



Tokyo Transient Migrants' Stories: Home is a Fleeting Romance, But Nevertheless

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Abstract

The Tokyo transient migrants' stories collection is an ongoing collaboration of the researcher with temporary migrants in Tokyo. This continuing research aims to illuminate the ruptures and transformations in migrants' lives in Tokyo in their state of transience and provide a platform that brings the complexities of transient migrations to the fore. It aims to map the experiences, particularly of women and LGBTQIA+ temporary migrants, as they engage and interact with communities linked to their home and host nations and how the plurality of their experiences intersects with gender, race, and class in this specific form of migration. The project employs the effects of transient migrations as a global, national, and communal phenomenon as its focal point.

This article aims to discuss the first stage of this continuing research, which zooms in on transient self-identifying cis-gendered women working in academia as teachers and/or doctoral students, which we would call in this research "professional transient migrants." I anchor this exploration in three pillars of query: 1) the reasons why they chose to come to Japan, 2) their expectations and fears prior to arrival, and how these played out during their time in the country, and 3) how they seek to establish a sense of home and belonging in Japan, and the challenges that they face in doing so. The research is qualitative by nature and uses a semi-interview structure to collect data and utilize thematic analysis.

The participants situate themselves as migrants who made conscious decisions to come here to Japan, decisions that were influenced by different sets of circumstances such as economic or social conditions or, for some, a desire to escape their home nations inflicted by cultural pressures and obligations. Participants' expectations of living in Japan were variegated perceptions drawn from popular culture constructed for foreign consumption, such as anime and manga, and the imagery of a place where tradition and modernity beautifully blend. The participants situate their fears in the tendency to find themselves in solitude and the lack of relatives to reach out to in times of crisis. The fear of constant self-reliance. The sense of home and belonging leans more toward familiarity with how the culture and society work amidst the strict social norms and the sometimes deep sense of loneliness and uncertainty about the future and their life trajectory in this country. Despite this convolution, Japan, for professional transient migrants is a state of comfort to a certain degree, comfortable enough to stay and



5th Global Conference on Women's Studies

28- 30 July 2023

Dublin, Republic of Ireland

convenient enough to feel at home; they step within the lines where comfort and familiarity intersect, and the question of belonging lies hanging in between. For them, home and belonging feel like a fleeting romance but, nevertheless.

Keywords: Tokyo Transient Migrants, Transient migrations, Women and Migrations.