NEPALESE LABOR MIGRATION TO JAPAN: MULTIPLE PATHS TO HOUSEHOLD DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLOBALIZED ECONOMY

Workshop: “Food, Agriculture and Human Impacts on the Environment: Japan, Asia and Beyond”
November 6-7, 2017
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Introduction: **Migration in Asia**

- Sociologist, teaching in Asian Studies & Asian American Studies
- Research: Immigration, Citizenship and Multiculturalism in Asia
- **Labor exchange between:**
  - **East Asia:** Japan, Hong Kong, S Korea, Singapore and Taiwan
  - **Southeast Asia:** Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Nepal, . . .
- Population, labor demand & supply, historical context
- Immigration policy: **circular migration** for unskilled labor
- **Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan:** Strict policy
- **Japan and S Korea:** ambiguous
Nepal: Environment & Development

- One of the most **ecologically wealthy** but **economically distressed and Politically unstable** countries in South Asia
  - Rich in ecological diversities
    - with 80% of the land covered by rugged hills and mountains
    - Developmental activities created many environmental problems due to inadequate consideration and poor management
  - **Political changes, 1950s to 2010s**, from absolute monarchy to democracy, especially impact of the 10-year civil war on the economy
  - **International migration** as a viable strategy for family survival, increasing remittances but negative impact on agriculture and natural resource/ ecological management
Backgrounds

- I conducted research on “Nepalese labor migration to Japan” in the 1990s, 2000s
- Interviews and surveys
  - Nepal: Kathmandu & Pokhara
  - Japan: Shizuoka and Aichi Prefectures
- “Nepalese labor migration to Japan: from global warriors to global workers,” Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2000
- Social ties and social capital (highly diverse groups, British Army Gurkha soldiers, ethnic & regional network)
- Visa-overstayers in the manufacturing industry
- Lively community activities during the weekends
A Quarter Century Later, 2010s

- Nepalese labor migration to Japan
  - An increase of **10 times** in number
  - From **2,686** in 1995 to **55,236** in 2015 (registered residents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5,314</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>6,596</td>
<td>24.1%+ Civil war ended in Nepal</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>8,417</td>
<td>27.6%+</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>11,556</td>
<td>37.3%+</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>14,745</td>
<td>27.6%+ Global Economic Crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>17,149</td>
<td>16.3%+</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>20,103</td>
<td>17.2%+</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>24,071</td>
<td>19.7%+</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>31,537</td>
<td>31.2%+</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>42,346</td>
<td>34.3%+ New Constitution in Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>55,236</td>
<td>30.4%+</td>
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</tbody>
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Nepal’s Political History

- 1951 Absolute monarchy
- 1991 First Democracy Movement, Constitutional Monarchy
- 1996 Maoist People’s War began
- 2001 Massacre of the Royal Family
- 2006 Second Democracy Movement
- 2006 United Communist Party (Maoist), a coalition party
- 2008 The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal
  - Forming the Constitutional Assembly
- 2014 The Constitution of Nepal
- 2015 Great earthquakes (Mag 7.8, 9,000 died, 12,000 injured)
Nepal as a Labor-Sending Country

- Nepalis outside Nepal
  - 1961: 328,470 / 9,741,466 = 3.4%
  - 1981: 402,977 / 15,425,816 = 2.6%
  - 2001: 762,171 / 23,499,115 = 3.2%
  - 2011: 1,921,494 / 26,494,504 = 7.3%
  - 2011: 25% of the total households have a migrant

- Destinations (A total from 2006/07 to 2011/12)
  - India: 880,000 (free border)
  - Middle East: 1,070,000 (Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE)
  - Malaysia: 380,000
  - East Asia: 100,000< (Japan and South Korea)
Nepalese Labor Migration to Japan, 2010s~

- 2008 Global Economic Crisis, Fewer manufacturing jobs, repatriation
- Diversification of visas to enter and reside in Japan
- 2014 Nepalese Residents
  - International students 15,697 37.1%
  - Family Stay 10,308 24.3%
  - Skilled migrants 7,412 17.5%
  - Other 1,692 3.9%
  - Total 42,346 100.0%
- Japanese language & vocational school students, work 4 hours/day
- Cooks of Indian/Nepali restaurants and their families
  - Working age, 20-29, 48%
  - Children 12< 12%
Nepal: Migration & Remittance Economy

- Not only economic, demographic & environmental push of the sending society, but also historical and political contexts
- **Increasing remittances from abroad** (e.g., Philippines, Indonesia)
- **Household Strategy**
  - Remittances in the globalized economy
  - Diversify income sources, defuse risks
- **National Economic Development**
  - Remittances > ODA
  - National revenues but also social development
  - During 10 years of Maoist conflict, poverty rate decreased from 42% in 1995 to 31% in 2004
  - Infant mortality rate improved significantly
- **Labor migration alone does not develop a country**
- Many social issues: fewer working age men in villages; unattended fields, natural resources, ecological degradation
Works Used

- Minami, Makito, 2017
  - 「移住労働が内包する社会的包摂」、名和克郎（編）「体制転換期ネパールにおける『包摂』の諸相」三元社
- Minami, Makito and Hiroshi Ishii, 2015
  - 「ネパール近現代政治史略年表」、南真木人・石井溥（編著）「現代ネパールの政治と社会」、明石書店
- Tanaka, Masako, 2016, “Not only job but also study: Rapid increase in migrant youth and children from Nepal in Japan.”