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5 Transnational Marriage Migration and the East Asian Family-Based Welfare Model: Social Reproduction in Vietnam, Taiwan, and South Korea

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Abstract

Since the late 1990s there has been a rising trend of Vietnamese women migrating to neighbouring countries (Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and China) for marriage. Previous studies of such cross-border marriages have emphasized either issues of choice and agency for women, or their poverty and victimhood. This chapter analyses this trend along the lines of the debate on the East Asian model of welfare and family policy, with case studies in Taiwan and South Korea. It views *commercially arranged transnational marriages* (CATM) as an institution that connects changing gendered regimes of social reproduction at the sending and receiving ends. Mediated by a combination of asymmetrical relations – gender, class, age, ethnicity, and national belonging– this institution operates in a transnational space through which material and symbolic resources are circulated. These in turn construct subjectivities and identities for participating actors. There is a dimension of trans-masculinity embodied in the practices of CATM and this requires further exploration regarding informed consent and the rights of its users. Beyond this, CATM should be further analysed in the context of changing family welfare and intergenerational care as gendered regimes, and such an analysis should also address how households adapt and devise new strategies to sustain and reproduce themselves economically, socially, and culturally. Such an understanding can help open the research agenda on social policy and rights and provide a regional perspective.

Keywords: Transnational marriages, East Asian family welfare model, gender, social reproduction, care, social policy, ethnicity, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam.

5.1 Introduction[4]

Economic and political transformation under the East Asian model of development and its South-East Asian followers has historically received much attention (Stiglitz/Yusuf 2001; Wade 2003). More recently, two emerging independent debates have opened a new line of enquiry on its reproductive side. One debate concerns the East Asian welfare model based on Confucian family ideology, which operates simultaneously as a welfare regime and a main source of hegemony and legitimacy in the model of the 'developmental state' (Jones 1990; Goodman/Peng 1996). The other debate concerns the patterns of women moving from South-East Asian countries to East Asian countries for marriage. Enquiries into these marriages, formally labelled as 'international marriage', have so far followed two main tracks. One track emphasizes issues of cultural identity, desire for mobility, and women's agency in 'global hypergamy', notably where women marry to move up to a higher socio-economic location in the global hierarchy (Piper 2003; Constable 2005). The main issue here concerns the politics of inclusion/ex-

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clusion regarding their citizenship and their individual rights. The other track takes a socio-demographic perspective, arguing that changing gender relations in the household and labour market, as well as an imbalance in sex ratios that favours male births, are factors that have led to a 'marriage squeeze' for men among certain groups (Lee 2005). Suzuki (2003) refers to the vernacular expression 'bride famine', common in some rural areas in Japan, while Kojima (2001) uses the term 'patriarchy's coping strategy' to explain the involvement of local governments in finding eligible foreign women for marriage with their citizens—in an attempt to circumvent the effects of a structural problem of gender inequality. Political and ethnic factors behind the choice of the community of origin of the foreign brides have also been noted (Jones/Shen 2008; Lan 2008; Yang/Lu 2010). The role of commercial agents in matching men's preferences with eligible women across borders has also been emphasized (Wang/Chang 2002). Recent research findings in the case of Vietnam by Bélanger and Tran (2011: 61) suggest that that by 'marrying up', or simply marrying across borders, Vietnamese women may be creating a domino effect in the formation of a 'global marital and reproductive chain' that echoes the notion of a 'care chain' (Yeates 2012).

This chapter examines the formation of *commercially arranged transnational marriage* (CATM) as a vehicle used among certain social groups in Taiwan, South Korea, and Vietnam in the context of the transition of the Confucian family within the East Asian welfare regime and its structural gendered features. After four decades as the backbone of welfare provision in support of the goals of the developmental state in countries classified as part of the East Asian Miracle (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore), this welfare regime now shows signs of instability in terms of human reproduction and intergenerational care. The three countries of this study – Taiwan, South Korea, and Vietnam – share a common legacy of Confucian values, particularly visible in the domain of the family. Historically specific to this part of the world is the concept of the family as kinship ties, often conflated in practice with the household registration system as an administrative device for bio-control (births, deaths, marriages, divorces, migration, and social entitlements).[5] The family and household are deeply interrelated but should be kept analytically distinct in order to discern: (a) how historically formed family practices of bio-control based on gender lines are articulated in relation to specific duties; and (b) how the household as a unit for resource allocation/management can be subject to change due to broader changes in the economy and state policy, which in turn can affect family relations.

While emerging practices of transnational marriage may signify a transition of the Confucian normative regimes of family and inter-generational care, their meanings may differ for the actors involved owing to very different development trajectories that generate a different understanding of gender equality and the family. To discern commonality and gendered difference in perceptions of transnational marriage, we adopted a multi-sited research methodology. An extensive review of the literature on marriage and the family in a transnational context was conducted in conjunction with an analysis of debates on gender regimes in migration in South-East Asia. In 2008, fieldwork was conducted in several rural communities in Vietnam known for sending women as brides to East Asia, where interviews with potential brides, returnees, and their parents were held. In 2009 we visited several cities in Taiwan and Korea where women who have used commercially arranged marriage as a vehicle to find husbands have found new homes. Snowball techniques were employed to identify and select respondents, which included local officials, the husbands, wives, and in-laws.[6] The aim of in-depth interviews was to obtain information on the procedures of CATM as they have experienced it, and the adjustments required in a new country as a mother, wife, daughter-in-law, and member of the local community.

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5 *Hukou* refers to a system of household registration dating back to China's ancient history. Originally, the system was designed to serve the purpose of administrative regulation of the population and representation of family authority under the male line of inheritance. Through direct and indirect influence, the system is also found in Vietnam (*Ho khau*), Korea (*Hoju*), Japan, and Taiwan (*Koseki*). In South Korea the system was abolished on 1 January 2005. In Japan and Taiwan the system still exists, but only as a tool for administration that has no impact on a resident's movement. In the *People's Republic of China* (PRC) and the *Socialist Republic of Vietnam* (SRVN) the system functions as a means to establish land use rights, the right of residence, and access to social entitlements.

6 In Vietnam, fieldwork covered 16 returnees as former wives through CATM from Taiwan (7) and South Korea (9); 2 mothers of the returnees and 3 officials from local authorities of the sending communes. In Taiwan, in-depth interviews were held with 19 Vietnamese wives through CATM, 6 husbands, and 5 mothers-in-law. In South Korea, interviews were held with 25 Vietnamese wives through CATM, 4 husbands, and 4 mothers-in-law.

Section 5.2 clarifies the meaning of the terms 'transnational marriages', 'social reproduction' and 'the reproductive bargain'– the latter being considered a useful analytical tool to explore how interactions between institutions and people reproduce gender relations in the household and family and their structures. Section 5.3 discusses different manifestations of the crisis of social reproduction in Taiwan and South Korea, with a focus on: (1) a bio-crisis (human reproduction and inter-generational care) and a crisis of cultural reproduction *vis-à-vis* the Confucian family-based welfare system, and (2) a livelihood crisis *vis-à-vis* the position of the rural household after two decades of Vietnam's market reform. Section 5.4 discusses the emergence of the marriage business as a system of networks formed in both sending and receiving countries, as well as discursive constructs and practices of identity. Section 5.5 demonstrates the diversity in the social positioning of Vietnamese women as daughters-in-law and how within a transnational context the meanings of 'tradition' and 'modernity' can be made and remade. Some women are also able to negotiate their female gender-based duties and entitlements in their new homes while maintaining their distinctive identity as members of their birth families. The conclusion suggests the need for a more holistic analysis of transnational marriage as a formation through which a transfer of values and resources takes place and gender relations are reproduced in terms of trans-masculinity, with implications for social policy and rights.

5.2 Viewing Commercially Arranged Transnational Marriages from the Perspective of Social Reproduction

5.2.1 Defining Transnational Marriages

Marriage between people of different nationalities is commonly defined as international marriage, reflecting the nation state as the key actor in formalizing a union. The body of literature on marriage migration within and between different regions of the world has introduced two new key terms to indicate different conceptual emphases: cross-border and transnational marriage (Lu 2007; Constable 2005, 2009). The emphasis on borders distinguishes between those defined by the nation state (immigration and citizenship) and those operating at the inter-group level (race, ethnicity, class, gender). Both types of borders are often based on a binary construct of 'We' versus the 'Others', allowing for a selective and contextual understanding of the sense of belonging to a family, community, and nation state. Legal borders express the normative principles of marriage as an institution and embody the collective values of a nation state. Borders drawn up at inter-group level are more dynamic and fluid and express the collective memories of a social group.

In states ruled by strong nationalist sentiment, as in the case of East Asia, the foreign wives are commonly classified as cultural outsiders, particularly if they come from countries with a colonial legacy. They are called *Ajia no hanayome* (brides from Asia) in Japan; *Chosnjok brides* (brides from ethnic Korean communities living in China), later changed into the neutral term of *damunwha* or 'multicultural' marriages in South Korea; *Waiji/dalu Xinniang* (foreign/mainland brides) in Taiwan (Yang/Lu 2010). Their status as foreign is specified in geo-political terms, with South Korea moving towards a more open position.

The concept of 'transnational marriage' borrows from Faist (2000: 199–200) the idea of a transnational social space, which refers to the combination of sustained social and symbolic ties and their contents and positions in networks and organizations that can be found in more than one nation state. Transnational marriages may be considered as unions formed within such a space, simultaneously sustaining it through bi-directional practices of financial, social, and cultural remittances (Suksomboon 2008). Linked to this concept is the notion of the "transnational family" defined as those "families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity" (Bryceson/Vuorela, 2002: 3). Due to diverse kinship traditions and individual social histories brought into the marriage by the spouses,[7] empirically the family in a transnational marriage may involve multi-layered flows of emotions, values, and resources between separate places. As perceptions about ties and positions may differ between spouses, families formed through transnational marriage should be considered in the context of more than one regime of family welfare and intergenera-

7 For example, in a patrifocal kinship relationships are centred around, or focused on, the father; in a matrifocal kinship they are centred around the mother, and in bilateral kinship both father and mother lines count. Bifocal practices allow a married woman to pay attention to the husband's household as well as her own birth household (Dube 1997).

tional care. Limiting the analysis of the family and of a gendered regime of care and welfare to a particular society, nation, or its culture is increasingly problematic in view of trans-border flows and conflicting perspectives on family duties.

5.2.2 Social Reproduction and the Reproductive Bargain: A Perspective on Transnational Marriages

Informed by, but critical of, the Marxist intellectual tradition which limits the concept of social reproduction to the renewal of social relations and material bases of the society and economy, feminist theorizations try to bridge the conceptual and theoretical separation between the production of things and the creation and maintenance of human lives (Katz 2011). Social reproduction in feminist terms encapsulates many layers of power relations that are historically shaped: sexuality and biological reproduction; reproduction of labour power inclusive of an intergenerational process of care provision; reproduction of social relations and institutions, of which the family and its relationship with the state is one of the most significant (Whitehead 2002). Social reproduction simultaneously is a material and a discursive system through which a society recreates itself biologically, emotionally, culturally, institutionally, and economically. As Kabeer (2004: 10) points out, this process involves an array of institutional structures and activities that embody gendered values and knowledge, therefore regimes of social reproduction are essentially gendered regimes, particularly as regards the significance attached to reproductive activities and the recognition given to those who carry them out.

It is here that the concept of 'reproductive bargain' introduced by Pearson (1997) is particularly valuable. The concept originally referred to the division of responsibility for different aspects of daily, generational, and social reproduction between the state, the household, and individuals in terms of resources that are collectively provided, and those that are accessed through wages and other money incomes. By studying the changing institutional arrangements in Cuba, which underwent a rapid transition in the 1990s, Pearson demonstrates how households adapt and devise new strategies to sustain and reproduce themselves, strategies that are patterned by an existing gender division of labour, and in some aspects, reinforced traditional gender roles.

Building on this insight, Gottfried (2009: 77) proposes a more general model to analyse an ensemble of institutions, ideologies, and identities around social provisioning and care for human beings. According to her the reproductive bargain:

> [...] constitutes a hegemonic framework within which actors negotiate rules. Bargain implies a bounded agreement (structure) proscribing and prescribing conduct, but it also injects a dynamic notion of boundaries being made (agency). Actors negotiate from different structural positions of power with different resources (material, symbolic and organizational). As a social process, agents interpret rules and influence rule making that can call into question and alter the boundaries of the bargain.

The reproductive bargain as a concept is a useful tool for carrying out an inductive gender analysis of the contextually formed ensemble of institutions and the discursive practices that affect the family as a site of social reproduction (biological reproduction, intergenerational care). Within a given social structure that affords different resources (material, symbolic, organizational) to people, the boundaries of the bargain are redefined and altered as actors in different positions interpret, negotiate, and perform rules in a social process. Underlying the whole concept of the reproductive bargain is the primary question of how power relationships are negotiated and played out among actors, leading to specific outcomes regarding which aspects of reproduction are subject to commodification and market dynamics, and which are socialized (Clement/Prus 2004: 5).

Contextual discourses on gender, ethnicity, and identity also affect and interact with political and economic forces to structure a social environment in which the reproductive bargain takes place. In East and South-East Asia, there have been strong links between the institutionalization of marriage and ideologies of family in the process of nation-building (Toyota 2008). Biological reproduction in this context is also related to what Yuval-Davis (1997) refers to as the cultural reproduction of the nation, which involves the transfer of an essentialized notion of the 'national culture' and its values, at times conditional on membership of the nation. Premised on a vision of the nation as a discrete self-contained entity, coterminous with the nation state and a national society, the notion of 'national culture' homogenizes diverse ethnic identities and bypasses trans-border cultural flows, co-influencing beliefs, habits, and practices of gender. Ideal forms of masculinity and femininity are constructed in accordance with their relationship to the 'nation'. The reproductive bargain in this context concerns not only material resources but also subjectivities and practices of identity.

Hearn (2010: 178) points out that, when analysing trans-border phenomena such as viewing the sex trade and its virtualization through *information and communications technology* (ICT) and media advertising, there is a clear construct of trans-masculinity that limits the possibility of moving towards gender equality where some social and legal foundations already exist. In this vein, commercially arranged transnational marriages that rely on a transnational space through virtualizations and inscription of masculine values may be considered as a manifestation of trans-masculinity that enables the cultural reproduction of a male-centred family. This process cannot be grasped by looking at a single site and at one period of time; it requires attention to signifiers of gender transformation over long periods.

5.3 Different Places, Different Social Reproduction Crisis

5.3.1 The East Asian Family-Based Welfare Regime and Transnational Marriages: Deterioration of the Confucian Family?

The debate on the East Asian family-based welfare regime (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) is divided between those who endorse a cultural perspective and those who emphasize political and economic determinants. The cultural argument emphasizes as the key norms Confucian values such as filial piety, inter-generational reciprocity, and self-reliance of the family *vis-à-vis* the state. These values play a primary role in shaping the arrangement of welfare provisions around the family as a key institution enforced by strong social control. State assistance remains minimal and available only when other sources of support can no longer be found (Jones 1990; Goodman/Peng 1996). The political economy argument points to different trajectories of East Asian welfare regimes that should be explained in terms of the corresponding development trajectories, political democratization, and the role of pressure groups in civil society (Aspalter 2006).

Notwithstanding variations in family and welfare policy among these four countries, there are some common socio-demographic changes after four decades of high economic growth. These include ageing population, declining or low fertility rate, delayed marriage, singlehood, and rising female labour participation (Chiu/Wong 2009). These features correspond to an increased number of registered international marriages, many of which involve a male national and a foreign woman.[8] These may be signifiers of a social reproduction crisis *vis-à-vis* the Confucian family, and perhaps also the relative weakness of women's organizations in bargaining with the state for support in intergenerational care, currently defined as a female domain.

As the two countries which receive Vietnamese women as brides, South Korea and Taiwan have different welfare arrangements, largely influenced by the landscape of their industrialization. While large corporations have dominated South Korean industrialization and are governed by relatively patriarchal and authoritarian regimes, family-owned small companies have characterized Taiwan's path. These aspects have a bearing on the configurations of family welfare and care regimes and the forces behind democratization and policy reforms (Aspalter 2005: 9; 2006).

The post-war welfare regime in Korea was characterized as a family-based welfare regime built on a rigid gender division of labour. Corporations adopted the construct of the family wage paid to the male employee, who relies on the non-working wife to provide care for family members, while the state provided residual support (Aspalter 2006). As Truong (1999) has shown, the massive participation of women in the labour force—supporting the initial stage of rapid industrialization—was managed through the intervention of the state and firms into the cycle of their reproductive life: recruited for paid work at pre-marriage age and encouraged to leave employment to raise a family (most likely in a three-generation household) after marriage, women return to part-time employment after childbearing age.

In the post-Beijing period, policies to build a strong and competitive labour force have invested in women's education (Mark 2007), and recently social

8 Yang and Lu (2010) note the following: in Japan the number of international marriages has grown from 0.43 per cent in 1965 to 0.93 per cent in 1980, and then to 5.77 per cent in 2005, with Chinese and Filipina female spouses at the top of the list. In Taiwan, cross-border marriages involving brides from Indonesia, Vietnam, and the People's Republic of China gained numerical significance from the mid-1980s onwards, and by 2002 they comprised 27.4 per cent of all Taiwanese marriages in that year. In Hong Kong, the number of cross-border marriages between Hong Kong residents and mainland Chinese has increased tenfold from 1995 to 2005, accounting for more than one-third of registered marriages involving Hong Kong residents in 2005. In South Korea, the number of international marriages multiplied 9.2 times between 1990 and 2005, constituting 13.6 per cent of newly-weds in 2005.

policies designed to promote equal opportunity between men and women have emerged.[9] The definition of gender equality is limited to equal opportunities in employment in order to fuel growth based on upgrading technology, allowing for a move into new areas of export (the knowledge economy and 'creative industries' such as media and communications technology) (Henry 2008; Marginson/Kaur/Sawir 2011). While women may have benefited from the opening of these new sectors, the structures of gender inequality that underpin the combination of the 'familialism' and 'developmentalism' model of economy remain unbroken (Peng 2008). As the society is facing a rapidly ageing population, and the fertility rate is below the replacement level (Rallu 2006), the state took an interventionist approach in 2004, based on the family/work balance model that offers cash allowances, child care provision, after-school care, parental leave, and arrangements for care of the elderly. It recognizes the significant percentage of the elderly living with grown-up children.[10] Yet inter-generational reciprocity in the Confucian family as an ethical principle remains strong while workplace practices remain family-unfriendly. Working women wanting to find a balance between work and family life must draw on the support of family members or in-laws living nearby, given that intergenerational care remains primarily the duty of women (Sung 2003).

Turning to Taiwan, though demographic changes are similar to South Korea, the family remains a significant force in enforcing obligations for intergenerational care. Women still provide a large proportion of unpaid care work, and both children and the elderly are still commonly taken care of by family members.[11] This resilience of the traditional family is the main reason why Taiwan lags almost a decade behind Korea in launching major family policy reforms, even though the pace of its democratization was not far behind that of Korea (Aspalter 2006).

According to Lan (2008), the Taiwanese government has deliberately praised and encouraged three-generation households as a time-honoured solution to childcare and care of the elderly (Lan 2008). Lan (2008) also points out that for middle-class families, the solution to the shortage of care is to hire migrant domestic workers, whereas for working-class families who cannot afford this option, a foreign bride is the solution to the shortage of reproductive care labour through a marriage contract. The 'care deficit' can thus be seen as a narrative to rationalize the recruitment of cheap and disposable migrant labour for middle-class families, while the 'bride deficit' is a narrative used to justify working-class men's needs not only for brides but also for unpaid reproductive labour (Lan 2008; Wang 2010). In 2008, Taiwan launched a Family Policy White Paper that includes cash allowances for child support, paid maternity leave (no paternity leave or childcare leave are mentioned), childcare provisions at the community level, and provisions for care of the elderly. The vision of the policy is far more modest than South Korea's (Chiu/Wong 2009: 117–119).

In both countries, despite these reforms it would seem that traditional patterns are pervasive for a relatively large segment of society. Where gender norms in the family remain unchanged, and options within national borders are not available, searching for solutions overseas becomes inevitable. Because practices of care itself are culturally embedded, searching for partners with some cultural proximity appears necessary.

5.3.2 Social Reproduction Crisis in Vietnam: A Focus on the Rural Sector

While the Vietnamese culture is a part of the East Asian legal traditions influenced by Confucian ethics, its gender order remains an exception owing to the principle of gender equality in the *Hong Duc* Codes (fifteenth to eighteenth centuries). The Civil Codes preserved Confucian ethics by assigning the wife a lesser status than the husband in a patriarchal family, but forbade domestic violence and granted divorce on several grounds unknown to the Chinese Codes.[12] The Codes not only retained a lasting influence up to the mid-twentieth century among the population, but also among the French colonial courts in Vietnam, particularly on the recognition of inheritance rights for women (Ta 1982). This can be seen in the 1959 Family Law of the Republic of Vietnam, which upheld

9 In South Korea, the Equal Employment Act was enacted with the purpose of increasing equality in the labour market between the sexes in 1985. In the wake of the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action, the Korean National Assembly passed the Women's Development Act, stipulating the duties of public bodies to eliminate discrimination, to promote the advancement of women in public life, and to enhance their welfare and living conditions within the family. The Ministry of Gender Equality was established in 2001 and expanded in 2005 and renamed the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (Won 2007).

10 This percentage has fallen from over 65 per cent in 1988 to 44 per cent in 2004 (Chiu/Wong 2009: 104).

11 In Taiwan the percentage of the elderly living with grown-up children had fallen from over 70 per cent in 1986 to 63 per cent in 2002 (Chiu/Wong 2009: 115).

equality of powers between husband and wife, as well as in two succeeding statutes, the 1964 Family Law and the 1972 Civil Code. The recognition of women's right to own land and their personal rights in marriage are considered by Vietnamese historians to be the formal recognition of women's active contribution to agricultural production, trades, and other economic activities over centuries, above and beyond their contributions to family well-being (Mai/Le 1978). Since the founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945, and in the now unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam, full legal capacity and equality has been granted to women in successive legislation.

Since the late 1980s Vietnam has been undergoing a major process of reforms, known as *Doi Moi* or a gradual movement towards a market economy. Agricultural Decision No. 10 in 1988 aimed at liberalizing the agricultural sector in Vietnam and provided land use rights for ten to fifteen years of secure tenure. Output markets were privatized and investment decisions were decentralized and left to the household. This system, known as the household contract-based system (*khoan ho)*, was supplemented by the Land Law of 1993 which gave households the right to inherit, transfer, exchange, lease, and mortgage their land use rights. Equal rights for men and women in land use rights are ensured. Land ownership remains entirely within state purview; land use rights can be withdrawn by the state for a specified purpose of national interest.

In practice, under the household contract-based system, the rural household became at once a unit of production and of social reproduction. The promotion of the household economy was also accompanied by the dismantling of local arrangements for social rights (childcare, care of the elderly, food entitlements when in need, primary health services, and education) that had been crafted into a network of cooperation between different local institutions (Truong 1997; 2006). Vijverberg and Haughton (2004) noted that as the household economy reached its first stage of saturation, surviving households became male-led. There was a tendency for men to 'take over' successful household enterprises and to play a more prominent role, despite women's having contributed many more hours of work. The rural household became a site of tension regarding the demands for both productive and reproductive labour that restrict women's ability to bargain for more time and resources for self-employment.

This withdrawal of the government from its role as the sole provider of employment and social services was a clear indicator of a major shift in the organization of social reproduction: from a state-led welfare regime to the East Asian Confucian family-based welfare regime, although in Vietnam there is no residual state support, except micro-credit in poverty alleviation programmes. Rural families now alter their strategy, placing considerable burdens on women. Both time and effort spent by women to meet daily and generational reproduction requirements in the family have significantly increased (Khuat/Bui/Le 2009). As market reforms deepened in rural areas, the need for women to engage in livelihood generation is also increasingly felt, particularly the need for a cash income to cover rising expenses in production and reproduction. Ironically, the more women engage in income-generating activities, the less they are able or willing to take on social reproductive roles as fully as expected by the revitalized gender norms in the family.

In particular, the pro-growth policies geared to turn Vietnam into a new 'tiger' economy have created many crises in the countryside, particularly around land use rights. One of the indications of this crisis is the increase of independent migration by women, both rural-to-urban and to neighbouring countries (Truong/Scott 2004; Nguyen/Truong/Resurreccion 2008). This trend may in part be a response to the risk of being landless, which is increasing as the state grants more favours to a few powerful actors, including foreign investors, state-owned companies, and state-backed private enterprises, and initiates the process of land reacquisition from farmers. One area where these land-related risks are high is the Mekong Delta; this is also where the migration of women to East Asian countries as brides is most common. Among the 635 households interviewed there in 2004 by Nguyen and Tran (2010: 165–168), over eighty-one per cent of the parents hoped to escape poverty through their daughters' marriages overseas.

Rather than paying attention to the specific micro-forces that generate new forms of rural poverty and its gendered dimensions, the state is using a new rhetoric of the family as a domain 'naturally' fit for women, reflecting a return to idealized Confucian norms. Similarly, state policies use the social perception of feminine virtues that underlies women's chief

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12 For example, a husband who neglected his wife and, unless on a public mission, did not personally visit her for five months (one year if they had children), would be deprived of his rights over his wife; she might then report the fact to the authority and remarry. The Criminal Codes also acknowledged the personal rights of women (Ta 1982: 548).

role in child-rearing and care for elderly or sick members of the family to encourage women to be "good doers of both state and domestic works" (Khuat/Bui/Le 2011). This emphasis on traditional gender roles by the government appears to be critically linked with the social and political stability of the nation (Gammeltoft 1998; Le 2004; Schuler/Anh/Ha/Minh/Mai/Thien 2006).

The rural reproductive crisis in Vietnam after three decades of market reform appears to be linked to the short-lived success of the household economy, which has proved to be too weak to absorb emerging structural risks and vulnerabilities derived from land leased from the state and the penetration of industry into rural areas. Yet it is expected to function also as a family-based welfare system in line with other East Asian countries. The initial reproductive bargain between the state and rural households under the household-contract system has outlived its relevance, yet so far the law remains unchanged. The burden of reproducing the household falls heavily on middle-aged women and old people, as young men, single women, and married women out-migrate in search of an income to protect the land that had been leased to the family.

5.4 Market Response: Arranging Marriages, Earning Profits, and Constructing 'Modernity'

Transnational marriage migration in Vietnam on today's scale is unprecedented and rapidly increasing to the countries in the region–South Korea, Taiwan, and China (IOM 2008: 170). In 2001, some 60,000 Vietnamese women had married men from Taiwan, and by the end of 2008 the estimated number rose to over 100,000 (Tang/Belanger/Wang 2011). In South Korea, marriages between Korean men and Vietnamese women increased from an insignificant number (95 in 2000) to a total of 10,131 in 2006, or a 73 per cent increase in this period and representing 33.5 per cent of total cases for that year (Kim/Shin 2008). Private agencies involved in commercially arranged transnational marriages between Taiwan and Vietnam initially emerged in the late mid-1990s, and they are now also active in South Korea.

As our interviews with Vietnamese spouses and their husbands show, the agencies and sub-agencies through which their marriages were arranged form a complex web of activities interlinked across national borders. Given the poorly enforced regulation of matchmaking agencies in Taiwan and South Korea, and the virtual absence of regulation in Vietnam, both brides and grooms become vulnerable to the conduct of these agencies, which in many cases are deceptive and essentially exploitative.

To create a demand by Korean and Taiwanese men for cross-border marriage, matchmaking agencies in the two countries construct a favourable image of brides from less developed nations like Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. They are depicted as a traditional 'gift' that will meet the needs for traditional social provisioning and care not only for their husbands but also for their husbands' parents. Lower-class men's access to matchmaking services is made easy, with attractive advertisements for 'purchasable traditional' spouses on television, in newspapers, and on street posters visible everywhere in these countries.

Typically, a Taiwanese or Korean man deciding to marry a Vietnamese woman would rely on a local agency or sub-agency in their own country, paying a fee for the service. The fee, which may be as high as US$10,000, includes service fees paid by the Taiwanese or Korean agencies to their Vietnamese counterparts; the cost of return travel to Vietnam and accommodation; viewing of potential brides; and the cost of organizing a wedding once a selection is made. Because Vietnam's revised Family Law in 2000 forbids international marriages for commercial purposes, Korean and Taiwanese agencies locate potential local brides through nationwide networks of Vietnamese agencies, sub-agencies, collaborators, and various informers, ranging from local authorities to people in the community, relatives, or family members. It is not uncommon to find recruiters living in the same community as the brides, as in most cases the brides are approached at home.

In Taiwan and Korea, agencies portray Vietnamese brides as 'traditional', 'virgins', and 'virtuous' (see also Wang 2010), while in Vietnam recruiters construct Taiwanese and Korean men as being 'modern' and this makes them most desirable as marriage partners. They are frequently depicted as urban men with jobs or running their own business, apparently at least middle-class if not wealthy, decent-looking, and owing a home that is not shared with parents or other relatives. In Vietnam, the most common scenario involves the potential brides being taken from the Mekong Delta by the recruiters (or travelling by themselves) to Ho Chi Minh City. There, they stay for a period ranging from a few days to several months just to attend shows, often held by the agencies in small hotels, where they are introduced to men who seek a wife.

The women are provided with food and accommodation and are rounded up whenever there are men who want to see them. According to the experience of one woman who had married a Taiwanese man:

> Almost every day I was taken to see foreign men from Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia. In three months.... many men, usually in groups of ten, but sometimes there were only one or two men.... The process is something like: the boss (recruiter) rents a room in a hotel; then men came in—five to six girls are shown for them to see; if they like someone, she can stay but she has to wait until they see all the girls, then they make the final decision. (A CATM wife from Can Tho, interviewed in Taoyuan, Taiwan.)

When the man has chosen a woman as a bride he has to pay for the costs of food and accommodation incurred prior to the selection; if the woman decides to leave, she will have to cover these costs. The woman from Can Tho quoted above said that in the beginning she often walked out of the room when she did not feel like being seen by potential grooms but she was then threatened by the 'boss' that if she continued to act in this way he would send her home, and she would have to pay the costs. She corrected her behaviour and finally found a Taiwanese husband after four months in Ho Chi Minh City.

Health checks, including blood tests (clearly with a fear of HIV), and mental health checks are always arranged in advance by the agencies with local health care centres or a hospital, public or private. These take place on the same day of the show, or the following day, to ensure that the chosen women are physically fit for marriage. A particularly degrading part of the health check is the so-called 'virginity check', though the brides are told it is a 'gynaecological check', for which most of the women are already psychologically prepared.[13] These health checks are often conducted carelessly, and, at least in our research, no one had been disqualified, since the physicians are bribed by the agencies.

> For blood test, we went to private doctors. For mental check, they took me to the hospital. But they know the doctors, they bribed them already so the test is very simple. The doctor just asked me a few questions and let me go, like they give me some questions on plus, minus, multiply... then let me go. (A CATM wife from Can Tho, interviewed in Taoyuan, Taiwan.)

After the health check comes the wedding. In most cases, the wedding is held before the official registration for marriage takes place at the office of the People's Committee of the commune or sub-district where the bride holds permanent household registration; official registration takes time, since most brides' communes are in the countryside. For the grooms, the wedding in Vietnam is just a small part of the 'business', an event to close the deal with the local agency, and to be introduced to the bride's family. For them, the actual wedding is organized in their home country, when their wives join them, though we found no instance of the bride's family being invited to attend the wedding celebrations in Taiwan or South Korea.

For the brides, the wedding is much more important than the marriage licence. It is a cultural seal marking a rite of passage in their life, from single to married status. Yet in a typical wedding commercially arranged by the agency, the conjugal rite is often downgraded from what in other circumstances would be a three-day celebration to a night at a hotel. While a feast is organized with the presence of the bride's family members, because the wedding cost is included in the package paid by the bridegrooms, the agencies always try to minimize expenses by limiting the numbers of guests to about ten people, including the bride and the groom, in order to maximize their profits.

> They [the agency] arranged a table for ten people, including me and my husband. When my parents, sisters and brothers, nephews and nieces arrived at the hotel, it turned out that there are eleven people. So, one person could not sit at the table. They did not even ask the hotel manager to add an extra seat for her... (A CATM wife from Hau Giang, interviewed in Taichung, Taiwan.)

Some women reported that no wedding was held for them and a few others said that they were not allowed to invite any family members to the wedding, which was just a dinner with their husbands. For still others, the agencies organized one joint wedding event for several couples, all in one place and at the same time. For the brides, clearly these weddings are sad memories as they are culturally improper and personally devalued.

Mass media in Vietnam sometimes describe transnational marriage as a sort of daughter sale by parents. In this research, there is not a single case in which parents have a voice in the price of the bride. At the wedding, the brides are provided with jewellery by the agency, such as a wedding ring, a necklace, and earrings, befitting Vietnamese wedding customs. Their earrings, brought by the agencies, were always

13 A CATM wife revealed that her several friends have passed this 'moral' test with a fake hymen, subverting the required 'proof' of virtue that the prospective grooms demand.

the cheapest possible. Several women said that the weight of all the jewellery combined was less than one '*Chi*',[14]slightly above US$100 at the time of the interviews. The wedding is also the time for the grooms to give their parents-in-law some money, called bride price – which can be kept by the bride's family.

Interviews with the brides show the level of bride price ranges from US$100 to US$1,000. Often the agencies deduct a part of the bride price agreed to by the groom. In one extreme case, the agency did not give the bride's family any share of the amount (US$1,200) agreed as the bride price. In another case, the agency only handed over US$300 of the agreed US$1,000. But none of the brides dared to ask for money back out of the fear that the agencies would make some troubles and cancel the marriage. They were led to understand that the deductions were to cover paperwork costs for the marriage licence or to obtain certification of marital status from the local authorities. The requirement for such paperwork also provides opportunities for the local authority to make money from the women's families by requesting material contributions.[15] Hence, it can be seen that all actors through their practices have contributed to the commodification of transnational marriage.

Finally, ICT also contributes to the socialization of practices in transnational marriage, and to the production of new desires for 'modernity'. The increasing socialization among many Vietnamese women regarding the prospects of marrying a foreigner is both the cause and the outcome of the prevalence of transnational marriage. This is in direct contrast with the tradition in which marriage preference was for local partners, often from the same community. Particularly for women, the power holders in the state and the family used to see marriage with a foreigner as socially and politically undesirable.

As Vietnam becomes more integrated into the regional and global economy, a proliferation of transnational spaces for networking and exchange has emerged and marriage with foreigners is becoming increasingly accepted, even desirable, not only on economic grounds but also culturally. Young people cannot help but notice the proliferation of Korean and Taiwanese businesses, from large enterprises to small home-based businesses, and they have developed widespread interests in products with Korean and Taiwanese brands, including Korean television movies and soap operas, fashion, cosmetics, and cuisine.

It should be stressed, however, that for the majority of the Vietnamese women interviewed, the economic considerations of a married life abroad is the major drive in their marriage decision. Beliefs in the prospect of a better economic situation, the possibility of supporting the family left behind, and of securing a better future for their possible children are all associated with such marriages. These beliefs are reflected in particular in one case in our study of a woman who herself borrowed from relatives 35 million Dong (about US$2,000) to pay for the agency that introduced her to her present Taiwanese husband.

In some communities, transnational border marriage has become a central part of people's lives. The media have carried reports about the so-called 'Taiwanese island', i.e. a commune in the southern province of Can Tho where most of the single women married Taiwanese men, and researchers have confirmed this (Graeme/Nguyen 2007). A similar situation was found during our fieldwork in the northern province of Hai Phong, where young women deliberately 'save' themselves for foreign husbands, leaving local men out of the marriage question, and paying no interest to finding employment or doing business, expecting their economic future to be guaranteed by marriage to a Taiwanese or Korean husband. Clearly, this creates a marriage squeeze in these local communities, as well as having other social consequences. In many other communes across the country, the visible wealth of households having members working as migrant labourers, or marrying Taiwanese and Korean men, has shaped the way local people think of making a better life.

The role of social networks in facilitating cross-border marriage has increasingly become important, as the number of Vietnamese wives is growing quickly. Our findings suggest that currently some ten per cent of transnational marriages are conducted not through the service of the agencies but though introduction by other wives who live abroad, whether friends, relatives, or from the same communities. Reliance on social networks provides some confidence and trust that the wife can get a good husband and receive support from people who have entered transnational marriage earlier.

In sum, there is a mutual interplay between market forces and structural conditions that are driving transnational marriages between Vietnamese women and men from Taiwan and South Korea. Within this, the circulation of symbolic and material values through ICT and social networks also contribute to producing

14 One '*Chi*' of gold is equivalent to 3.75 grams.

15 A father of one CATM wife in the study, for example, had to give up a plot of land to the commune's People's Committee, which was then used to build a communal cultural centre.

institutional practices that form an emergent system of trans-patriarchy in which Vietnamese women actively participate.

5.5 Reproductive Bargaining in the Host Societies: Social Positioning, Self-Consciousness, and Dignity

As a hegemonic framework, the Confucian family-based welfare system in the host countries proscribes and prescribes the conduct of the foreign wives. Within it, family members negotiate from different structural positions of power, each being endowed with different resources (material, symbolic, and organizational) and interpret rules in certain ways. Within the Confucian family welfare model, the role of a daughter-in-law is confined to biological reproduction (sustaining the in-law family lineage by having children, particularly sons) and care provisioning to enhance the welfare of the entire family. The Vietnamese CATM wife is expected by her husband and in-laws to fulfil these norms to show her 'quality' as a daughter-in-law, wife, and mother. As Wang (2007) has shown, this cultural hegemony has never been achieved fully but remains negotiated and contested.[16]

Though nominally a married woman in Vietnam is considered 'the daughter of the other family', in practice for many Vietnamese communities marriage does not change the status of a woman as a member of her birth family. As such, and within her own means, the married woman is expected to share some responsibilities with her siblings in providing care for her parents, however limited. In Taiwan and South Korea, a daughter-in-law is considered by a husband's family as its own and will object to her sending remittances to her birth family (Tang/Belanger/Wang 2011). In the process of bargaining over the long-term provision of reproductive services, successful wives draw on cultural commonalities to facilitate consensus and acceptance, easing adaptation and eventual mutual trust and tolerance.

Our research findings reveal different moments in which issues of contestation and compromise over the meanings of reproduction arise, particularly regarding which aspect of reproduction is being negotiated, whose family counts, and which ties should be prioritized. The reproductive bargaining process tends to be centred on the meanings of the family and the boundaries of interpretation of the sense of belonging, which has implications for defining the work of a woman and her control over her sexuality and mobility. Her failure or success in altering the boundaries of the bargain can be expressed in three moments: exit, loyalty, and voice. Exit becomes a reality when bargaining fails. Loyalty means full or partial compliance with the expected norms required for a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law in the host country before gaining the recognition of the rights of a person. This recognition in turn enables the wife to achieve some of her own objectives through voice and influence.

The initial social positioning appears favourable to the CATM wives, given the immense competition for waged employment in rural Vietnam. They imagined that transnational marriage would place them in an environment that would change their lives. Many turned away from their own families in crisis but remain loyal to some members, because of what they refer to as their 'moral debt'. All the women who participated in this study wanted to 'graduate' from a life of subsistence peasantry to become urban women with successful, non-agricultural jobs.

Some want to turn away from domestic violence and men they do not respect:

> Many [Vietnamese] men now are using drugs, gambling, drinking, so I will not be happy to marry them. They look down on their wives, called them with bad words. (A CATM wife from Ho Chi Minh City, interviewed in Taipei, Taiwan.)

> My father often got drunk. He never cared about us. My mother would not dare to do anything against his will, as he would beat her... So I thought I did not want to have my own family like that. Getting married with a foreign husband is ten times better. (A CATM wife from Can Tho, interviewed in Dangjin, South Korea.)

Others see marrying overseas as an opportunity to make a living in a better environment:

> I know that it is not easy at all to have a happy marriage. Men in Vietnam and here [Taiwan] can be the same. But coming here I can make more money. At home we do not have enough to eat. (A CATM wife from Long An, interviewed in Taipei, Taiwan.)

> I came here because I wanted to help my family. My parents are very poor, so the neighbours look down on us... Even our relatives do not want us to visit them because they are afraid that we will borrow money from them.

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16 Wang shows that wives can use various strategies to resist or evade control by the family of their husbands. These may include the threat to return home and never come back, or frequenting public spaces such as Vietnamese restaurants, shops, and venues where they take Mandarin language courses to meet and share information. Some use a more expensive pre-paid card for their mobile phones to evade the surveillance of the family.

(A CATM wife from Can Tho, interviewed in Taichung, Taiwan.)

Some express the desire for mobility

> I got married with my husband not because I need his money. I want to get out of Vietnam to see the world. At home I had to do farming all the time. (A CATM wife from Ho Chi Minh City, interviewed in Hongseong, South Korea.)

In their image of 'modernity' a husband means someone with an urban background and a stable job, respecting his wife, loving his children, and affording the family a comfortable life. Because "South Korea is a 'modern' country, its people must be 'modern' too", opined one woman who decided to return home. In her words:

> I returned home because my life with him brought no happiness, I had no future. I stayed at home all the time... having no one around, no friend. My husband only came home late at night, drinking. (A CATM wife returnee from South Korea, interviewed in Hai Phong, Thuy Nguyen district.)

In most cases, the image of the 'modern husband' comes into direct conflict with reality. This conflict is particularly acute when it relates to their desire to support their birth families by engaging in paid work. This, in the communities where their husbands belong, goes against the expected norms for a married woman.

> We [the husband and his parents] want Thuy to stay home and take care of our family and our children... I make enough money for the family so there is no need for her to work.... Taking care of our children is more important. (A Taiwanese husband interviewed in Taichung, Taiwan.)

> My parents are very old. My mother could not walk and needs help in moving. I am very busy at the factory and cannot return home early to take care of my parents. Sometimes I have to work until 10 p.m. because my boss wants me to work late. (A Taiwanese husband interviewed in Taipei, Taiwan.)

All CATM wives in our study, whether in Taiwan or South Korea, are responsible for domestic work in their new families. For many wives, this situation can even be worse than what they themselves experienced or observed in Vietnam, particularly for those who came from the north, where society encourages daughters-in-law to work outside the home, and where husbands share some of the burden of domestic work.

> Generally, of the ten [wives] come here seven of them stay at home, taking care of children, cooking. Very few of them work. ... In Vietnam, both husbands and wives work and care for parents-in-law like that. Here staying home to do domestic work is important to Korean people. (A CATM wife from Hau Giang, interviewed in Dangjin, South Korea.)

A clash of perspective about 'work' was also noted:

> In Vietnam people will say a wife staying at home is *lazy* [emphasis added]. But here even if wives have college education or employment, they will stay home if they have children. Some [wives] work, but most stay home. (A CATM wife from Ho Chi Minh City, interviewed in Hongseong, South Korea.)

In a few cases, the wives were physically locked inside the home, or had their passport confiscated by their in-law family. As narratives from all sides indicated, this confinement stems mainly from fear on the part of the husbands' families of a loss of 'investment', since large amounts of money had been paid to obtain the wives. There was also a fear of 'losing face' with neighbours, when the wives would frequent their 'ethnic' networks, acquiring 'bad attitudes and conduct' from other CATM wives, or being suspected of having love affairs with other men, especially Vietnamese men who were migrant workers. Domestic violence was reported by women with alcoholic husbands, or husbands who lost employment. Domestic violence also arose through difficulties in communication due to insufficient knowledge of the local language, over-insistence on having their own income, or spending time with friends and compromising domestic duties and care provision. Expressing discontent with their triple role as wife, mother, and daughter-in-law can lead to exit from the marriage through divorce or escape, and sometimes to a return forced by their husbands.

In the meantime, all the wives learn to prepare family meals as the members prefer them; they cannot follow their own dietary habits, except in isolation.

> Here they do not use fish sauce in cooking. They said it is stinky. Instead they use soy sauce. (A CATM wife from Hai Phong, interviewed in Taoyuan, Taiwan.)

This dietary alienation enhances feelings of isolation and homesickness, further compounded by the inability to communicate in the local language, which in turn prevents them from finding paid work outside the home and thus sending remittances to their birth families.

> No matter which country you are in, life gets complicated if you do not have a job. We must work. Without a job, people will look down on us, no matter how good the material conditions we are enjoying are. (A CATM wife from Bac Lieu, interviewed in Taichung, Taiwan.)

This perspective can come into conflict with the expectations of in-laws.

> The reason why many wives are having difficulties is mostly because they too often think of work to earn money and send to their families.... The parents-in-law think that their daughter-in-law should care for their family and their son, but she only cares about making money to send to her parents. (A CATM wife from Hau Giang, interviewed in Taipei.)

For all the wives the first year was the most difficult, as they became aware of their social positioning as foreign wives brought into the family through commercially arranged transnational marriage. Placed in a hierarchy of social relations defined by local cultural norms as well as their emotional, social, and physical isolation and linguistic constraints, their bargaining position depends on their awareness of the new context and ability to reposition themselves. Cases of successful bargaining show a common strategy that involves a step-by-step approach to 'winning the hearts and minds' of the husband and parents-in-law, particularly the mother-in-law.

A three-stage bargaining process was discerned. In the first stage, there is hardly any negotiation on tasks related to daily housework, sexual demands, and dietary habits. Differences in role expectations and interpretation of duties and obligation need to be overcome in order to demonstrate loyalty. In the second stage, usually after a few months of residence, the wives, having acquired sufficient experience, begin to understand their complex relationship in their in-law family, the rules and power relationships among members, and the expected roles that each family member should perform. All the women have tried to learn the language, with varying levels of success. While some still face difficulties, the wives' achievement in mastering language can be impressive:

> At the beginning, I just knew how to say hello. I did not understand whatever my husband said. I cried a lot. Then I tried to learn the language myself. I have progressed fast. After six months, I understood everything people said. (A CATM wife from Vinh Long interviewed in Hongseong, South Korea.)

This process of learning the language and family rules helps them to adapt their behaviour to meet certain degrees of satisfaction from members of their in-law families. Once a sense of stability and confidence is established, the wives start to build up voice and status within their families. From here onwards, they could take certain stands, and began to argue about what was right or wrong regarding their conduct. In a number of extreme cases, quarrels with husbands and mothers-in-law did occur. Yet in most cases, the women try to avoid unnecessary conflict. Those who have learnt how to perform the expected triple roles of being wife, daughter-in-law, and mother to the satisfaction of in-laws can gain some respect and space for their agency.

> I learnt how to cook good food the way my in-law mother likes. In Vietnam, I used fish sauce to cook. Now when I fry vegetables, I put soy sauce instead. I did what I observed from her. She likes it and complains less about many things I did when first coming here. (A CATM wife from Long Xuyen interviewed in Taoyuan, Taiwan.)

Adjusting to the dietary habits of in-laws appears to be a primary condition of gaining trust and stabilizing the domestic front, and a significant aspect of a bio-cultural aspect of reproduction. Gaining linguistic skills is necessary to influence the views of in-laws on the significance of paid work, as well as to establish positive social ties with neighbours and beyond. Gaining trust within the family also meant demonstrating that social networking with other foreign wives from the same ethnic groups could be positive in terms of providing mutual support mentally, socially, and economically. In several cases, paid work demonstrates to in-laws and neighbours their ability to use their own income to support their birth families, thus improving their status in the husband's family and in the neighbourhood.

> They [the neighbours] asked 'how many times a year do you go home? How much money do you bring home each time?' I then replied 'this is my family's own business. It does not involve you.' (A CATM wife from Ho Chi Minh City, interviewed in Taichung, Taiwan.)

Knowledge of, and access to, legal services provided for foreigners, especially for foreign spouses, in South Korea and Taiwan helps the wives learn about immigration legislation and citizenship rights, as well as services available in the area of their residence (language and cultural education, shelters for victims of domestic violence, legal counselling). Although few actually used these services, knowledge of their availability enhances the confidence of the women in critical situations. Becoming a citizen in the husband's country is a shared aspiration for better protection of rights.

A few of the women interviewed have become successful businesswomen in the host society. The most impressive case that emerged in our research was a woman who started her life in Taiwan as an isolated CATM bride but became the owner of a large shop selling various merchandise and food to the local community in Taipei. She now runs an import business handling foods, clothes, and other items from Vi-

etnam, catering for the Vietnamese community living nearby. Gains from this business enable her to make social and financial remittances to her siblings so that they can open businesses in Vietnam, as well as to ensure that her parents are well taken care of by a hired domestic worker.

Despite the contextual nature of the reproductive bargaining process at the household level, it can be observed that fair outcomes hinge on the ability of the CATM wives to recalibrate their imaginations in order to face the real structures of power into which they are placed and to find means and sources of local support to re-position themselves. A change in social positioning is central for them to find their own source of dignity as a person beyond and above the local cultural framing of 'womanhood'.

5.6 Conclusion

A unique feature of East Asian states is the inclination towards centralizing masculine power and idealizing society for the purpose of political and social stability. The rise of transnational marriages in conjunction with a demographic crisis has challenged such ideals, and reflects emerging contradictions in the transformation of social reproduction that raise new questions about gender and efficiency in this model of the economic miracle. From the perspective of Vietnam as a sending country, CATM reflects many changes in gender relations in production and reproduction, particularly in rural areas, which have spurred female outmigration in the last two decades, of which CATM is one form among many.

Transnational commercially arranged marriages between Taiwanese and South Korean men and Vietnamese women seem to manifest a triple complexity of masculinity embedded in the East Asian welfare regime, yet foiled by dominant discourses on the family and nation. At the first level, the prevalence of son preference and related practices manifest the historical dimension of masculine hegemonic power. The silent resistance by the new generations of more educated women, who no longer adhere fully to Confucian values, demonstrates the incompleteness of hegemonic power and how marriage and childbearing and -rearing remains an important arena of female resistance. At the second level, in the face of a near fertility collapse that threatens masculine hegemony as well as the model of East Asian capitalism, the state response in liberalizing choices in marriages boils down to the redefining of 'race' and 'ethnicity' and the embracing of cultural proximity as a pragmatic measure to help some families to preserve the three-generation family structure and the Confucian gender order. While this may help address some dimensions of the reproductive crisis (human reproduction and intergenerational care), it postpones the question of the future viability of the family-based welfare model of East Asian capitalism. Responses from civil society to transnational marriages differ, depending on national political tendencies. South Korea is more inclined towards the model of multiculturalism as part of the nation-building effort (Lee 2008). There, transnational marriages involve partners from a wide range of countries beyond those sharing Confucian ethical features (Kim 2011). Taiwan adheres to the Confucian model but diversifies source countries to maintain its independence from China, linking transnational marriages with international relations.

At the third level, transnational masculinity through such marriages has to resolve the subtle difference between a patrifocal type of marriage under strict Confucian rules and a bifocal type prevalent in South-East Asian countries, including Vietnam. Maintaining family unity necessitates intra-family negotiation over rules and the conduct of wives towards the husband's family and their own. Yet the construction of their moral character at the inter-group level in the communities of the receiving countries as 'opportunist', and at the level of formal institutions in their native country as 'immoral' at worst and naive at best, displaces the real crisis of social reproduction. Transnational masculinity expressed through CATMs has many implications for social policy above and beyond the rights of women as wives, be they native or foreign. It calls for a renewal of feminist innovations in theorizing about social reproduction to capture its transnational implications. As transnational marriage migration concerns essentially the question of how sexuality and biological reproduction is valued and negotiated, and how the maintenance of daily life in one location is tied to the maintenance of relationships with members of the birth family left behind, analytical treatment of the relationship between structure and agency requires an approach capable of addressing the formation of multiple social borders (racial/cultural, economic, and political) as structural constraints within which interaction based on subjective identities takes place.

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