

Title: Religious Conversions of Filipino Workers in the Arab Gulf region and the Transformation of Intimate Spheres

by Naomi Hosoda (Kagawa University)

Abstract

The Arab Gulf region is one of the three major destinations for international migrants today. The six fast-growing, resource-rich countries in the region have attracted millions of workers from South Asia, Middle East, East Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. Further, according to the World Bank's estimate, migrant workers in the six countries sent home about \$61 billion in 2011. Despite such a large volume of human and monetary flow, this migration trend has been investigated almost solely from the perspective of "labour movement" or "labour problems", leaving the social and human dimensions of the phenomenon unexplored. My talk will examine the social dimension by focusing on the religious conversion of Catholic Filipinos to born-again (Protestant) Christians or Muslims during their sojourn in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It has been argued that there is little place for the migrant workers to form close relationships that cross lines of class and nationality with other people, because of legal and socio-economic constraints in the Gulf region. However, if we look at social relations of Filipino converts in the UAE, we can observe that some of them have crossed those lines. I will elaborate on the relationship between religious conversion and the development of new social relations among Filipinos in the UAE, comparing those who have become born-again Christians and those who have become Muslims.

Biography

Naomi Hosoda is an assistant professor at International Office, Kagawa University, Japan. She obtained her PhD in Southeast Asian area studies from Kyoto University. Her main research interest is anthropological studies on Filipino migration, with a focus on cultural normality, family, and transnational community. Her works in English include: 2008: Open City and a New Wave of Filipino Migration to the Middle East, in Eric Tagliacozzo, et al (eds), *Asia Inside Out: Changing Times*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 281-303 (2014); *Kababayan Solidarity? Filipino Communities and Class Relations in United Arab Emirates Cities*, *Journal of Arabian Studies* 3(1): 18-35 (2013); The Sense of *Pamilya* among Samaritons in the Philippines, in Yoko Hayami, et al (eds), *The Family in Flux in Southeast Asia: Institution, Ideology, Practice*, Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 365-386 (2012); Connected through "Luck": Samaritons Migrants in Metro Manila and the Home Village, *Philippine Studies* 56 (3): 313-44 (2008); and "The Social Process of Internal Migration in the Philippines: A Case of Visayan Migrants in Manila" *Afrasia Working Paper Series No. 26*, Seta: Afrasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Ryukoku University (2007).

