
- Bearing children
- Raising and educating children (and adults)

- Maintaining the household on a daily basis
- Dividing labor and pooling income from livelihood activities
- Caring for elderly and other nonworking household members

International and Crossborder Marriages

The marriage market in Asia is becoming rapidly globalized, and just in time for tens of thousands of single-but-looking South Korean men, most of them in the countryside where marriageable women are in scant supply. With little hope of finding wives of their own nationality and producing children to take over the farm, the men are pooling their family's resources to raise (money) to find a spouse abroad. (Demick 2006)

Rates of international marriages are increasing in several Pacific Asia societies. One of the factors behind this trend is the continuing urban transition in higher income societies, which is depleting rural populations and leaving many men who are obligated to carry on with family farms, but are unable to find brides due to an observed preference by women for urban work, house-holding, and lifestyles.

In Japan and Korea, local governments have joined with farmers to sponsor searches for potential spouses from other Asian countries. For example, Haenam, a district in the southwest of Korea, plans to provide unmarried men with 5 million won (US\$5,500) each to cover the expenses of bringing in foreign spouses. As a result of such efforts, marriages between local farmers and women from countries such as China, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam account for a disproportionately high share of international marriages in relation to total marriages. In Japan the number of international marriages between Japanese men and foreign women reached about 30,000 per year in 2000. Most of these marriages are with “mail order” brides. Although only about 1.4 percent of the population in Japan originates from abroad, in 2002 international marriages accounted for about 5 percent of the national total.

The Taiwan and Korean cases are even more striking. Currently, marriages between Taiwan and non-Taiwan residents comprise one-third of all marriages in Taiwan. In addition to mainland China, Vietnam has become a principal source of spouses for Taiwanese men. Over the past three years approximately 80,000 women have moved from Vietnam to Taiwan for marriage. One thousand Vietnamese women and Taiwanese men marry every month. Approximately 148,000 brides have come from mainland China for marriage in Taiwan between 1993 and 2002.¹⁰

In Korea unions between a Korean and a foreign spouse made up 14 percent of all new marriages in 2005. Even more striking is the fact that marriages involving a foreign spouse accounted for nearly 40 percent of all rural marriages (*Chosun Ilbo* 2006; *Asian Pacific Post* 2006). Global householding in the form of marriage has also come to Korea: "As the number of international marriages increases in the rural areas, rural villages are experiencing their own kind of 'globalization'" (*JongAng Daily* 2006).

Although proportionately international marriages are highest in rural regions, the greatest numbers are found in the metropolitan regions. Over time, as the experience of Taiwan shows, the rural initiatives also spread to the cities. As divorce rates continue to rise and marriage rates among men and women within the same country fall, global householding initiated by international marriage can only be expected to increase. To the extent that this is already a billion dollar industry and is gaining more acceptance in the countries in which the couples choose to reside, it will become a common occurrence especially in the higher income economies.

Bearing and Adopting Children

Four out of every 10 men in rural areas [of Korea] marry non-Korean Asian women. Experts say this will result in around 2 million mixed-race births by 2020. (Asian Pacific Post 2006)

"There are only old people around here," said Le Pho, a 22-year-old Vietnamese woman who married a South Korean a year ago and is now pregnant. Her child will be the first born in the village, Seogok-ri [Korea], in more than 20 years. (Demick 2006)

One of the principal motives for international marriage is to have children and to carry on the family line. In 2005 South Korea and Taiwan tied for the lowest birthrates in the world at 1.1 per woman (Demick 2006). For men, particularly those in heavily depopulating rural regions of high-income countries, namely, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, marrying a foreign woman is their only chance of producing heirs. Although not sufficient to reverse trends toward below replacement fertility in these countries, data on rates of birth clearly show that international marriages result in more children than do local marriages.

When having their own children becomes impossible, couples can turn to international adoption. Sending Asian babies to the West for adoption has long been practiced. The preference for male children not only results

in highly imbalanced sex ratios favoring males but, paradoxically, also results in the availability for adoption abroad of a very large number of female children. China, which now has 120 boys for every 100 girls under age four, is experiencing significant levels of abandonment or the putting up for adoption of female children and is now a principal source of (female) babies for adoption in the West. Korea and Vietnam are also major sources of children for adoption. From 1951 to 2001 children from abroad adopted in the United States totaled 265,677. Of that number 156,491 (or nearly 60 percent) came from Asia. The annual number more than doubled between 1991 and 2000.

Adoption of children from abroad is as yet uncommon in most Pacific Asia countries. However, unreported adoptions are said to be occurring in many countries, and recently the government of Korea moved to ban surrogate motherhood after a Korean couple engaged an American woman to bear their child (Lee 2005).¹¹ In the case of Singapore, adoption is becoming a more open option, but some of it still remain underground. In 2005 applications for adoption processed by the Singapore government totaled 556; foreign children accounted for 56 percent of this number. Smuggling of babies from Indonesia—some are stolen from parents—is reported to be a significant part of adoption in Singapore (Arshad 2006).

Late marriage and other factors, such as rising divorce rates, are leading to physical and social inhibitions against bearing children. Yet the desire to have children remains strong. As of 2004 some 640,000 couples in Korea were unable to conceive and spent about 8.6 billion won a year on fertility treatment. Just as the marriage of rural men to foreign women seemed improbable just a few years ago but is now becoming routine, so might the adoption of foreign children into families in Pacific Asia.

Child Rearing and Education

[Korean] fathers were not passive or reluctant participants in this scheme. To the contrary, they were often the initiators of this family splitting for the sake of children and, despite the great difficulties they have to endure, they seem to have no regret about their decisions. Furthermore, despite long periods of physical separation, our kirogi fathers seem to be able to maintain stable and normal relationships with their wives and children. (Lee and Koo 2006, 551)

One of the most striking trends in householding in Pacific Asia is sending children abroad for education. Households in almost all countries in the region do this in large numbers. In Korea and Taiwan it has taken the form of husbands remaining at home while wives and children move abroad for many years for the sake of the children's education and, in the case of Korea, for them to avoid military service as young adults (Huang 2006; Lee and Koo 2006; Bang and Ko 2006).

China reportedly has the largest number of persons who have studied abroad. In 2002 the Ministry of Education reported that 460,000 Chinese have studied in 103 countries and regions, with the United States attracting 150,000, the largest portion (*People's Daily Online* 2002). From 1999 to 2002, the number of young people under the age of twenty-two with such education increased at an annual rate of 40 percent.

In parallel with these trends, such countries as the U.S. and Australia have been positioning themselves as centers for schooling and higher education for people from Asia. In the U.S., which had 572,000 foreign students in its education system in 2003, such prestigious universities as MIT have 70 percent of their graduate students from abroad. Three-quarters of all long-term visitors from Asia in Australia are in educational programs.

All of these trends are exacerbated by demographic transitions in the region. In Japan, Korea, and Taiwan school age children are shrinking in numbers so rapidly that schools are consolidating or being closed. Universities are already feeling this squeeze as well, and major efforts are now underway in these countries to open universities to foreign students on a major scale. In other words, higher income countries of Asia are now trying to reposition themselves to become destinations rather than sources of education of the global household.

Daily Household Maintenance and Reproduction

As a crisis developed in the reproductive sphere, the (Singapore) state allowed a limited recruitment of domestic servants from Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Philippines in 1978. . . . Currently, there are about 160,000 foreign domestic workers employed in Singaporean homes. . . . This translates to about one in every seven households (including middle-class families) where the domestic front is shored up by a foreign woman. (Lam et al. 2006, 481)

In the April of 1992 the (Taiwan) government added a category of “care-giver” for the Taiwan households with the members in vegetated, paralyzed or heavily disabled condition who need full time care. Four months later, the category of “domestic helper” was further opened to the double earner family with kid(s) under twelve or elderly people above 70 years old. . . . In contrast to the waning number of migrant workers in the construction and manufacturing sectors due to the decline in those sectors of Taiwan’s economy, the volume of domestic workers keeps a steady growth rate. By the end of 2005, the total number of the domestic workers already exceeded 143,000. This number accounted for 43 percent of the total migrant workers in Taiwan. (Huang 2006, 463)

The advent of the “age of international migration” (Castles and Miller 1994) has also brought a new age of global householding to many Asian countries in the form of the hiring of foreign domestic helpers and caretakers of children and the elderly. For the first time in history, middle class families, not just elites, can avail themselves of having full-time domestic workers due to the ease of recruiting them from such countries as the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, China and, more recently, Vietnam (Wee and Sim 2003). In 2003 three quarters of a million legal foreign workers, almost all women, were working in these occupations in just Hong Kong (240,000), Taiwan (120,000), Singapore (150,000), and Malaysia (240,000). The major source of this labor force is the Philippines. In Singapore, for example, one in seven households now has a domestic worker from abroad, and two-thirds of households say that they cannot take care of domestic chores, including taking care of children and the elderly, without a (foreign) domestic helper (Lam et al. 2006).

Domestic workers typically find themselves involved in two or more households in the home countries and in the countries in which they work. Filipina domestic workers in Taiwan, for example, are simultaneously bread-winners for their households in the Philippines and surrogate mothers of children in Taiwanese families (Lan 2003). Similarly, Indonesian maids in Singapore are found to be remitting about two-thirds of their wages of about US\$150 a month to their households in Indonesia (*Migration News* 2004).

In addition to caring for children and performing daily household cleaning and food preparation, foreign workers are increasingly involved in caring for the elderly. In Taiwan such workers have become the backbone of

sustaining a system of filial piety, which makes putting elders in a long-term care facility unthinkable for many families, despite the fact that all adults in the family are engaged in their own jobs outside of the house. On call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, these foreign caregivers provide the semblance of a caring Taiwanese family that cannot, in fact, take care of elders with advanced health problems. Japan, facing a similar situation, is also now allowing entry to foreign nurses for elderly care.

Whether these workers are considered as members of the families for whom they work is perhaps debatable (Lam et al. 2006). Nonetheless, they are clearly indispensable to the reproduction of hundreds of thousands of households in many countries in the Pacific Asia region. Given the very large shares of urban middle-class families where both husbands and wives are working and aging populations growing more numerous, the use of foreign domestic workers in global householding is likely to continue to expand.

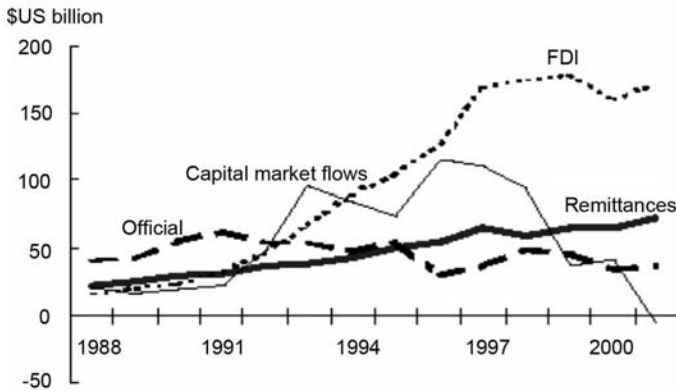
Labor Migrant and Household Remittances

An estimated 2.182 million contract workers and immigrants, largely women, remitted some US\$3.3 billion from Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia “on monthly averages ranging from US\$300 to US\$500,” said the ADB study Southeast Asian Workers<?> [sic] Remittances. . . . The volume of remittances, ADB added, may be higher “if estimates of undocumented workers are included.” (Opiniano 2005)

Human Rights Watch criticized Singapore for collecting S\$530 (\$314) million a year in levies from the employers of 150,000 foreign maids, but does not protect the maids under its regular labor laws. Employers pay S\$200 to S\$295 a month for the privilege of importing a foreign maid. There are about 600,000 foreign workers in Singapore. (Migration News 2006, 9)

Worldwide remittances from international migrants are now nearly double the amount of global aid by governments and international institutions (figure 5). In 2003 Pacific Asia accounted for 14 percent of these remittances. Worker remittances to the Philippines alone totaled almost US\$8 billion in 2003, which accounted for 10 percent of the country's GDP (*Migration News* 2004). Remittances to Indonesia from its 1.2 million legal workers abroad were almost US\$3 billion in 2003. According to the State Bank of Vietnam, remittances from overseas workers hit a record of US\$4 billion in

Figure 5. Migrant remittances compared with other international financial flows



Source: Cerstin 2003

2005, representing a rise of almost 25 percent over the previous year (MOF 2005). In 2004 an estimated 68,000 workers were sent abroad under government contracts.

These remittances do not flow just one-way from migrants to households in their country of origin. In a great number of instances, these households take care of the migrants' children and serve as a sanctuary in between migration episodes. They also give meaning to the sacrifices that especially low-wage migrant workers endure in harsh, highly exploitative employment overseas. Household support is very frequently cited as the main reason for migrating and is the focus of emotional attachments abroad.

Counterflows: Households Moving from Higher to Lower Cost-of-Living Countries

The Philippine government is helping local developers market retirement homes to Filipinos abroad, especially professionals settled in Canada and the US. . . . Developers have shown models of their projects at Filipino consulates in North America to stimulate interest in retirement in the Philippines. (Migration News 2006)

The movement of seniors, usually after retirement from work, from higher to lower cost locations in foreign countries is already a marked trend in Eu-

rope and the United States. In the early 1990s the Japanese government also proposed a plan dubbed as “Silver Columbus” (500 years after Columbus went to the Americas), which would create retirement communities for Japanese seniors to spend their twilight years in foreign countries. In Pacific Asia some locations such as Bali and Chiang Mai have become noted for the appearance of foreign communities for long-term living, including retired people. Recently the city of Hanoi apparently launched a suburban housing development program to attract Japanese and other seniors. Saigon South in Ho Chi Minh City is suggesting a similar component to its massive development program.

Already a significant pattern in Europe and North America, the movement of households in which the principal income earner is no longer working is just beginning in Pacific Asia. Yet would-be host countries are already engaged in building retirement communities to attract retirees, especially people from Japan. By 2002 one-quarter of the population in Japan was over age 65. By 2050 this share is projected to reach 42 percent, with more than one-third of the population over 80 years old. This is taking place in the context of a labor force that began to decline in numbers in the 1990s and a social security system that is already paying out more than it takes in. Other countries will encounter similar issues. In 2050, 33 percent of Korea’s population will be over age sixty-five (United Nations 2003). Taiwan’s population has a similar trajectory.

In view of the rapid increase in the number of retired people who subsist on fixed incomes in higher income economies, governments are already putting forward policies and developers are already building and advertising retirement communities for expatriates. In Thailand the Board of Investment has announced that “Thailand wants to attract international retirees and nursing home patients,” and that it will provide tax and other incentives to developers of retirement communities and resorts (*Leisure Club* 2007). Medical and other services specifically targeted at the elderly are part of the inducements being offered by private sector developers. In 2001 a developer announced plans to build a retirement village for Japanese at the cost of 40 billion baht (US\$1 billion) in northern Thailand (*Bangkok Post* 2001). Phuket, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Chiang Rai are all advertising schemes to develop foreign resident communities in Thailand. Saigon South, a huge suburb of Saigon planned for 1 million people that is being built by Taiwan developers, also invites retired households to move into its houses and condominiums.

Retirement emigration from Japan is already significant. Toyota (2006) reports that four types of such movers have appeared since the 1990s: (a)

seasonal movers who spend winter in Southeast Asia (notably Thailand) and the other half of the year in Japan; (b) totally relocated households that include two generations of retirees—the recently retired and long-retired parents—who move, in part to avail themselves of domestic helpers who are not allowed to enter Japan; (c) economically displaced seniors who lost their jobs during Japan’s “lost decade” and more than one decade of economic stagnation, who move to escape household pressures in Japan; and (d) single male retirees in search of partners. All together, the emerging retirement migration pattern shows itself to be diverse and growing in numbers.

CONCLUSIONS

Global householding is a permanent and expanding feature of population movements among Pacific Asia countries and from Pacific Asia to the rest of the world. In its growing prominence, it encounters many institutions and levels of governance beyond the household itself. Professional recruiters actively manage flows of migrants and thereby capture billions of dollars from all facets of moving people from one locale to another. The phenomenon of “mail order” brides is no longer stereotypically a movement of Asian women to the West, but is now occurring within Asia on a major scale, with substantial monetary earnings for its many allied services (Huang 2006). Domestic workers are required to pay huge fees to brokers that total as much as one year’s salary to gain approval to move from, say, Taipei to Toronto. Businesses hiring migrants regulate work opportunities, incomes, and even community living arrangements of migrants. In some cases, such as in Taiwan, foreign domestic workers are not even allowed to have cell phones or a day off from work. Societies in receiving countries are known to channel migrants into certain neighborhoods, limit access to amenities and public spaces, and otherwise socially constrain the life-worlds and mobility of foreign workers. At the same time, NGOs are emerging to seek improved treatment of vulnerable immigrants.

When householding goes global, this myriad of agents, institutions, and governments present formidable challenges to its success. In addition, popular and academic writing on the various dimensions of global householding often takes a pejorative view of its nature and impacts. Among the more commonly expressed views are that it is exploitative, particularly of women and children; it is morally improper, because of the presumed dominant economic motive of those in the receiving country to falsify marital and familial relationships;¹² it undermines local culture; and it undermines the welfare

of citizens by bringing cheap labor to form households, but in the process takes away jobs from locals. The many experiences that counter these views remain in the shadow of the predominant negative treatments.¹³

Those engaged in transnational migration and global householding are beginning to find allies, support groups, and government support. Although much attention has been given to the nation-state as represented by the central government, what is apparent from numerous studies is the heightening role of local—prefectural, district, and municipal—governments in global householding. Local governments, for example, have been a vanguard in recruiting foreign brides for men in rural areas. They have also developed programs to assist in the education and welfare of foreign members of households (Tegtmeyer-Pak 2003).

Faced with having to deal with global householding issues on a daily basis, local governments have also begun to depart from national policies regarding services provided to migrants and migrant rights. In Japan, for example, the Kanagawa Prefecture has raised the banner stating that “foreign residents are citizens, too” (Douglass and Roberts 2003). Others have opened lower level civil service employment to long-term foreign residents. Where local governments have significant autonomy from the center, the differences between the national and local state seem to be widening across a number of work and residential issues faced by foreign workers. Yet the local state remains relatively unexplored as an agent in the governance of migration. With its importance certain to increase in the future, the role of local governments in national migration policy deserves much more attention.

Even with the expanding roles of local governments in implicit immigration policy making, national governments retain decisive influence over the possibilities of global householding. Policies common to many national governments in Pacific Asia are paradoxical in this regard. On one hand, these policies systematically separate foreign workers from households. As previously noted, low-wage foreign workers are routinely forbidden to bring family members with them, and are typically not allowed to marry locals or bear children while employed in the country. The only purpose for allowing them into the host country is to appropriate their labor power. They have almost no chance of becoming either permanent residents or citizens. On the other hand, men in these same higher income countries who are desperate to find spouses are allowed to bring in women drawn from the same socioeconomic strata as most foreign workers. The would-be husbands are not allowed to marry a woman who is in the country as a low-wage worker or trainee. In some places, such as Taiwan, foreign spouses are forbidden

to work or earn a livelihood until they obtain Taiwanese citizenship, which takes several years.

Such artificial separation of householding and livelihood represents one of the most inhibiting factors in the fruition of global householding in Pacific Asia. Yet all indicators suggest that it will continue to expand even in the face of great difficulties imposed by all agents, institutions, and governments it encounters. Currently, crossborder marriage and childbearing, education of children, and recruitment of domestic workers are its most prevalent forms in the region. In addition, international adoption is occurring and, if social barriers to its acceptance substantially decline as they have in Europe and North America, it might well increase. At the other end of the age spectrum, retirement migration is showing signs of growing in number, not only from the higher income economies of Japan and Taiwan but also in countries, such as the Philippines, that are trying to bring its long-term emigrants home in their senior years even though they might be permanent residents or citizens elsewhere.

In order that these manifestations of global householding will earn a more thoughtful consideration in policy, the first task at hand is to put this neglected dimension of international movement of people, global householding, on the research and policy agenda. The continuing focus on migration as individual decision making for work or economic ends is overly narrow and reductionist in its formulation. Although economic concerns are certainly important, people are moving all over the world for a host of other reasons, including the betterment of the lives of household members through internal divisions of labor, pooling of resources, and mutual support and affection. That such relations might be contested or even turned upside down in the household through migration should be no surprise. What is surprising is the neglect of the household as a vital institution in social reproduction that is now globalizing.

Notes

- 1 The use of household rather than family also invites a more rigorous and open-ended debate about what is almost universally considered to be society's most basic social unit. As noted, "family" is typically assumed to be understood by the reader and does not require further elaboration. It mostly remains unexplored. Household, in contrast, goes beyond marriage and blood relations and is more conceptually capable of allowing for diverse forms of relationships. In many Asian societies, for example, a domestic helper is considered to be part of a functioning household, but not necessarily a member of the family that employs her. When the household

is seen as an ongoing social process—householding—it also becomes a dynamic social institution that changes in specific circumstances and through time. No assumption is made about intrahousehold relations being equal or equitable. Relations within the household can be contested as well as cooperative. See Douglass (2006) for definitions of household.

- 2 In contrast to “family,” household is used to allow for formations not strictly composed of relations attained through marriage or direct lineage. A household may consist of fictive as well as actual kin, of distant as well as under the roof members, and of hired domestic helpers. Household is also used to avoid the treatment of family as a black box that is presumed to have a single utility function, with decisions harmoniously made around one decision maker (Folbre 1986). A household, in Friedmann’s (1992) words, is “a mini-political economy” that is characterized by conflict and contestations as well as cooperation.
- 3 As noted by Smith (1984), labor does not simply “magically appear at the factory gates” where it is organized by labor market principles. Rather, its power and availability is reproduced in the household daily.
- 4 Many studies do not define family at all, but seem to presume a conventional notion of an institution made up of “kin” that is constituted through marriage and direct lineage. Some try to show that family has a wider meaning (e.g., Sørensen 2005), but transnational family studies in the main do not explore alternatives to heterosexual marriage or the kin-based family. When adding “transnational” to family, concepts also vary. Some follow the UNFPA (2006, 33) definition that “[t]ransnational families are those whose members belong to two households, two cultures and two economies simultaneously” (Jolly et al. 2003; Parreñas 2001). Others use it for a family that has moved from its home country to a new country (Bryceson and Vuorela 2003). Others use it to indicate that one family member is working abroad (e.g., Silvey 2006). Still others use the term to describe a “mixed marriage” with one spouse coming from a foreign country (Bacas 2006). How some of these uses of “transnational migration” add value by replacing earlier terms such as “international migration” is not readily made clear.
- 5 Such transnational family studies are often aimed at showing how contestations and role reversals within families are brought on by many factors, such as the feminization of international migration and the increasing role of women as the family breadwinner, which are shifting power and roles among its members (Constable 2005; Piper and Roces 2003; Parreñas 2005).
- 6 The slowdown in population growth has reached middle-income countries as well, resulting in the weakening of traditional family structures (Harbison and Robinson 2003).
- 7 Until the late 1980s migration to Japan from other Pacific Asia countries almost wholly consisted of women going there as “professionals” in the sex industry (Douglass and Roberts 2003). Since that time, a new layer of workers in construction, low-wage assembly, and services has been added and continues to increase even in Japan’s decade of economic slump.
- 8 About half of Asia’s international migrant labor comes from Indonesia, the Philippines, and other Southeast Asian countries. When they go abroad, half will remain in Southeast and East Asian countries such as Malaysia, South Korea, and Taiwan.
- 9 With more than 300,000 emigrants leaving per year, China has become the largest source of international migrants by the beginning of this century (United Nations 2002).
- 10 Marriages between Vietnamese women and Taiwanese men constitute one-third of international marriages registered in Ho Chi Minh City. Interestingly, the government of Taiwan has made it more difficult and costly for a Taiwanese to marry someone from mainland China than from

- other countries. Longer waiting periods and income tests are imposed on women from mainland China, but not on women from Vietnam or elsewhere (Tsai 2003).
- 11 Up to the late 1980s as many as 9,000 Korean children were being sent abroad for adoption every year (Freundlich and Lieberthal 2000).
 - 12 The diminution in the moral value of marriage is exemplified by a statement made by a support group for foreign brides: "Multinational marriage matching is mainly operated by marriage brokers and the process is quite the same with a business transaction," and thus "the value of marriage is distorted" (Liao 2003, 1).
 - 13 For example, divorce rates in Japan have approximately the same rates of increase for international and domestic marriages. Instead of jobs being stolen by foreign workers, numerous studies show that jobs are not taken by foreigners but rather go unfilled (Douglass and Roberts 2003).

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