

Immigrant Wives and Their Cultural Influence in Taiwan

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Abstract

In Taiwan, the number of immigrant wives (foreign brides) has increased dramatically in recent years. Media outlets and academic research works report family violence and other problems. This study explores immigrant wives' "hidden" position and status within the family and wider society by interviewing immigrant wives and their families. We compare the result of our fieldwork with the reports of Taiwan's media and governmental institutions. It is found that the Taiwanese government mostly sees the problems that are reported to them that are only a part of the whole picture. Most immigrant wives actually have strong influence in Taiwan, in their new families and in society. At the same time, they provide the stimulus for the Taiwanese government to consider multiculturalist approaches to policy-making, give Taiwanese people more cross-cultural opportunities, and provide Taiwan a lesson for globalization.

Keywords: cultural migration, globalization, immigrant wives

Introduction

There were 4,899 registered immigrant wives in Taiwan in 1994,¹ but a booming immigration has occurred in recent years and their number reached 319,735 (Dept. of Household Registration Affairs, MIO, 2005b), about sixty times more, in ten years. As a result, intermarriage attracts people's attention. Many media outlets report sentimental social cases, such as the case of A-ling. A-ling was an immigrant wife from Vietnam. She was seriously abused by her Taiwanese husband. She finally got a legal divorce after litigation.² The Taiwanese government sees the problems that are reported to them. Many academic research works examine the problems such as family violence, marriage swindle, the wives being a disadvantaged minority, etc. (Lu, 2001; Hsia, 2001; Chu, 2002; Chen, 2002; Yen, 2002;

¹ No official record of the non-registered migrant wives before 1994 can be found.

² A-ling obtained an R.O.C. passport and became a Taiwanese citizen in April, 2005 (The Liberty Times, 2005, p. 19).

Chen, 2003).

However, such intermarriage gives Taiwan new perspectives too. The article focuses on a different standpoint and aims to: (1) compare the results of our fieldwork with the reports of Taiwan media, that of governmental institutions and the related academic research; and (2) reveal that many immigrant wives, if not most of them, actually form a “power” in Taiwan. The notion of “hidden transcript” (Scott, 1990), a power that the subordinate group has, is the theoretical background of this study. In doing so, this article explores immigrant wives’ “hidden” position and status within the family and wider society, including their contribution in terms of shoring up Taiwan’s declining fertility rate and reproductive labor on the home front.

An *immigrant wife*³ is defined in this study as a female immigrant who was not born or did not grow up in Taiwan but migrated to Taiwan because she married a Taiwanese man, regardless of the reason for marriage (love, economics, or any other reason).

Previous Research

From a Western perspective, Chant and Radcliffe (1992) pointed out that marriage is a helpful means to promote individual status, especially for women. Johnson and Warren (1994) discussed the immigrant’s assimilation, socio-cultural change, and social integration. Lievens (1999) and Brown (1996) concentrated on the importance of ethnicity in assisting international marriages.

Focusing on the case in Taiwan, Hsia (2003) has indicated that the immigrant wife phenomenon appeared in the early 1980s. These immigrants are mostly from areas like China and Southeast Asia. They came to Taiwan to seek better lives. Such marriage is not as simple as an ordinary marriage. It concerns not only the couples and their families, but also the societies and the different cultures. Shen and Wang (2003) called these marriages “commodified transnational marriages” because a great number of commercial marriage brokers are involved. These marriages are sometimes described as commodities because the men provide money in exchange for a wife. Negotiations can go between US\$5,500 to US\$20,000. The complete operating system of an international marriage broker facilitated the international marriage (Wang & Chang, 2002).

Studies have shown that the men who take immigrant wives usually have low socio-economic status, and therefore have difficulty finding Taiwanese wives (Zhang, 2000; Hsia, 2003; Chung, 2004). They are regarded as the image of patriarchy (Hsia, 2003). The wives have to fit their husbands’ expectations and become traditional, obedient wives who are responsible for birthing babies and taking care of family members (Chung, 2004; Shen & Wang, 2003). In some cases, immigrant wives become the victims of domestic violence.

Immigrant wives are described as a group of disadvantaged women. At the same time, the number of them is increasing. This is mainly due to the following reasons (a). some Taiwanese men consider themselves as disadvantaged in finding Taiwanese wives, and (b). these men are under the pressure of

³ “Foreign bride” is the term more commonly used in academic research and news reports. However, we believe it has a negative connotation.

giving offspring as many other men do, (c). the trend of globalization that Taiwanese women marry to men of other countries, while Taiwanese men marry to women from other countries. These and other reasons will be discussed in detail from two aspects in the following sections: immigrant wives in Taiwan, and immigrant wives' cultural influences.

Theoretical Background and Research Methods

Scott (1990) proposed the concept of "hidden transcript" in which he declared that a subordinate can possess a hidden power and be actually the dominant group. Scott distinguished a "public transcript" from a "hidden transcript" in the interaction between dominant and subordinate. Public transcript refers to public interaction which may give a stereotypical impression that the dominant role owns the power and may oppress the subordinate, positioning the subordinate as weak and pathetic. However, this could be misleading because the hidden transcript is in operation. The hidden power the subordinate possesses may influence the wider range and turn his or her weak position into an influential status. For example, in a company, the boss has the dominant role while an employee is the subordinate one. The boss gives orders and the employee takes it. The boss can reprove the employee for efficiency or being late for work. In public, the boss has the power. However, behind this public transcript is the hidden transcript; the employee fulfils the wish of the boss and the boss cannot do his job without the assistance of his employee. Once a long-term employee quits his work, the boss has to postpone or even stop his plan until he finds another reliable employee. The present study delves into the case of immigrant wives based on Scott's hidden transcript. It seems that immigrant wives are a disadvantaged group in Taiwan society, but they have hidden power behind the public transcript.

In the tide of globalization, economics is the predominant cause of political change and population migration. People migrate for economic reasons. As a result, the notion of "flexible citizenship" arises. This citizenship is maintained by administration of economic power (Ong, 1999). Likewise, the success of the immigrant wives in Taiwan is sustained by the hidden but observable power that they have in their adopted families and in Taiwan society.

In order to recognize the power that these new citizens have, we talked to immigrant wives and their husbands based on semi-structured interviews in early 2005. The interviews were conducted mostly in their houses or working places, or most accustomed surroundings, to enable expression of both positive and negative experiences and opinions. An interview schedule was used as a guide. All questions were open-ended and interviewees were encouraged to talk freely about their family lives and work. The interviewees are from Brunei, China, Myanmar, or Vietnam, aged twenty-one to thirty-eight. The husbands aged from thirty-two to forty-five. Most of them are housewives and/or helping with family businesses, some work as factory workers, social volunteer workers, and one is a part-time English teacher.⁴ Most of them have children. Each interview lasted between thirty to fifty minutes. They were taped, transcribed and translated into English.

⁴ Ms. Ju is a special case. She met her husband in England when she was studying law there. She is high educated and with great language proficiency and law knowledge. She knows to and will fight for her right, a good job for her is not only for making money.

Immigrant Wives in Taiwan

The result of our interviews showed that there is truth in the public's general understanding of immigrant wives. Nevertheless, there is more going on behind the scenes. In this section, we present the immigrant wives' roles in their adopted families, and in Taiwan society.

1. In Family

Many migrant wives have power in their Taiwanese families because (a) most of the husbands are afraid that their wives might want to go back their homelands, (b) their families rely on the migrant wives, e.g., for taking care of family members, and (c) these wives give birth to next Taiwanese generation.

First, most of the husbands are afraid that their wives might want to go back to their homelands, which would mean that all their time, costs and energy will be lost. There are media reports that immigrant wives run away or go back to their hometowns (e.g., Zhang, 2000: 41-45; Ruan 2005). Our participants do express this fear. Mr. Va,⁵ who had two children from a former marriage, said that he does not plan to have his wife bear children after being married for 1.5 years, because he is afraid that his wife might return to Vietnam if she does not adjust to Taiwanese life. In that case, child care would be a problem. The hidden transcript between the wife and her husband is that though he is the immediate dominate role in this marriage, and he said "I do not plan to have my wife bear baby" under an imperative tone, he is afraid that his wife might return Vietnam if she does not like the life in Taiwan. He is actually the passive party who depends on his wife's adaptation. "Staying or going" is the power of this immigrant wife. There are also cases (Shen & Wang, 2003: 13) that the husbands want their wives to have babies as soon as possible so that the wives will not think of going back to their homelands.

Ms. Wo, a respondent from China, mentioned that every couple should learn to trust each other, especially those with international marriages. Even though Ms. Wo's marriage is based on love, without trusting each other, one of the spouses may doubt the other side's intention for getting married. Ms. Wo didn't tell the reason why she thought her husband did not trust her in the beginning of their marriage. Undoubtedly, the constant reports of the media about "run away wives" or "fake marriage, factual prostitution" (e.g., Epoch Times, 2001; Liu, 2005; Chen & Cui, 2005) increase this fear. Governmental institutions have similar reports (Wang and Tan, 2004). Reports from the mass media or from the government in this respect have a two-fold effect, as an alert and a fear.

Most of the immigrant wives are ten or more years younger than their spouses (Tsay, 2004), and most husbands have comparatively low socio-economic status and are less educated (Zhang, 2000: 16). We see that these men are disadvantaged in finding Taiwanese partners, and also have the fear that their young wives will leave them. This reinforces the hidden power of the immigrant wives. Trust makes for long-term marriage. Our participants, Ms. Ju, Va and Me, who married for love and had known their husbands for a longer time before they married don't have much of this problem.

⁵ We use codes when mentioning our interview participants.

Second, these families rely on their migrant wives to take care of the elders, to do the housework, to give birth, and so on. They perform the bulk of housework and home care and at the same time gain the reliance of their families. Many immigrant wives think that what they do are their duties. Our interviewees Ms. Wo and her husband Mr. Io run a small business. Mr. Io usually has to go out to sell their goods while Ms. Wo stays at the shop to look after the business and their four-year-old son. Though she does not live with her parents-in-law, she still has plenty to do. She said this is her duty of being a wife and a mother. The hidden transcript between this couple is that while the immigrant wife is doing a lot of housework and performs the duty of a wife, she actually wins the reliance of her husband and families. The same is true with some other interviewees.

Although Ms. Va works in a manufactory, she lives with her family-in-law and shares a lot of housework with her in-laws. Ms. Va said that she works not only to help her family in Vietnam, but also to save money with her husband in order to buy a house of their own. That is their plan. Ms. Me works in her mother-in-law's noodle shop. She said that because her sisters-in-law don't want to inherit this shop, she takes care of it. However, she also stated that she does it of her own accord. The hidden transcript here is that she may gain not only reliance of the families but also family property.

Most of our female participants have a traditional view of being a wife or daughter-in-law and in this way they win their power tenderly and unnoticeably, though unintentionally. They mentioned a Chinese proverb *jia ji sui ji* (嫁雞隨雞 marry a chicken, follow a chicken) meaning that a woman should follow her husband and share a life with him whatever he does and wherever he settles. This is one of their reasons to settle down in Taiwan and take care of the families.

Third, immigrant wives bear and educate the new Taiwanese generation. One of the traditional Chinese values is *buxiao you san, wu hou wei da* (不孝有三 無後為大 among three events of being unfilial, without a son is the vital one) that utters the importance of giving offspring. This Chinese traditional notion is rooted in a lot of Taiwanese parents' mind. While some modern men are not concerned about it, many receive pressure from their parents, which is one of the reasons for having a transnational marriage. Childbearing thus enhances status in the family, for both the immigrant wives and their husbands.

As said, having babies can decide whether the immigrant wives stay in Taiwan or go back to their homelands. From the immigrant wives' perspective, as Shen & Wang (2003: 14) stated, babies become the immigrant wives' power. Having children or not depends on whether they want to stay. Some of them use contraception or have abortions because they don't want to give birth, as two of our interviewees hinted and mass media reported (e.g., Tsai, 2006). Further, when the immigrant wives have children and educate them, mothers' influences on children—part of the new Taiwanese generation—is of concern.

Most of our female participants have their own children. Just like all mothers, they are all proud of their children. Ms. Wo's son is four years old. She insisted that her son has a talent for art and showed us his paintings. She and her husband said that they would have only one child because raising children and educating them costs a lot. Having one well-educated child is this couple's topic priority right now. Ms. Ju, who used to study in England and now is studying in a graduate school, teaches her children to be active in every learning opportunity. She also communicates with her children's school teachers to understand their learning progress.

Ms. Me's and Ms. Pa's children are about to go to junior high. Ms. Me is very concerned with her son's future school. Ms. Pa, from China, said that her daughter performs very well at school so she would consider having her daughter go to Beijing University, which is in her opinion a first-class school. The hidden transcript between Ms. Pa and her husband shows that her influence may affect the study location and the future of their child. When we talked about future plans, most of our participants' biggest wishes are invested in their children's future.

Mothers have important influences on their children. From the interviews we see that immigrant wives are just like ordinary mothers, careful and concerned with their children's raising and education. They have a great deal of influence on Taiwan's new generation.

2. In Society

Societal discrimination is what immigrant wives face in Taiwan society. As Piper stated (1997), the social problems that result from intermarriage, such as lack of social identification, are more serious than individual psychological problems. When talking about the attitude of Taiwanese people toward immigrant wives, discrimination never stopped being mentioned by our participants in the interviews. Ms. Me said that when she worked in a factory, she felt that her boss treated foreigner workers unfairly. Her boss liked to call out, "You! Myanmar!" This term alone hurt the new citizen because it implied that she was a foreigner and showed discrimination.

Employment inevitably is affected by the immigrant spouses' language proficiency. Ms. Ju said that people noticed her accent and refused to employ her, even though she had a diploma in Law. We see that law does not transfer well across political boundaries, though having such a degree would otherwise show her working competence.

In addition, Ms. Fi and Ms. Pa, both from China, complain that they face even more serious societal discrimination and unfair treatment because of the cross-strait political situation. For example, they have to wait more than eight years to get a Taiwanese ID card while Vietnamese wives need to wait only four years. Immigrant wives are not widely accepted within the Taiwanese community. More efforts are needed to understand the new Taiwanese citizens and to accept them positively.

On the other hand, what does the Taiwanese government do for our immigrant wives? After World War II, Taiwan was a deprived country facing population stress. Immigration was never an issue until the mid-1980s, when migrant workers from Southeast Asia were observed on the street for the first time. In 2003, about three years ago, the Taiwanese Ministry of the Interior started to implement the "Action Plan of Providing Services and Assistance to Immigrant Spouses" (Yu, 2003). Local governments provide immigrant wives with counselling courses (Chung, 2004: 94; Shen and Wang, 2003: 13). According to Chang (2003), counselling courses were initiated by non-governmental organizations caring for immigrant wives but became one of government's policies. The counselling courses in Tainan city, for example, includes learning Mandarin and dialects,⁶ mathematics, society and culture, health care, cooking, and so on (Hsu, 2003). These courses are free of charge. However, though most of our participants know about the courses, they are not able to take advantage of them. Some of them are

⁶ Dialects in Taiwan include Taiwanese Southern-Min, Hakka, native Taiwan Austronesian languages, etc. According to Ke (1991), 70% people in Taiwan speak Mandarin as well as Taiwanese Southern-Min.

busy with taking care of their families, such as Ms. Wo, and some lack transportation, like Ms. Fi.

Besides, Ms. Ju mentioned that she tried official employment service. However, the jobs it offers are unacceptable to her. Most of the jobs are labor jobs, such as working in the factory, nursing elders or cleaning houses. Ms. Pa also complained that the choice of occupations is too limited. The service the government provides can be improved to take care of various needs of the new citizens.

Immigrant Wives' Cultural Influences

When immigrant wives become Taiwanese daughters-in-law, and later Taiwanese mothers, their influence on Taiwan can't be ignored. We believe they reify Taiwanese male chauvinism, change the population structure, relieve the workforce shortage, push government to deal with the issue of immigrants, and give Taiwan a multicultural perspective. In this section, we will discuss these points in turn by comparing the results of our fieldwork with the reports of Taiwan media, that of governmental institutions, and other related academic research.

1. Reify Male Chauvinism

Some of the husbands of our participants say that they don't think a local wife would meet their expectations of an ideal wife. Tsay (2004: 8) pointed out that "men tend to marry women who are younger, less educated, and of lower status". This is the so-called slope hypothesis, which proved to be true from our investigations. When more and more women in Taiwan are highly educated and economically independent, fewer and fewer women are content with being full-time housekeepers.⁷ They consider that to be a sacrifice.

Since most men still want to have traditional wives to take care of their families, the patriarchal traditions make it difficult for a Taiwanese man to find a Taiwanese partner. As Chung (2004: 18) and Xiao Long-nu (2005) believed, "Taiwanese men want obedient women to bear children, or take care of the household", that is to say, they like to have a traditional wife. Most of our interviewees do not have a paid job. They are either housewives, such as Ms. Fi and Ms. Pa, or work at family business like Ms. Wo and Ms. Me. Our interviews with the husbands indicate that reports in the media enhance Taiwanese men's idea of marrying an immigrant instead of a local woman.

Hsia (2003) considered the marriage of immigrant wives as commodified transnational marriage. She asserted that the promotion of feminism threatens the predominance of men. So-called "Taiwanese daughters" do not have to be Taiwanese women, but traditional women. As a result, immigrant wives offer Taiwanese men a chance to find traditional wives because as immigrants they are more obedient to their husbands than Taiwanese women would be. They are willing to stay at home, do the housework and take care of the elders. In addition, most of them are economically dependent on their husbands,

⁷ The position of Taiwanese women has risen these years, not only in their level of education, but also in politics. The rate of women receiving doctoral degrees has grown 2.9% from 1998 to 2004 (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, 2004). Ms. Lu Hsiu-Lian became the first female vice president in Taiwanese history in 2000. Ms. Tsai Ying-wen became the first female vice premier in 2006.

and this complements the husband-as-breadwinner model and strengthens their husbands' dignity, in spite of the fact that their husbands do not have high incomes. In this way, the immigrant wives reify the tradition of patriarchy in Taiwan society.

2. Change the Population Structure

Immigrant wives are in great number. They are new Taiwanese citizens. They themselves and their children change Taiwan's population structure. According to the statistic data from the Ministry of the Interior, the population of males is always higher than the population of females in Taiwan. In 2004 the male population was 11,541,585 and the female population was 11,147,537 (Dept. of Household Registration Affairs, MIO, 2005a). That is, there are 394,048 more men in Taiwan. The immigrant wives increase female population. As mentioned above, there are 319,735 immigrant wives in Taiwan as of March, 2005, and the number is increasing. That almost balances the gender difference in Taiwan.

Table 1. New born babies number by mothers' nationality

Year	Total population	Local mothers		Immigrant mothers		
		Population	percentage	Population	percentage	
1998	271,450	257,546	94.88%	13,904	5.12%	
1999	283,661	266,505	93.95%	17,156	6.05%	
2000	305,312	282,073	92.39%	23,239	7.61%	
2001	260,354	232,608	89.34%	27,746	10.66%	
2002	247,530	216,697	87.54%	30,833	12.46%	
2003	227,070	196,722	86.63%	30,348	13.37%	
2004	216,419	187,753	86.75%	11,206	17,460	13.25%

Source: Children's Bureau Ministry of the Interior R.O.C. (Jan. 2005)

Furthermore, when the number of Taiwanese mother's babies decreased from 257,546 in 1998 to 187,753 in 2004, i.e., 27% in six years, the number of immigrant wives' babies (see the column "immigrant mothers") increased from 13,904 to 30,348, i.e., 46% in the same time period (see Table 1). That is to say, the rate of immigrant wives' babies boomed from 5.12% in 1998 to 13.25% in 2004. When the recent birth rate declined in Taiwan (see Fig. 1), as Tsay (2004: 12) indicated, "the contribution made by the 'immigrant wives' to the national number of births has been well recognized and appreciated." The population structure is changing because of the immigrant wives.

3. Relief the Workforce Shortage

According to the statistics from the Ministry of the Interior (2005b), 82,219 immigrant spouses have a working permit, but among them only 28,496 have a paid job. As a matter of fact, all of our interviewees are working, doing either paid (Ms. Va works at a factory and Ms. Ju is a part-time English teacher) or unpaid work (Ms. Me sells home-made sweets and Ms. Fa is a housewife and also

works at family farmland). Immigrant wives are “economically productive” since they either have a job or help with the household economy by doing agricultural work or unpaid work for the family. Most of our participants perform the latter. They seem to regard taking care of the family as their duty and do it willingly, unlike many modern Taiwanese women. Their contribution in the traditional Taiwanese family is, as in Tsay’s (2004: 13) words, an “irreplaceable part of the country.”

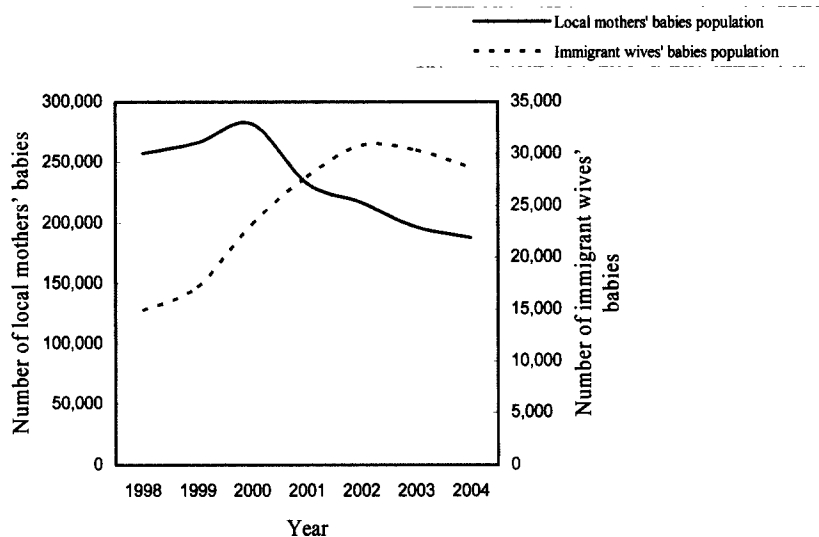


Fig. 1. New born babies number by mothers' nationality

When immigrant wives obtain working permits and can have jobs, they usually work as nurses, waitresses or factory workers. Their place in these areas relieves the workforce shortage of Taiwanese workers.

4. Push Government to Deal with the Issue of Immigrants

The Media presents an image of immigrant wives as social trouble makers. When there is news about using fake marriage to actually import foreign women for prostitution (e.g., Chen & Cui, 2005) or immigrant wives' children having learning disability (e.g., Juan, Chen, & Lin, 2003), people consider immigrant wives as the ones who are to be blamed. However, such problems reveal that our government does not have enough experience to deal with these issues. Though the government provides some services, more powerful support structures are necessary.

Recently, as mentioned, the Taiwanese government has begun to take the immigrant issue seriously. New policies are being set up. For instance, in regard to life care, the governmental institutions have counselling courses and encourage immigrant wives to enroll. The government also provides one thousand Taiwan dollars per person for contraceptive devices, three thousand Taiwan dollars for prenatal examinations, and ten thousand for ligation. In regard to child care, two thousand

five hundred Taiwan dollars are given monthly to the immigrant wives of low-income families for child nourishment, and all children of immigrant wives have priority to register in public kindergartens (Lin, 2004).

In regard to work, one of our participants complained to us that the government's policy about working permit is not fair. As she is from Mainland China, it takes more years for her to obtain a working permit than others from other part of Asia. As mentioned in the last section, the Ministry of the Interior in 2004 documented that 65% (53,728 out of 82,219) of immigrant spouses with working permits do not have a job. Though some foreign women come to Taiwan to work as prostitutes, most immigrant wives want legal jobs. The government has policies in this regard too. Job training started since 1998, as well as small business loans. Now we can see a great progress that some of immigrant wives are working in hospitals as translators for immigrants.

However, it is expected that more reasonable policies be drawn forth to assist the social integration of our immigrant wives. The experience of other immigration countries such as that of Australia (Iredale, 1994; Iredale, Innes, & Castles, 1992) can be of reference. For example, in Australia, immigrants are provided with family doctors. A list of the doctors can be found under "Medical Practitioners" in the telephone directory. Community Health Centres, operated by local governments, provide health screenings for young children as well as support, education and information for parents. In the labor field, Migrant Resource Centres and Migrant Service Agencies provide advice on finding work, and they also have specialist placement officers to help immigrants find work. Most importantly, the Australian government has a Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to take charge of these issues.

5. Give a Multicultural Perspective

We have immigrant wives among our relatives, or we easily meet them in the neighbourhood or at the workplace. When walking on the street, we see different Asian faces and shops of various Asian cultures. The opening of multi-cultural businesses increases economic possibilities. There are Vietnamese restaurants and Southeast Asian handicraft stores on the street, as well as the boom of marriage broker's international businesses. Also, the Taiwanese businessmen see the immigrant wives as new customers, and design credit cards, cell phones, etc. specifically for them. With these daughters-in-law from different cultural backgrounds, we actually get the chance to learn to appreciate different cultures. All these have become part of Taiwanese culture now.

Moreover, immigrant wives mirror ourselves when we are abroad. Some Taiwanese women want to marry foreign men. They might find themselves in the same circumstances that the immigrant wives have in Taiwan. Through the new Taiwanese daughters-in-law, people in Taiwan learn to view the world in both advantage and disadvantage standpoints.

Some Taiwanese people find this new multicultural trend difficult to cope with and therefore disdain it or discriminate against immigrant wives. Yet, once we turn to accommodate this fact with confidence, Taiwan may become a cultural-economic center in Asia a couple of generations later. Because immigrant wives bring in not only their native languages, but also cultural customs, cuisine, home stories, songs, memories and personal relations in their native countries, that connect peoples and

cultures. Moreover, in some years, the new Taiwanese generation will be able to speak many Asian languages and inherit various Asian cultures from their mothers.

Conclusion

Immigrant wives are described as a group of disadvantaged women. At the same time, the number of them is increasing mainly for the following reasons (a). some Taiwanese men consider themselves as disadvantaged in finding Taiwanese wives, and (b). these men are under the pressure of giving offspring as many other Taiwanese men do, (c). the trend of globalization that Taiwanese women marry to men of other countries, while Taiwanese men marry to women from other countries. These and other reasons were discussed from two aspects in the two sections: immigrant wives in Taiwan, and immigrant wives' cultural influences.

When men marry to women from other countries, these immigrant wives are disadvantaged not only because they have to accommodate themselves to a new country, a new culture and a new identity, but also their husbands (in most cases) are not in the high socio-economic.

These men are comparatively disadvantaged in Taiwan. Therefore, they might have difficulty finding a Taiwanese wife. Moreover, some men still yearn for a more traditional and obedient wife whom they might not find easily in Taiwan. However, these men are still under the pressure of finding an ideal wife and having offspring. These pressures force them to get a wife from somewhere else.

On the other hand, the power structure of gender in Taiwan has been changed, but people's ideas of an ideal husband or wife are still quiet traditional. That is, for men to find a wife that is of lower status and for women to find a husband that is of higher status. As a result, some Taiwanese women marry to men of other countries and the men have fewer chances to find themselves an ideal Taiwanese spouse. As a result, the number of immigrant wives are increasing.

Scott's hidden power (1990) is the theoretical background of this study. On the theoretical front, this study shows that immigrant wives do possess a hidden power: (1) most of their husbands are afraid that they would want to go back to their homelands, (2) families rely on them for taking care of the family, (3) they will highly influence the next generation, and (4) the Taiwanese government must deal with their cultural acclimation.

From the analysis of our interviews, we found that the government either mostly sees the problems that are reported to them or gives statistic data without making an in-depth probe of the messages that the facts reflected. Some of the media outlets do provide data for our study, but many reports tend to reinforce negative stereotypes of immigrants. In fact, let alone the social problems and pessimistic reports, immigrant wives are the new citizens of Taiwan who shore up Taiwan's declining fertility rate, relieve the shortage of workforce, intensify the multi-cultural environment of Taiwan, and also push the government to face this issue seriously and set up new policies.

The imbalance of the global economy has pulled women from less developed countries to other countries. Just like Asian women have married to Westerners and moved to other countries, Taiwan has become an immigrant destination for Chinese and Southeast Asian women. As immigrant wives

gradually become an irreplaceable part of Taiwan, their influence on Taiwan can no longer be ignored. This study enables us to see this issue from the immigrant wives' points of view. It reflects our own situation when we are abroad and allows us to think about Taiwan's international role. In addition to the power that they have within their Taiwanese families and what they have performed as new Taiwanese daughter-in-laws, immigrant wives provide Taiwan a lesson for globalization and may push Taiwan to become an Asian cultural economic center in some decades.

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Appendix

Information of Interviewees:

Interviewees	Age	Time-span in Taiwan (until March, 2005)	Original Nationality	Occupation
Ms. Va	19	6 months	Vietnam	factory
Mr. Ha*	32	born in Taiwan	Taiwan	electrician
Ms. Wo	33	5 years	China	family business
Mr. Io*	41	born in Taiwan	Taiwan	family business
Ms. Me	30	20 years	Myanmar	family business
Ms. Fi	50	1~2 years	China	family business
Ms. Pa	40	over 10 years	China	housewife
Ms. Fa	36	over 10 years	China	working
Ms. Ju	38	10 years	Brunei	graduate student/ cram school teacher

The data was collected in March, 2005.

* Mr. Ha is Ms. Va's husband, and Mr. Io is Ms. Wo's husband.

外籍女性配偶及其對台灣文化的影響

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摘要

台灣近年來女性外籍配偶的數量遽增，許多媒體以及研究者皆針對其家庭暴力等問題做報導及探討。本研究旨在透過訪問這些女性外籍配偶以及她們的家人，探討這些跨國婚姻而移民台灣的女性在台灣家庭中，甚至是廣大社會中所隱藏的角色以及其實質上的社會地位。我們也將本研究得到的結果和台灣媒體及政府機構的報導做比較。結果顯示台灣政府多半將外籍配偶的問題視為冰山中的一角，然而外籍配偶不論是對於其家庭或是整個台灣社會都有不容忽略的影響力。此外，外籍配偶不僅能促使台灣政府考慮多元文化的政策，同時亦使台灣人民有機會能接觸到不同的民族文化，同時也讓台灣社會習得全球化時代寶貴的一課。

關鍵字：文化遷移、全球化、外籍配偶