Olivia Killias, *Follow the Maid: Domestic Worker Migration in and from Indonesia*.

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Women's transnational labor migration helps shape contemporary Asia. This mobility offers many women in poor countries a chance for a better future. Employing them as domestic workers enables the middle class in rich countries to enjoy modern life while keeping the prevailing gender, class, and racial hierarchies intact. Transnational trade in care work provides governments in sending and receiving countries with the necessary resources for national 'progress,' such as the housemaids that free middle-class husbands and wives to have a rewarding career, or the remittances that help finance economic development. Under such circumstances, in 2018 Indonesia—one of the largest labor exporting countries in Asia—sent 198,175 Indonesian women to work in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, and other rich countries on the continent. 93,124 of these women took jobs as domestic helpers (BNP2TKI 2019).

In the study of female inter-Asian labor migration, one question worth asking is: what processes turn women into migrant housemaids? In 2005, using Indonesian, Philippine and Sri Lankan domestic workers in Singapore as case studies, Lenore Lyons devoted an article to this question to expose the ways transnational labor migration affects gender constructions in origin and destination countries. In *Follow the Maid*, which is a response to and expansion of Lyons' article, Olivia Killias (2018) revisits the same question, using it to explore three themes: the evolution of paid domestic labor in South-east Asia, the manifestations of its care chains, and the complex, contested, and ambivalent emergence of a transnational class of migrant domestic workers (pp. 4 and 8). In doing so, she examines the role of various actors with whom the migrant woman interacts at different stages in her 'metamorphosis.'

To attain these goals, from 2006 to 2013 Killias did an ethnographic study of those site- and stage-specific processes which went into the transformation of women from 'Kalembah' (an upland village in Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia) into migrant domestic workers in Malaysia. The legal, moral, social, and economic processes these women went through included the production of Indonesia's migration regime; pre-departure negotiations with relatives; recruitment by local brokers; training by labor agents and state officials in Jakarta or Surabaya; placement by maid agents and work for urban/suburban

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middle-class families in Malaysia; and return to their home village (pp. 3–4, 202).

Killias presents the fruits of her investigation in a well-written book where she spends one chapter for each of the processes in ‘the making of the maid.’ Chapter 1 points out that Indonesia’s labor migration regime—which emphasizes legality in managing labor mobility and oscillates between the desire for national prestige and the thirst for remittances—is the newest mutation of a state policy whose evolution has a long history, rooted in colonial indentured labor (pp. 31–37). Chapter 2 contends that the Kalemah women’s decision to work overseas is best understood as the spatiotemporal outcome of how these women—in search of adventure, freedom, the money to build a modern house, or a way out of failed marriage—interpret different types of labor migration; negotiate gendered norms about geographical mobility, its lifecycle-based timing and scale, and the family division of labor; and respond to the rural shift away from farming jobs and to the gendered requirements of global labor market. Chapter 3 paints a nuanced portrait of the male local broker, who helps ‘create’ Indonesian maids by connecting prospective migrant women in Kalemah with a recruitment agency in Jakarta, Surabaya, or Semarang. Brokers take the morality of their work seriously as it forms the basis of their professional reputation, on which their success and failure depend.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in two training camps, Chapter 4 gives vivid descriptions of the ‘tools’ for transforming women into maids, including medical checks, placement contracts, isolation, immobilization, initiation rites, photographic and textual archives, and training in docility and deference. Even in such ‘total institutions,’ the women manage to exercise their agency through friendships, solidarity, and the arts of resistance. Chapter 5 transports us to Malaysia where the making of the maids is completed, not only by maid agents exoticizing Indonesia, compiling biodata and constructing the home-versus-work dichotomy, but also by Malaysian state and employers restricting the maids’ mobility through work contracts, immigration laws and seclusion. Malaysian employers’ distrust prevented Killias from conducting in-depth participant observation that could have illuminated the home-based, day-to-day maid-employer relations. Chapter 6 shows that as a temporary contract worker, the Indonesian maid must finally go home. Yet her return can be delayed and contested. The uncertainties around this stage of migration highlight the frailty of transnational families, which may result from marital problems, unequal access to communications technology, and the isolation that the maid suffers overseas.

There are places in the book, however, where fruitful questions suggest themselves but which Killias passes over in silence, such as whether and how

the *domestic* labor migration that the Kalemah woman undertakes as a teenager increases the probability that she will work *overseas* in her adulthood. And one decision remains unexplained: given that at the time of the study the popular destinations for Kalemah women migrant workers included Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Singapore (pp. 64, 65, 91), why did Killias choose Malaysia as one of her research sites? The Malaysian site seems to have received a lesser amount of ethnographic immersion than their Indonesian counterparts.

Overall, reading this book is a dynamic and rewarding experience in that the author consistently conducts her discussion in a space created by dialectical pairs such as mobilization vs. immobilization, connections vs. ruptures, structural constraints vs. agentic resistance, and desire for change vs. persistence of old patterns. The book enriches the scholarly literature on female transnational labor migration in Asia by showing the promises and challenges of applying a multi-site and multi-stage approach in this area of inquiry.

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