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## **Gender, marriage and migration : contemporary marriages between mainland China and Taiwan**

Lu, M.C.W.

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# **Gender, Marriage and Migration:**

**Contemporary Marriages between**

**Mainland China and Taiwan**

**Melody Chia-Wen Lu**

**For my grandmothers Luwu Yin and Wudong Shiu-ying,  
who passed away during the course of writing this thesis**

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# **Gender, Marriage and Migration:**

## **Contemporary Marriages between**

## **Mainland China and Taiwan**

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van  
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Melody Chia-Wen Lu

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## PROMOTIECOMMISSIE

Promotoren: Prof. dr. Axel Schneider  
Prof. dr. Carla Risseuw

Referent: Prof. dr. Hill Gates (Stanford University)

Overige leden:

Prof. dr. Hei-yuan Chiu (Academia Sinica, Taiwan)

Prof. dr. Barend ter Haar

Prof. dr. Leo Lucassen

Dr. Tak-wing Ngo

Prof. dr. Joyce Outshoorn

Prof. dr. Wim Stokhof

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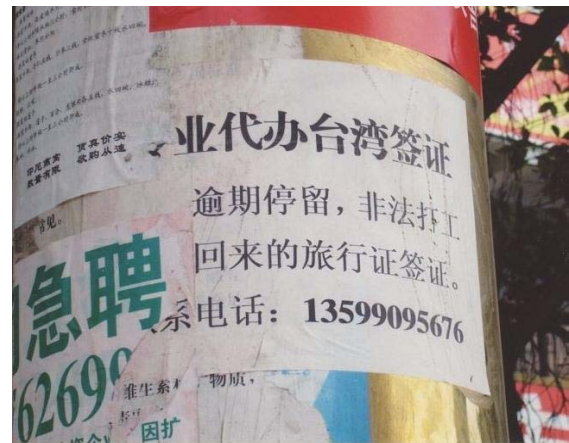
**A veteran returned home in China and welcomed by the villagers in 1988.**



**A veteran with his wife at their home in Hukou *juancun*, 2003.**



A mother-in-law prepares for the wedding of her widowed daughter-in-law, who is about to marry a Taiwanese man, Humei village, Fuqing.



Advertisement of applying for a Taiwanese visa (including overstay and illegal work) in Fuqing city.



Left and above: Marriage brokerage advertisements are at every corner in Taiwan.





**A mainland bride got her Taiwanese ID after waiting for 11 years. She happily showed it to fellow brides and shed tears.**



**Social gathering of a group of young mainland brides and their children, Shinpu, Hsinchu, 2003.**



**Two photos above: Protest rally organised by cross-strait families, Taipei, 2003.**





## Introduction

In the summer of 2003, when I first started my fieldwork in Hukou (新竹縣湖口鄉), a semi-industrial town in Northern Taiwan, I joined my informant Aqin for her grocery shopping in the morning market in the neighbourhood. Aqin is a woman from Sichuan province in the People's Republic of China (PRC), who married and migrated to Taiwan seven years ago. We stopped at a food stand to buy fruits and the woman selling fruits was speaking Hakka to her friend standing beside her. The vender knew Aqin, as Aqin had bought fruits from her before. She whispered to her friend, "*they are 'mainlanders' (waishengren 外省人)*". Aqin apparently heard what she said but pretended that she heard nothing. The vender then smiled friendly at me and said, "*so, you are a newcomer. When did you come?*" Her friend said, "*I am also a mainland. We just came here at a different time.*"

I realised that she must have taken me as one of the mainland brides (dalu xinniàng 大陸新娘), a term commonly used to refer to women from the PRC who marry to Taiwanese<sup>1</sup> men. I thought it was a natural response since I am in the company of a mainland Chinese woman, whose Mandarin accent can be easily distinguished, especially in this area where Hakka people constitute the majority of the population. However, later I came across the same situation very often when I was alone. Similarly, in my second fieldwork site Baihe (台南縣白河鎮), a Minnan populated rural village in Southern Taiwan, I was often greeted with the question, "*you just married in over here! (jiaguolai 嫁過來) Where are you from? China, Indonesia, Vietnam or Cambodia?*"

As a native Minnan Taiwanese, I do not speak Hakka. Fokkienese is my mother tongue and my Mandarin accent is no doubt a Taiwanese one. It puzzled me why in these two localities, sometimes even in urban Taiwan, I was addressed as a mainland Chinese or Southeast Asian woman. The signifiers of the language, dressing code and physical features that differentiate Taiwanese women and mainland Chinese or Southeast Asian women are not always visible. It took me some time to realise that any new face of a young (or not-so-young) woman in these communities would be automatically taken as a mainland bride or Southeast Asian bride, as it had been for some years that no non-local Taiwanese woman married into these areas. Local women

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<sup>1</sup> Taiwanese refers to all citizens of Taiwan, Republic of China, including all ethnic groups, i.e. mainlanders, Minnan, Hakka and aborigines. Mainlanders (waishengren) refers to the people migrated to Taiwan from all parts of Mainland China during or after the civil war in 1949 as well as the second and third generations born in Taiwan. Minnan and Hakka refer to ethnic groups migrated from Southern China over the centuries. For the brief history of Minnan and Hakka migration, see description of fieldwork site, p.12. The distinctive features of these two groups are said to be language -- Minnan speak Fokkienese and Hakka people speak Hakka, as well as their kinship structures and gender relations (see Chapter 1, 1.3. Minnan, Hakka and most of the mainlanders belong to the Han ethnic group.

prefer to marry out. The cross-border marriages in Taiwan constitute more than one third of new marriages in peripheral areas in Taiwan in recent years.<sup>2</sup>

Being treated as a mainland Chinese or Southeast Asian woman gave me some first-hand experiences of how local Taiwanese communities receive them, particularly in the initial stage of their arrival. These women experience a mixture of attitudes towards them, from hostility, contempt, pity, prying, apathy, to warm friendship and acceptance. These attitudes derive from the images the local communities and Taiwanese society as a whole have towards these women and the cross-border marriages, images that were constructed by the media, popular literature, various state policies, academic scholarship, and the actors of cross-border families.

The term *dalu xinni*ang invokes a specific kind of image, which is subtly different from brides from other countries. *Dalu xinni*ang is generally associated either with backwardness and poverty or with calculating, morally questionable women who are willing to do anything for money. “Anything” refers to dirty, labour intensive and low-income jobs and sex-related work.<sup>3</sup> The actors themselves and the communities develop various mechanisms and strategies to cope and disguise such stigmatised stereotypes in everyday life. For instance, the friendly woman in the beginning of my narration refers Aqin *waishengren*, a term normally referring to people who migrated to Taiwan from all parts of mainland China during or after the civil war in 1949 as well as the second and third generations born in Taiwan but not to mainland brides, as an attempt to disguise the difference among them. Others call them “Taiwanese daughter-in-law”(Taiwan xifu 台灣媳婦) and their children “Sons of Taiwanese” (Taiwan zhizi 台灣之子). All of these terms, be it stigmatising or friendly, point to the fact that they are considered different from Taiwanese, even after years of marriage and living in Taiwan.<sup>4</sup> Throughout this thesis I will explain these terms used to refer to mainland Chinese women who are married Taiwanese men, who use which terms and the connotations they carry. However, I choose the term “mainland brides“ to refer to them in general for the reason that this term aptly describe the positions of these women in Taiwanese families and society as a new member waiting to be accepted and approved.

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<sup>2</sup> For numbers of cross-strait marriages over the years, see chapter 2, 2.3.2.

<sup>3</sup> I use the word “sex-related” work to refer to a wide range of work involving women using their sexuality and erotica to make a profit which does not always involve commercial sex. The places they work include massage parlours, karaoke bars, night clubs, brothels, telephone sex companies, escort services, etc.

<sup>4</sup> After I completed my fieldwork in 2004, women’s organizations and some government authority recently adopted a more gender-neutral and inclusive term “New Taiwanese Residents” (Taiwan xinzhuimin 台灣新住民) to refer mainland and foreign brides and their children. However, this term is not commonly used in the media and in daily life yet.

Phenomenological sociologist Schutz (1972) suggests that if we place an individual at the beginning of an imagined line, all other human beings are located in the line with different “social distance”. The distance can be physical with various degrees of direct social interaction. It can also be psychological and moral, with various degrees of shared experiences and traits. The psychological and moral closeness is based on the feelings of empathy and commiseration, the assumption that others have the ability and will to understand how I feel, and vice versa. The physical social distance is limited to contemporaries and psychological distance can be extended to predecessors and successors across time. Individuals categorise people according to the social distance, with which they place them in the line and react to them accordingly. What Schutz does not point out is that the social distance between one individual and others can be changing in different situations and over time, as the ability of empathy can be fostered. However, at a certain point this imagined line is disconnected, dividing the people into one and the other side of the rupture. I call such rupture of the social distances a “border”. The ones before the border are identified as “we” and the ones after are “they”. The membership of the we-group gives certain rights and entitlements that the they-group does not have. The most obvious example is that citizenship, a membership to a nation-state, provides legal rights to its citizens and excludes non-citizens from enjoying these rights. There are other forms of exclusion which is more subtle and criteria of membership more ambiguous that constitutes the social and cultural exclusion within the same nation-state.

“We” and “they” are oppositional concepts that mutually define each other. Because the we-group is composed of people who have different degrees of social distance with me, some without any physical contact, it is difficult to find an absolute common ground shared by all in the we-group. Certain traits are believed to be shared by all members of the we-group, and these traits are used to promote solidarity and mobilisation among the we-group and to differentiate from people in they-groups. These traits are considered to be natural or inherited that they-group do not share. A we-group exists only because a they-group exists, and the antagonism between them reinforces their mutual existence. A we-group with perceived shared traits and a border separating them from they-group is an imagined community (c.f. Bauman, 1990).<sup>5</sup>

It is in this context that I use the term “cross-border marriages” to suggest that there exist various borders, i.e. gender, ethnic, kinship, class and national borders, interwoven and constructed to place mainland brides as a they-group by Taiwanese. The image of mainland brides and the process of image shaping are central to justifying and

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<sup>5</sup> Here I use the term “imagined community” in general sense, not necessarily referring to Anderson’s concept of national identity (1983).

sustaining the borders. These borders are not clearly drawn nor fixed, and actors involved with cross-border marriages challenge these borders individually and collectively with various strategies. In the process of resistance some fronts are broken, some are reinforced and new borders are drawn.

### **Objective of the research and research questions**

My journey of this research project starts with a personal experience. In the early 1990s my father gave up his business in Taiwan due to the economic depression and went to Shanghai to look for business opportunities. Eventually he married a Shanghaiese woman and they lived both in Taiwan and Shanghai. From time to time I heard complaints about my father's wife from my relatives, that she did not respect my grandparents, that she "sold" herself in order to take money back to China, that my father was stupid enough that he could have "enjoyed" her without marrying her, etc. All these stories ended with one conclusion: that all mainland Chinese are *by nature* greedy and ruthless. Without hearing her side of the story,<sup>6</sup> I already was amazed by these comments, knowing that the same judgement would not be made of a Taiwanese woman if she did exactly the same thing. It seems to me that the common intra-familial tensions and conflicts that could happen in every family are enlarged out of proportion. Later I came across other families of mainland brides, some suffer tremendous difficulties, and some enjoy peaceful and nice marriage life, nevertheless all of them are struggling to cope with the suspicion of family members, hostility of Taiwanese society and restrictive governmental legislation. I started to ask: Where does the stereotype of a ruthless and morally corrupted woman come from and why does it persist so strongly? Is it because Taiwanese husbands of earlier cross-border marriages are from a lower social class and these marriages are often commercially arranged? Is it related to mainland Chinese brides' educational and social backgrounds? Or is it because of existing negative images of mainland Chinese as a result of long-time political antagonism? How are mainland Chinese women perceived differently in comparison to Taiwanese wives/daughters-in-law and other Southeast Asian brides?

In conventional migration theory, economic gains are regarded as the primary motivations for cross-border marriages. Studies of Asian women's labour migration show that women often migrate not only for the economic benefits for themselves but also for their family. It is argued that Asian women are socialized to be filial daughters

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<sup>6</sup> After my parents' divorce I stopped making contact with my father, hence I did not know my stepmother personally. Later in the course of my research, though not intended, she introduced me to her natal family and fellow mainland brides for my interview.

and caring mothers who sacrifice themselves for their parents, husbands and children. Marriage is a strategy of survival or social mobility for the whole family. These women are often deemed victim of globalisation processes and patriarchal family systems and values (Lee, C.K., 1998; Parrenas, 2001; Jacka and Gaetano, 2004; Gilmartin and Tan, 2002). Commercially arranged marriages are therefore often associated with human trafficking and forced migration. However, when I encountered mainland Chinese and Southeast Asian wives in Taiwan, I discovered that very few of them take marriage migration as a way out of poverty and few aim at immediate economic improvement of their natal family or themselves. These women make a decision by themselves in their mate choice and in moving to an unfamiliar land. Most of them are aware of the risks involved and the potential vulnerable situation and stigmas. What prompts them to make such a hasty and risky decision to marry abroad? Why do some middle-class, educated women still choose to marry “out” when China is experiencing a booming economy and shortage of women? A much less frequently asked question in the literature concerns the motivations for Taiwanese men to marry foreign or mainland Chinese women. Furthermore, other than the potential brides and bridegrooms, who else are involved in the decision-making and the mate choice of cross-border marriages?

The last piece of the puzzle in this research concerns how cross-border families, particularly mainland brides, cope with their stigma in everyday life. How do different members of the families develop intimate relations when mainland brides are constantly defined as “the other”? In other words, how do they cross various borders? What is the impact of cross-border marriage migration on gender relations and intra-familial relations?

To summarize, my three main research questions are,

- 1) Why do mainland brides choose to leave China and to come to Taiwan and why do Taiwanese men marry mainland Chinese women?*
- 2) Why and how are mainland brides constructed as “others”?*
- 3) How do members of cross-border families negotiate gender and intra-familial relations?*

I attempt to answer these three research questions by looking at the perspectives of different actors and by examining how these perspectives are formed and whether and how they are substantiated. I categorise these actors as 1) the state (policy and opinions of various government departments), to be discussed in Chapter 3; 2) the market (marriage brokerage industry and matchmaking operations), to be discussed in Chapter 4; and 3) family (kinship and community), to be addressed in Chapter 5. Chapter 1

provides information on the cultural principles and practices of marriage and family in the Chinese society. This information lays a foundation for the later chapters in addressing my three research questions. Chapter 2 discusses the marital and migratory motivations of the cross-straits families. In Chapter 3 I analyse the perspectives of the state and media as well as various social actors influencing the policy-making and image representation. In Chapter 4 I look at the marriage market -- matchmaking practices and monetary transactions in the matchmaking and during the wedding. In Chapter 5 I illustrate the power relations between the members of cross-strait families. These perspectives are not necessarily congruent with each other, yet each of them constitutes some piece of the puzzle that is necessary to understand the whole picture. They are often interlinked and have mutual influences. The concluding chapter synthesises the perspectives of various actors discussed in various chapters and their interrelations and contradictions. I will also show how these findings contribute to the scholarship in the relevant fields.

In order to answer these three questions, I need to ask the following sub-questions:

### **On motivations for cross-border marriage**

In order to explain migratory behaviour, conventional migration studies see (voluntary) migration as a rational choice, often driven by economic deprivation and opportunities. Derived from this assumption, scholars and policy makers study the macro-structural factors prompting people to leave their home region/country (push factors) to a place where they have more economic opportunities or where their labour is needed and of higher value in relative or real terms (pull factors). This is largely used to explain labour migration. It can be problematic to explain marriage migration with the push and pull factors because the marital decision is driven by cultural and social factors rather than by an economic logic, though it has to be noted that material conditions shape cultural and social perceptions. The key question here is, how do the motivations for cross-border marriage relate to the political economy and cultural perceptions of love and marriage? In order to answer this question, I need to go back to general perceptions of marriage and marriage regimes and overall migration trends in Taiwan and China.

Chapter 1 discusses the cultural principles and practices of marriage and family in the Chinese society. Although the information in this chapter deals with marriages between nationals in both Taiwan and China, it provides a reference for studying how cross-strait marriages are similar or deviant from the norms of local marriages. I start with a summary of the traditional perceptions and practices on marriage and gender

relations in literature, historical accounts and anthropological studies. The summary is based on the characteristics of Chinese family and kinship (*jia* 家) associated with Neo-Confucianism and applied only to the dominant Han ethnic group. In view of the long history and wide geographic diversity, any attempt to generalize would be an impossible task. I do not deal with the characteristics of the family in ethnic minority groups as well as of aborigines in Taiwan because the demographic data show that of the majority of cross-strait couples belong to the Han group in China and Taiwan. This is followed by an overview of the contemporary development of marriage regimes in China, with attention paid to the radical engineering process under the socialist ideology during the Maoist era and the changes in the era of economic reform. This is followed by the contemporary development of marriage and family in Taiwan, with special attention paid to differences in sub-ethnic groups, i.e. Hakka, Minnan and the mainlanders. In these two sections I address multiple dimensions of demography data, marriage law, family composition and structure, household economy, ideals of femininity and masculinity, matchmaking and marital rites, inter-generational relations and social support systems and gender division of labour at home.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of internal and international migration in China and Taiwan from a gender perspective. In existing scholarship marriage migration is often conflated with women's labour migration, and more specifically, commercially arranged marriages are compared with sex trafficking. These scholarships often place women as victims of globalisation process. This chapter sets out to examine whether marriage migration shares the same context of political economy that causes women's labour migration by analysing the demographic data, migration flows and migration motivations. Marriage migration is a specific form of migration that is highly gendered, as in most cases it is women who are uprooted from their natal family and are relocated to the new family following the Chinese patrilocal system. I will address a few issues that call for further scholarly efforts. First is the need to develop a linkage between political, socio-economic factors and personal motivations for migration in order to challenge the economically determined framework of conventional migration studies. Second is the linkage between internal and international migration, which share similar motivations and can often be treated as a continuous experience. The third is the relations between labour migration and marriage migration. In Chapter 2 I will also present demographic profiles of the cross-strait couples in comparison to couples of local marriages and other cross-border marriages in Taiwan. These demographic profiles will be used in later chapters to examine whether certain images and stereotypes towards cross-strait couples can be supported.



## **On the formation of images and borders**

The conventional studies of (limited) citizenship of immigrants and migrants often address the issue of exclusion from the perspectives of legal and formal rights (Castles and Davidson, 2000). Recent scholarship starts to address the issues of social and cultural exclusion of immigrants. I analyse all forms of political, social and cultural exclusion by asking how these borders are formed and why a particular image persists. I argue that the state, the marriage brokerage operations and the cross-strait families each play a part in forming and strengthening the borders between mainland brides and Taiwanese.

In chapter 3 I examine the discourse of government documents, seemingly objective demographic data, media representation and popular literature, academic work on the issue of cross-strait marriages. These discourses are analysed in the context of the political process of democratisation in the post-authoritarian rule and nation-building process in Taiwan as well as the cross-strait interaction in the period between 1992 and 2004. In various periods the legislation governing and images of cross-strait marriages and mainland brides develop and change, and an image of mainland bride as calculating and morally questionable stood out and was constantly reinforced. Why? Corresponding to these images, the Taiwanese government hesitates to grant mainland brides political citizenship, set criteria for brides of low-income family to work, but is rather generous in providing the same standard of social protection that Taiwanese women enjoy. What are the principles guiding the criteria of citizenship and the distribution of welfare resources? What are the underlying assumptions for gender relations, ethnicity and class in these principles?

The images towards cross-border marriages and mainland brides do not only relate to who they are; it is also attributed to what they do and why they do it. The majority of cross-border marriages are mediated and matched. The way the couples are matched and money transactions involved are considered as commercially arranged, or in Chinese words as “trade marriage” (maimai hunyin 買賣婚姻). How are commercially arranged marriage perceived in Taiwan and China? What are the differences in practices and meanings of matchmaking and marriage transaction in commercially arranged marriage and in “normal” marriage? How do these practices and meanings affect migrant women’s status in kinship network? The task of chapter 4 is to investigate at the marital decision and matchmaking practices of cross-border marriages in the light of traditional and contemporary practices in both Taiwan and China. I intend to challenge the discourse of trafficking in women and commodification of women in feminist scholarship and activism which regards women in commercial marriage

migration as traded commodity. However, a closer look at match-making/brokerage operation shows that cross-border marriage involves complex, localised social networks as all marriages do. Study of these networks and processes gives a picture that women are not a faceless commodity, but active agents in making their life choices. Having said that, the market and institutionalised marriage brokerage has eroded the traditional matchmaking practices and to some extent altered their meaning and the perceptions about them.

### **On negotiation of gender and intra-familial relations**

How do the mainland brides cope with stigmatised images in the community in everyday life? What are the strategies of maneuvering among different kinship members and building a new social support network? How do they negotiate autonomy and freedom? In extremely tragic and disempowered situations, where can they escape? These strategies are developed within a limited economic and social capital rendered available to them, and are grounded in inherited cultural notions of what can and cannot be done, which is common experience for every newly wed bride and daughter-in-law when they enter a new kinship network and before they are accepted as full member of the kinship network. However, the process of gaining acceptance is much more difficult and complex for mainland Chinese brides as compared with local Taiwanese women. Some may never gain full recognition and are treated as outsider after years of marriage, yet some manage to win approval and sympathy from the kinship network. Here I will apply the anthropological studies on human relatedness to challenge the idea that Chinese society is patrilineal and that biological kinship overrides other social relations. I will illustrate that the border and for mainland Chinese women are not rigid and unchanging and it can be “crossed”. The rationales of border and exclusion based on gender, ethnicity and kinship network at times provide openings for mainland brides, who exercise their agency and develop various strategies to win acceptance and approval. I will discuss different dimensions of these strategies, includes maneuvering among different kinship members, the economic and social capitals secured outside the kinship network, the meaning of paid work and financial autonomy, etc. I make efforts to give a picture of mainland Chinese brides as active agents rather than passive victims, however, in many sad and tragic instances, some mainland brides choose to escape from abusive conditions but are led into more vulnerable situations, becoming sex workers or illegal workers.

## **Contribution and limitation of my research**

Other than challenging the existing scholarship and filling its gaps, I adopt a few approaches with the hope that it will propose a new framework of understanding cross-border marriage migration. The first contribution of my research thesis is to analyse migration, both in the aspects of migratory motivations and migrants; positions in receiving societies as a process rather than a one-time event. That is to say that migrants may not benefit immediately and directly from the act of movement, yet the decision is made and strategies are developed in view of long-term benefits and security. This is what makes marriage migration different from short-term, temporary labour migration. It is crucial to bring the temporal dimension into the study of marriage migration and study the experiences at different periods of a life course.

Secondly, I study migrants' experiences in the web of relations in the receiving society, i.e. the interplay of the impacts of policies and regulations, the interests of the market that includes marriage brokerage and the labour market, as well as relations with family members and other social networks. The relational approach, particularly the inter-generational relations, is new to the studies of marriage migration as the existing scholarship often conceptualises marriage as relations between two individuals in the framework of the nuclear family.

Another contribution is to take into account cultural notions during the political and socio-economic changes. It not only provides a deeper understanding of guiding principles of human relations and behaviours, it also explains these changes in light of historical continuity and does not see it as a new phenomenon disconnected from the past. This is particularly important since in the discipline of migration studies migrants are often placed in separate categories and are treated distinctively different from the people in the host countries. By doing so it reinforces the "otherness" of migrants and justifies their exclusion.

The above mentioned approaches are reflected in the research methodology I choose. In order to study the relations of cross-strait family members and their daily experiences, I adopt ethnography as my main research methodology. This means that I have to choose the locations where cross-strait marriages are concentrated and the presence of mainland brides visible. As my initial research inquiry suggests that ethnicity may be an important factor contributing to mainland Chinese women's being otherised and marginalised, I chose two fieldwork sites in Taiwan where three distinctive "sub-ethnic" groups reside, i.e. Minnan, Hakka and mainlanders. All of these three groups belong to Han ethnic group and are influenced by the normative ideals of family described in Chapter 1. As mentioned earlier, aboriginal communities were left

out because the statistical data show that only a minority of aborigines opt for cross-strait marriages. The family organisation and gender ideology in these three sub-ethnic groups are distinctive and constitute the core of their ethnic identity. A comparison of three groups will render valuable insights. In addition, I follow two of my key informants back to China during their visits to their natal families. The latter is an attempt to explore the relations between migrant women and their natal families. However, due to the time constraints my fieldwork in China does not provide sufficient information for me to deal with this aspect of migration properly. Therefore most of the research findings in China, which are exploratory in nature, unfortunately are not incorporated in this thesis. The relationship between the mainland brides and their natal families either in China or overseas and the transnational family network will be in my future research agenda.

The focus on family relations and experiences in close-knit communities and my choice of methodology and fieldwork sites only allow me to document cross-strait families in rural and semi-industrial areas. The nuclear families in urban areas may have different experiences although they are subjected to the same policies and popular images. In rural and semi-industrial communities the cross-border and cross-strait marriages are predominantly matched by matchmakers. Therefore my research does not pay too much attention to the middle and higher class couples of “love marriages” who met each other through business contacts.

I also do not address extensively self-organisation and the political and collective action that mainland spouses and their husbands take to resist the stigmatised images and to claim their rights in the public domain. This is mainly because the majority of mainland women in rural communities are confined within the kinship network and very few of them choose to join these actions in view that it will bring more stigmas to them. Fortunately, the views and experiences of better-educated women with higher political consciousness are well articulated in the public forum such as newspapers and websites and are well documented by other scholars (Chao, 2006).

Another limitation of this research that is open to further investigation concerns the male mainland spouses. Statistically they are a minority among mainland spouses as more than 90% of cross-strait marriages are between Taiwanese men and Chinese women.<sup>7</sup> My encounter with male spouses during my fieldwork shows that they are more likely to meet their Taiwanese wives through business contacts and less likely to be matched as compared to mainland Chinese women. Most of them live in urban areas and in all fieldwork sites I choose they are not present. Therefore I make a

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<sup>7</sup> Demographic profiles of cross-strait families, see Chapter 2, 2.3.2.

methodological choice to leave them out. Nevertheless a study of male spouses and their relation with the wives' family would offer interesting insights as it challenges the cultural norms of patrilocality. I intend to pursue this inquiry in the future.



**Map 1: Across Taiwan Strait<sup>8</sup>**

<sup>8</sup> Source: Visual Information Center, USA. Updated April 2, 2007  
[http://www.lapan-info.net/Portals/45/VIC\\_Products/2007/04/070402-ChinaTaiwanDisputePrimer.doc](http://www.lapan-info.net/Portals/45/VIC_Products/2007/04/070402-ChinaTaiwanDisputePrimer.doc)

### Brief description of three fieldwork sites

As mentioned earlier two fieldwork sites in Taiwan are chosen in view of their ethnicity and economic activities. The first one is Zhongxing village in Hsinchu county where veteran soldiers and the Hakka group lives. The economic activities here are a semi-industrial and agricultural. The second is Baihe town in Tainan County where Minnan group reside. The main economic activities are agriculture and tourism. In both places sex-related work such as massage parlours, beer houses and karaoke bars are present. Detailed descriptions are provided below.

Zhongxing is a veteran's settlement (*juancun* 眷村) situated next to Hukou military camp in Hukou xiang,<sup>9</sup> Hsinchu county in Northern Taiwan. *Juancuns* are settlements of veterans who came from China after the civil war in the late 1940s. There are two kinds of *juancuns*: the first are official housing compounds built by the military to accommodate higher rank military officers and their families. The second are informal and at times illegal housing settlements built by lower rank soldiers upon retirement. Lower rank soldiers were not provided housing, therefore upon retirement they often purchase houses or simply occupy land and build simple huts surrounding the military camps, informal settlements developed over the years.<sup>10</sup> This kind of informal settlements spread all over Taiwan near the military camps and Zhongxing village is one of them. Due to its informal nature, the boundary of the Zhongxing *juancun* does not entirely coincide with the official administrative unit village (*cun* 村). Nevertheless as estimatedly 90% of the population of Zhongxing village are veteran soldiers and their spouses and children; the remaining 10% are local Hakka and aborigines who rent housings from veterans while working in Hukou Industrial Zone nearby.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Xiang (鄉) is the tertiary administrative unit at the same level as township, but normally used in rural region. Village (*cun* 村) is also an administrative unit under Xiang.

<sup>10</sup> Some veterans, mostly single ones, stay in the Veteran Domiciliary Centres. There are 14 Veterans Domiciliary Centres all over Taiwan and 4 other self-paid care centres for veterans, all built and managed by the Veterans Affairs Commission, Executive Yuan, Taiwan. According to the Statistic Year Book of the Veterans Affairs Commission (2005), there are estimated 99,837 veterans in total, among which 8,574 (8.59%) live in the free or paid care homes; 4,863 (4.87%) live in China and 83,661 (83.8%) live out of veteran homes in the beginning of 2005.

<sup>11</sup> The Household Registration Record in Taiwan does not indicate the ethnicity of individuals (i.e. Minnan, Hakka or mainlanders) with the exception of aborigines as a separate category. The percentage here is told by the village head of Zhongxing village Mr. Hsu and verified by former village head Mr. Gan. (Interviews with Mr. Hsu and Mr. Gan separately in May and June 2003) Both Mr. Hsu and Mr. Gan are Hakka.



**Map 2 Fieldwork sites in Taiwan, Hukou township, Hsinchu county and Baihe township, Tainan county<sup>12</sup>**

1. Zhongxing village, Hukou xiang, Hsinchu county, Taiwan (新竹縣湖口鄉中興村)

Many of the low-rank soldiers remained single for most of their life,<sup>13</sup> thus the sex ratio of the unmarried is extremely high.<sup>14</sup> In 2002, the total population of Zhongxing village

<sup>12</sup> Modified from [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/taiwan\\_pol92.pdf](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/taiwan_pol92.pdf). Source: University of Texas.

<sup>13</sup> The reasons why many of low-rank soldiers remained single are explained in Chapter 1 1.3.3.

<sup>14</sup> The sex ratio is a demographic term referring to the number of males per 100 females. Among 513 single household in Zhongxing village 360 are male and 153 female. The sex ratio of singles is therefore 235. (Source: Household Registration Office, Hukou xiang, Hsinchu County, Taiwan.).

is 5,333, with 1,758 households, among which 513 are single households. The sex ratio of singletons is as high as 235. Starting from the late 1980s, after the connection between Mainland China and Taiwan were resumed, large numbers of veterans have married Indonesian and mainland Chinese women. By mid-2003, there were 346 cross-border marriages in Hukou xiang in total, with 164 mainland brides, 88 Indonesian brides and 55 Vietnamese brides.<sup>15</sup> This figure includes both Hakka and veterans soldiers in Hukou xiang. As village and ethnically specific data are missing, I conducted a household survey among the veterans in Zhongxing *juancun*. According to my survey, there are 46 mainland brides, 3 Indonesian brides and 2 Filipina brides who married veterans and live in Zhongxing *juancun*.<sup>16</sup> The average age of the veteran husbands is 75.7, and that of their mainland wives 46.7; the average age gap of cross-strait couples is 29 years and the average years of marriage is 6 years. This is slightly higher than the national average of cross-strait couples.<sup>17</sup> The veteran husbands are retired lower-rank soldiers and their main source of income is their monthly or biannual pension. Some veterans have accumulated a large sum of saving and own houses over the years. 98% of the mainland wives had marital experiences in China and have teenage or young adult children from previous marriages; and the majority of mainland women married to veteran soldiers have jobs and earn income in Taiwan. Majority of veterans are retired and do not work. Veterans come from different parts of China, with an average level of primary school education, and speak various dialects or heavily- accented Mandarin. Their mainland Chinese wives too are from different parts of China, with the majority coming from the same province/region of their husbands. The mainland spouses speak dialects and Mandarin which is less accented than their husbands'.

The houses in the veterans' settlements are meagre with minimal facilities, which were initially built for single veterans as temporary housing. Streets are narrow. A standard house in Zhongxing *juancun*, in which I myself lived during my fieldwork in Hukou, is less than 20 square meters consisting of two small bed rooms, one living room, kitchen and the bathroom. Most of them are not equipped with air-conditioning. Because the houses are built with low ceilings without heat insulation and the

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<sup>15</sup> There are also 7 Filipina brides, 8 Thai brides and 3 Cambodian brides. The rest are male spouses, mainly from Thailand. Source: Household Registration Office, Hukou xiang, Hsinchu County, Taiwan. The total number of cross-border marriages is much higher than the figure because the Household Registration Office only started calculating the number of foreign and mainland spouses since the beginning of 1997. Therefore those who married before 1997 is not included. The figure here is compiled from 1997 till May 2003.

<sup>16</sup> A few more cross-strait couples are absent and temporarily visit their relatives in China.

<sup>17</sup> The national average age of veterans who marry mainland women is 69.6 and that of their mainland wives 45.5 in September 2003 (Han, 2003). Detailed demographic data see Chapter 2, 2.3.3.



ventilation is bad, many veterans and mainland brides sit outside the house along the streets during the day, either playing Chinese chess or gossiping.

Outside the veterans' settlement, Hukou is a semi-rural area populated with Hakka. The historical record shows that the earlier immigration of Minnan and Hakka people into this area can be dated as early as three hundreds years ago during the reign of Kangxi emperor in Qing dynasty, before which this area was populated with aborigines. In the early eighteen century the area gradually became a Hakka settlement and aborigines were forced to move to inland hilly areas. The ancestors of the Hakka in Hukou came from Chaozhou and Huizhou regions in Guangdong province in China. Traditionally agriculture was the major economic activity, however, with the establishment of Hukou Industrial Zone in 1978, Hukou started to receive influx of immigrants from less developed neighbouring regions from all ethnic groups. Nevertheless, Hakka still constitute the majority of the permanent population except in the veterans' settlements. Agricultural labour constitutes less than 20 percent of the population.<sup>18</sup> Similar to the veterans' settlement, Hakka villages also have an imbalanced sex ratio among single men and women, and many men have difficulties finding local wives and opt for marrying Indonesian brides of Hakka origin. In Zhongxing village, Hakka men who marry mainland or Indonesian women have an average age of 42, while the brides are much younger, ranged from age 18 to early 20s. All Hakka husbands and wives have no previous marriage. Rural Hakka households are large, with several generations cohabitating together or living close-by and they often have a degree of collective family economy.

## 2. Baihe town, Tainan County, Taiwan (台南縣白河鎮)

Baihe town is situated in Tainan County in Southern Taiwan. The majority of the local population belongs to the Minnan ethnic group; although historical record shows that some 20% of the population had a Hakka origin but their Hakka identity is no longer visible due to the process of assimilation (Baihe Chenchí, 1997).<sup>19</sup> The immigration of Han Chinese to Baihe can be traced back to 1661 after Koxinga defeated the Dutch and started to develop a Han settlement around Tainan city. The peak of influx of Han immigrants arrived during the later part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century after Qienlong emperor of the Qing dynasty lifted the ban on cross-strait migration in 1760. The majority of the

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<sup>18</sup> Information provided in the official history record of Hukou xiang (Hukou Xiangzhi, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> It is common in Taiwan that some Hakka who lived in dominantly Minnan regions adopted Fokkienese languages and customs and "became" Minnan. Some were not aware of their Hakka ancestry. In these cases they no longer maintain distinctive Hakka features such as lineage organization and gender division of labour (see Chapter 2). Minor differences only exist in the rituals of ancestral worships.

Minnan immigrants came from Guangzhou in Fujian province. Located at the juncture of two trading routes between coastal and hilly communities, Baihe gradually became a trading centre for agricultural and hunting commodities. Agriculture and husbandry remain major economic activities up to today. The majority of the local population engage in agricultural activities or work in the informal sector such as eateries and small trades in the markets. The main agricultural activities are rice and fruits growing, with supplementary husbandry and fishery.<sup>20</sup>

Similar to many rural towns, Baihe experiences flows of out-migration of young labour forces to urban areas in the industrialisation process, leaving ageing peasants in marginalised and difficult situations. According to the land policy in Taiwan, in order to protect the agricultural industry, some lands in rural areas are designated for agricultural activities and cannot be transferred or sold for other purposes. With Taiwan joining the WTO, the prices of agricultural products have dropped drastically and it is not cost-benefit effective to farm any more. Many farming lands have been laid barren or have only minimal vegetations planted in order to secure government agricultural subsidies. In 2002, the agricultural population composes 43.11% of the total population in Baihe, with nearly 90% owning agricultural lands. Since late 1990 it is observed that the agricultural labour (those who do not own land and are employed by land owners) have increased gradually. This is likely due to the increasing unemployment rate in the cities that prompts earlier migrants to return to the rural areas.<sup>21</sup> Like Hakka families, Minnan families, particularly agricultural households also practice multi-generational cohabitation. In 2002 every household has in average 3.4 persons.

In recent years Baihe sees the booming of the tourist industry. In summer Taiwanese tourists visit Baihe to see lotus flowers and enjoy the views in the countryside, while in the winter they visit a hot spring resort in a neighbouring town. The tourist industry provides some employment opportunities and attracts workers from poorer and more isolated towns in the neighbourhood. As a result, the entertainment industry such as massage parlours, karaoke bars and night clubs also attract some mainland and foreign brides and provide them job opportunities.

With a total population of 38,000 in Baihe, the percentage of cross-border marriages goes as high as 37% of total marriages in the year 2002, among which two third are cross-straits marriages.<sup>22</sup> The majority of the cross-border couples are matched

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<sup>20</sup> Information provided in the official history record of Baihe township (Baihe Zhenzhi, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> Baihe Statistic Summary, Baihe Town Office, 2002: 45

<sup>22</sup> Source: Baihe Registration Office. There exist no public data on the number of cross-border marriages at the township level. The figure is a result of my participating in the first nationwide census of mainland and foreign spouses in Taiwan in November 2003 together with the officers at the Baihe Registration Office.

by local brokers or matchmakers. The husbands age at mid-30s to mid-40s and brides at early or mid-20s at the time of marriage. For the majority of them it is their first marriage. The brides are from various provinces in China, with the majority from Qonghai city in Hainan province in earlier years and recently more from Fuqing in Fujian province.

Although the cross-strait couples in Minnan, Hakka community and in veterans' settlement share the characteristics of larger age gap between husbands and wives (as compared to national average), the age, marital experiences and family composition in rural Minnan and Hakka communities share more similarity. The pattern of cross-strait families in the veterans' settlements is rather distinctive. In Chapter 2 I will further analyse these features.

### 3. Humei village, Fuqing city, Fujian province, PRC (中國福建省福清市湖美村)

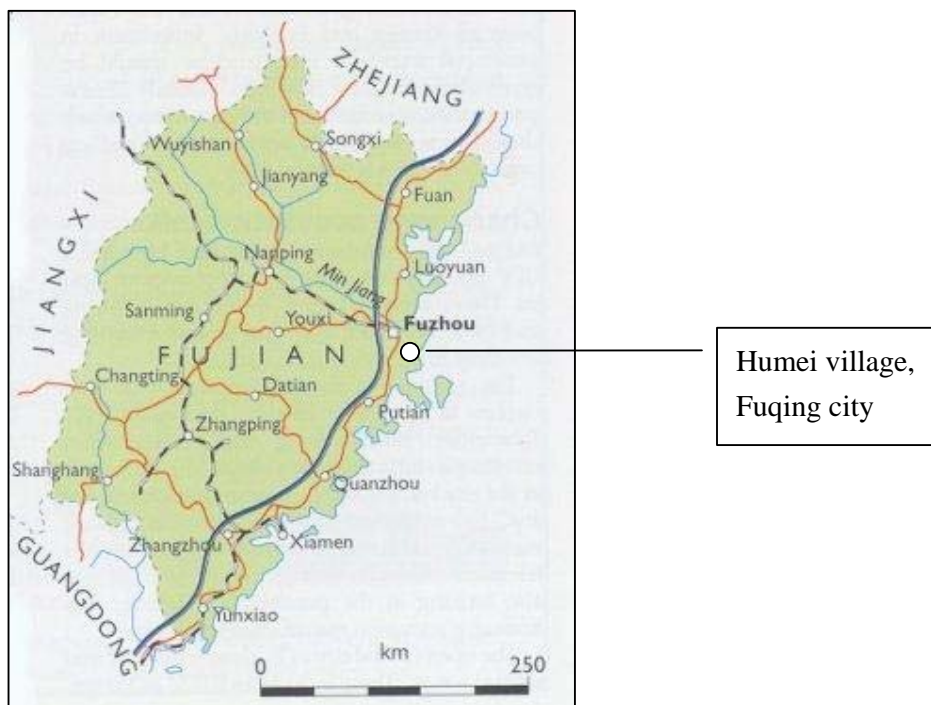
In addition to Hukou and Baihe, I have an opportunity to follow a key informant to visit her natal home in Humei village in Fuqing city. Located near the provincial capital Fuzhou, Fuqing is an economically fast developed area receiving growing foreign investment, among which a large percentage consisted of the remittances of overseas migrant families and workers from Fuqing. Fuqing has a long tradition of labour emigration to Japan, North America and Europe, and in recent years Singapore and Taiwan. It is also an area notorious for human smuggling.<sup>23</sup> Humei village is at the outskirts of Fuqing in the poorer area of the region. Though classified as a rural area in China's registration system, there are only a few agricultural activities left. The majority of the productive labour force has migrated overseas or to other parts of China, leaving only the aged and the young in the village. With a little more than 200 households, there are some twenty men and women who already migrated to Taiwan via marriage and more are planning to go. Every family in Humei village has a few members, both men and women, currently working or married abroad.<sup>24</sup> The majority of those who marry Taiwanese have prior marital experiences with young children in Humei taken care of by elder parents.

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<sup>23</sup> The illegal Chinese immigrants in the Dover tragedy in which 58 were found suffocated in a truck to UK in June 2000, as well as 23 Chinese cockles drowned in Morecambe Bay in UK in February 2004, are all from Fuqing and nearby towns.

<sup>24</sup> For instance, my key informant has four sisters and one brother, all of them are away from home. They respectively migrate to Argentina, Japan, Singapore, Macao and two are in Taiwan. Other than my informant herself and her brother who married Taiwanese, the others are illegal labour migrants. With the money the family earned abroad, my informant's two sons started a business venture in Gueizhou in Southwest China. Her youngest daughter, aged 15, went to Shenzhen in Guangdong province to work in a hair salon. The family rarely have opportunities to see each other, and my visit during Chinese New Year in 2004 was one of them.

I stayed in Humei village only for a month during the Chinese New Year in 2004. Although short, the fieldwork was very intensive as it was a rare chance for all the family members who migrated to different parts of the world to return home and have a reunion. During this month I attended two weddings and several matchmaking gatherings between Taiwanese men and Fuqing women. It is particularly interesting to observe how migration, whether for marriage or for labour, change the economic and social positions of individuals and their kinship in the community which otherwise can never be achieved by other means. How the change of socio-economic positions motivates a chained migration and how migrants develop strategies of pulling economic and social capitals and maintain the links between the natal communities and migratory destinations are inquiries that I would like to investigate in my future research.



**Map 3: Fieldwork site 3: Humei Village, Fuqing city, Fujian Province<sup>25</sup>**

<sup>25</sup> Modified from <http://www.paulnoll.com/China/Provinces/Province-Fujian.html>

## **Research methodology and some reflections**

Taking into consideration that this research inquiry is largely concerned with private domains and that the research subjects are a socially stigmatised group, I decided to use ethnography as my main research methodology. This is also in view that the earlier research on cross-border marriages in Taiwan conducted by sociologists mainly adopts the methods of in-depth interviews and partial participant observation (Hsia, 2002; Wang 2001; Han, 2002), which are limited to relatively long-term observations of daily life activities and the interaction with their kinship network and the wider community. I hope the present ethnographic research will complement these earlier studies and provide other insights.

Derived from the anthropological discipline, ethnography is not only a method of data gathering, it also renders epistemological significance on studying a given society and/or culture from holistic perspectives and the multiplicity of complex conceptual structures. Geertz uses a metaphor to describe doing ethnography as trying to read (in the sense of “construct a reading of”) a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalised graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour. The task of ethnographer then is to sort out the structures of signification (1975: 10). I use the metaphor of a map that conveys the multiplicity of worldviews of a given community.

I spent in total fifteen months in the fieldwork from April to August in 2002 and from April 2003 to April 2004. The first three months in 2002 was spent in gathering governmental statements, public discussion on related legislation and popular representation in the media, both written and visual, in Taiwan. In this period I also gathered demographic data in order to determine the fieldwork sites and criteria and sampling of informants. Time was also spent in investigating matchmaking and marriage brokerage process by interviewing matchmakers/brokers operating on various scales.

In the years 2003 and 2004 I spent a full year in ethnographic fieldwork in the three field sites described above. I spent in two fieldwork sites in Taiwan roughly five months, including the preparation of entry and departure. In the last two months I followed one of my key informants back to China to visit her natal family as well as to collect secondary and demographic data in Fujian, Shanghai and Beijing in the PRC. This research therefore has its limited focus on the matchmaking practices and the family life in Taiwan. Multiple research methods are used to complement this shortcoming and to provide secondary and background information:

1. Household registration records in the local government offices in Hukou and Baihe that give information about cross-strait couples' ages and age gap, occupation, education, and year of marriage. Because in Hukou there exists no specific data on veteran soldiers I conducted a household survey myself.

2. Life-story interviews with both husband and wives of cross-border couples. In Hukou, I conduct in-depth interviews with twelve couples, that include five veteran husbands and their mainland wives; four Hakka husbands and their mainland wives, in two cases I also interviewed the parents-in-law; three Hakka husbands and their Indonesian wives. In total 27 informants were interviewed in Hukou, at least twice each, in combination with many informal visits and chats. In Baihe it was more difficult and time-consuming to enter the existing kinship network. I interviewed 10 cross-border families, with couples and parents-in-law and other kinship members. Outside these two fieldwork sites, I have also interviewed 34 informants of cross-strait couples (including both husbands and wives) in Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Kaoshiung and Chuanghua, many of whom are members of FATS.

3. Participating and observing daily routines of the informants, particularly the wives. This includes working in factories, farming, selling vegetables in the markets, shopping/marketing, cooking/domestic work, visiting friends, religious activities, hospitalisation, etc. as well as being invited for countless dinners. Following their activities allowed me to have an integral picture of the life of these migrant women, their interaction with the local community, and their perception of Taiwanese society as well as the comparison with their own home society.

4. I have also interviewed various people in the community, such as neighbours, the heads of the villages, local civil servants, social welfare workers, medical doctors, (unprofessional) match-makers, etc. who have close contacts with cross-strait couples. I also spoke with the head of two major Hakka and Minnan clans and the women of different generations to grasp the overall ideas and the changes in Hakka and Minnan kinship networks and the ideals of femininity and gender relations.

5. I have worked as an intern in a marriage brokerage agency briefly in Taichung which also recruits female domestic migrant workers. In addition, I interviewed several marriage brokerage agencies of various sizes and establishments.

6. In Hukou, I participated regularly in an evening literary class in a primary school catered for foreign and mainland Chinese brides for three months. For many younger Vietnamese and Indonesian brides, this is the only occasion that I could talk to them freely without the intervention of their husbands and parents-in-law.

7. I encountered a mainland Chinese woman working in a massage parlour in the neighbourhood in Hukou. In this massage parlour I met many other women who either escape from their marriages or do sex work without their husband's knowledge. Their experiences had enriched my research in a great deal and helped me to challenge the line between "real" and "bogus" marriages.

As a result of my methodological choice, in these three sites I mainly interacted with couples of relatively lower social and economic status and with those who married via matchmaking. To supplement and to contrast their experiences, I also interviewed other couples from "love marriages", i.e. who are from middle class, higher education and professional background who met via business contacts and who live in urban areas. I met some of them through random encounter, but most of them belong to a self-organised group, the National Association of Cross-straits Families (FATS, also known as Mainland Bride Association) in Taipei. I participated in the social and political activities organized by this Association, including two major demonstrations against restrictive regulations. A virtual community, an online forum organised by middle-class, professional couples, is very active and articulate brides often write lengthy, personal articles sharing their experiences and views on relevant events. Upon permission I draw sources from this forum.

As a female researcher, I am bound to have a gender-specific relationship with my informants. Though trained in women's and gender studies, I do not want to focus only on women's experiences alone, as I believe that gender relations can only be analysed from the perspectives of both men and women. However, during my fieldwork I found it more difficult to talk to men than to women, particularly with the husbands. Partly due to the segregated gender domains it is easier for me to be part of the "women's network" and not possible to join "men's circle".

Although I am a native Taiwanese, I also experienced the "borders" when I enter the fieldwork sites. However, the distinction of the insider and the outsider, or the emic and etic knowledge generated accordingly (Eriksen, 1995: 36), does not apply in my research. First of all, the members of the cross-borders families themselves have mixed ethnic background, that me being a Minnan Taiwanese does not always grant me "insider" status and advantage. Though mainland and foreign brides are socially

excluded in the community, they act as insiders when receiving me and guiding me into the community network. For instance, in Hakka areas the Indonesian brides often helped translate when I talked to their husbands and parents-in-law who hesitated to speak Mandarin though they are capable of doing it. In this circumstance it is the ethnic identities as Hakka versus Minnan (I) that draw the border between them and me, not the national identities as Taiwanese and Indonesian. Another example is that when I interviewed the veterans retreated from mainland China, it was often their mainland Chinese wives who helped translating when I had difficulties in grasping veterans' heavily accented Mandarin. My being a Minnan young woman often caused initial suspicion from veterans; as they are the group that experienced the most hostility from the local Taiwanese population. On the contrary, their mainland wives were not so sensitive to my ethnic background and were more open to my friendly gesture.

Only in a few occasions when my European partner visited me, I had the honour to be invited to men's drinking sessions by acting as his translator. It shows that at this circumstance the gendered border is stronger than the ethnic and national border. Nevertheless, the gendered border seems to diminish when I relate to older men of my father's age. If I had been a male researcher, I would be able to participate in men's talks but would never have been allowed to talk to women freely. Another reason is that given the stigma and stereotypes on cross-border couples, some of the husbands are extremely defensive to any inquiry. In some occasions the husbands and unfriendly fathers-in-law threw me out of the house. Others accepted my interviews, but often took defensive positions or insisted on the authority of knowledge by assuming a role of teacher and not allowing me to speak. Interestingly, their mainland wives, equally or more stigmatised, tend to welcome me and are eager to share their experiences.

Being a Western educated, urban middle-class woman of course created gap between my informants and me. Initially I was very anxious about the gap and tried very hard to integrate into the community. As many researchers have experienced, the efforts of "living and talking as locals" often became a joking material for the locals. It only revealed my poor imagination and assumptions toward the rural life and these couples, which themselves were influenced by popular images. My education background and the role as researcher did not give me authority in the community; rather, my informants took me as a student who came here to learn the way of life from them. After living with the community for some time I was allowed to move freely and to some extent participate in their daily life particularly with women. Initially, I hesitated to acknowledge that I had a European male partner, knowing that the imagination toward the West might cause my superior status, as well as knowing that this kind of relationship (not legally married and, with a foreigner) may not be



sanctioned. Later, I realised that my unmarried and childless status as an “old” woman way passed marriageable age gave me no legitimacy to raise any question related to intimate and sexual life, and it was not possible to win their trust if I refused to share my personal life. To my surprise, sharing my personal relationship triggered long and enthusiastic discussion on the differences of marriages in the West, China and Taiwan. The fact that I was not legally married did not seem to constitute a problem at all, as long as they knew that my parents had approved my relationship. This shows that the social sanction of marriage is more significant than the legality. Mainland and foreign wives were keen to know how I negotiated the cross-cultural relationship in a foreign country and felt comfortable that I too identified with their experiences of exclusion.

My research is a result of keeping a balance between the “sameness” and “difference”. The “sameness” allows me to build affinity with my informants based on shared experiences, while the “difference” gave comparative perspectives offered by my informants and myself. The research process taught me that the multiple borders of ethnicity, class, gender and age are mutually shaping, constantly changing and negotiable, as my informants experienced. My task as a researcher is to elaborate the process of border construction and their referential framework of these borders.

## **Chapter 1   Changing marriage regimes and gender relations in Chinese society**

This chapter discusses the cultural principles and practices of marriage and family in Chinese society. This information lays the foundation for the later chapters and are crucial to my research questions: why people marry and why they opt for cross-border marriages (chapter 2); how and why cross-strait marriages and mainland brides are considered different in Taiwanese society and the mechanisms of legal and social exclusion (chapter 3, 4 and 5); and the dynamics of gender and intergenerational relations (chapter 5). Although the information in this chapter deals with marriages among nationals in both Taiwan and China, it serves as a reference for studying how cross-strait marriages are similar or deviant from the norms. These norms are not fundamental, irreducible and fixed, as the developments of marriage regimes in China and Taiwan show how they can be changed by political and socio-economic conditions over time. Rather, cultural norms serve as a mediating mechanism through which the gendered and inter-generational relations and gender roles in society are made to seem biological and natural (Collier and Yanagisako, 1987).

The first section of this chapter deals with how the Chinese family is conceptualised as the basis of social organisation in Chinese society and its organisational principles and functions. It also discusses what marriage means in this context and what constitutes a socially recognised marriage. This information provides the foundation of understanding the responsibilities and obligations of different members of the family and what is expected from a new bride when she enters her husband's family as well as her position in the family.

The second and third section deal with changing marriage regimes and gender relations in contemporary China and Taiwan. They are analysed in the light of political processes and economic developments in different periods. Particularly in China, the meanings of marriage and family and the regulating legal mechanisms have undergone drastic changes. However, as I will argue in section 1.4, the matchmaking principles and practices continue to follow traditional ideals despite legal interventions. Nevertheless, political processes and economic developments bring demographic changes and provide conditions for the change of gender roles. I will analyse these changes by summarising research findings of various scholars. Most of this research is quantitative and serves as an indicator of the general trends and attitudes rather than as an analysis of the processes of change. In these two sections I will also briefly discuss the public perceptions toward inter-ethnic and international marriages.

Section 4 gives detailed accounts of matchmaking practices and criteria of mate choices in contemporary China and Taiwan. Socio-economic status continues to be an important consideration for mate choice although the measuring criteria of the status change and the decision-making process reflect the increasing power of potential couples against parental authority in their respective kin groups. This information will be used to compare the practices of cross-border marriages in Chapter 4. Despite the consideration of socio-economic status, the marital decisions are thought to be based on the cultural notion of fate. I will elaborate on this notion and explain why marital decisions are not always rational although this does not mean that the actors have no control over it. This helps to understand marital and migration motivations of cross-strait couples, which will be addressed in Chapter 2.

In the last part of this chapter I explore a new conceptual framework in understanding human relatedness within Chinese society. Chinese kinship and its patrilineal characteristics are often cited as an elementary structure of Chinese society, which is an irreducible given and a cause of behaviour (Chao, Kang 1987:9, 29-30). However, scholars have begun to consider that family relations may be the result of yet more elementary causes. I adopt the concept of *yang* (養, care) proposed by Stafford (2000) to explain the dynamics of inter-generational relations. In Chapter 5 I will go a step further to discuss the gendered aspects of care.

## **1.1. Conceptualising Chinese kinship**

### **1.1.1 Family and kinship (*jia*)**

Chinese society has been widely regarded as a typical example of the lineage theory<sup>26</sup> that conceptualises kinship as a distinct unit separated from the rest of the society, whose members share natural reciprocal obligations derived from blood relations (Holy, 1996). The ideology of the patrilineal descent takes precedence over all other principles of social organisation in China (Freedman, 1979). Chinese kinship can be characterised as a “Continuum of Descent”, which implies that all (male) descendants are a unity, and that a living man is the personification of all his forebearers and of all his descendants yet to be born.<sup>27</sup> The primary function of marriage therefore is to procreate and to carry on the patrilineal lineage (Baker, 1979; Fei, 1998(1947)).

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<sup>26</sup> This was developed by Structural-Functionalists of the British Social Anthropological School, mainly by Radcliffe-Brown and elaborated by Fortes and others in the 1960s (cf. Eriksen, 1995; Holy, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> It refers to the mainstream ideals of kinship in China before the 20<sup>th</sup> century in contrast to the changes in the contemporary society. It should be noted that this perception is not unchanging and static, rather it

Despite the prominence of this conceptualisation up to today, a few Chinese scholars have proposed a different outlook on the Chinese family, though their ideas have not been widely recognised outside China until recently. Instead of the patrilineal and patriarchal authority, Fei argued as early as 1947 that the major characteristic of the Chinese family is its fluid, extensive and flexible structure (1998(1947):40). Wang Sung-hsing also argues that the Chinese family is characterised by its relatedness (*guanxi* 關係) and not by its structure (Wang S.H., 1995).<sup>28</sup> The theory of differential order (*cha xu ge ju* 差序格局) of Fei Hsiao-tung proposes that the nature of social relations in Chinese society is “like ripples caused by throwing a stone into a pond. Everybody is situated at the center of water rings, which are extended to reach an edge of one’s social influence. No matter when and where one finds oneself, one is always situated at the centre of the flexible social network” (Fei, 1998(1947): 26).<sup>29</sup> The immediate inner circles of this water ring consists of kin relations resulting from biological reproduction and marriage; and the outer circles, that is all social relations of an individual, can be considered an extension of the kin relations (ibid.; Wang, M. 2003:36). Fei clearly identifies this social structure as an influence of Confucian idea of “*renlun*” (人倫). *Lun* refers to order and orderliness, and *renlun* thus refers to the order across human relations at different levels, in which the father-son relation is considered primary and most significant (Fei, 1998(1947): 27).<sup>30</sup> Following this line of thinking, anthropologists classify Chinese society as a classical model of the father-son axis society and considers that the clan is the fundamental characteristic of Chinese society (Hsu, Francis, 1963; Li, Y., 2003:69). Unlike Structural-functionalists, Fei do not think that there exists a distinct boundary of the kinship and neither is the kin relation solely based on biological ties. He argues that the non-biological kinship, particularly the father-son relation resulted from the social or legal recognition such as the adoption and the actual rearing responsibility is more important than biological fatherhood (Fei, 1998(1947):125-129; Chuang, 1994:6).<sup>31</sup>

The lineage and kinship these scholars refer to is based on different definitions which they have not agreed upon. The disagreement leads to very different conclusions

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is more associated with the Neo-Confucian trends developed around 900 years ago and is not necessarily applicable to ethnic minority groups in China (Baker, 1979).

<sup>28</sup> Wang Sung-hsing proposes this concept in 1986 in an article published in Japanese. It is translated and republished in a compiled volume dedicated to him (1995).

<sup>29</sup> English translated and quoted by Hwang K.K. (2000:156).

<sup>30</sup> Mencius develops Confucius’s concept of *lun* a step further and proposes five *lun* (*wulun*), that is, in the order of significance, father-son, emperor-subject, husband-wife, brothers and friends. (Mencius, *tenwengong pian* 孟子滕文公篇).

<sup>31</sup> This point is raised in Fei’s book *Reproductive System* (*shengyu zhidu*, 1998), in which the discussion is not referring specifically to Chinese society. Fei was a student of renowned anthropologist Malinowski.

on the organisational principles of Chinese family and how and why the modern Chinese family changes in reaction to political and socio-economic factors (Wolf, A, 1981; Chuang, 1994:3,5). Chuang summarises earlier literature and categorises two groups of definitions of the Chinese family *jia* (家): one emphasises the economic functions of the family, which is close to the English term “household”, and the other stresses the ritual and shared ancestry, which is close to the term “lineage”. The former can be translated as *jiahu* (家戶) and the later as *zongzu* (宗族) (Chuang, 1994:5-6). The correspondence between these two categories and these Chinese words is, however, not clear-cut.<sup>32</sup> The interrelation between the functional and lineal principles of the Chinese family has been puzzling anthropologists in Chinese Studies more than half a century.<sup>33</sup> On this issue Freedman argues that the lineal principle determines the membership of a family and is undoubtedly passed from father to son and to all male descendants. However, it is the functional principles, mainly the economic contribution to the corporate body of the family that determines a member’s active membership and rights to decision-making on the common affairs of both economic and ritual matters.<sup>34</sup> Such principles can be observed most clearly at the time of the division of family (*fenjia* 分家).

### 1.1.2 *Fang* and *fenjia*

*Fang* (房) is a sub-unit of *jia* composed of a son, his wife and their children, as well as all their male descents and their wives. Traditionally, a household *jia* is a collective economic unit, in principle all land and economic resources are shared by all *fangs* under the authority of the eldest male. When a son gets married, he is recognised as a potential head of a new household in the future. When a household *jia* is divided (*fenjia*), a *fang* becomes a new yet not entirely independent economic unit. The *fangs* may share common property, the caring responsibility for the elders and other members who are otherwise uncared for, and continue to contribute and manage the matters regarding ancestral worship and lineage organisation.

Anthropologists have long noted that the co-existence of collective and individual households and parallel structures of *fang*, *jia* and *zhongzu* render Chinese

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<sup>32</sup> The terms referring to Chinese family, clan and lineage, such as *zong* (宗), *zu* (族), *xing* (姓) and *shi* (氏) are often used interchangeably and historically different, without a clear-cut distinction between the economic function and ancestral worship (Huang, 1981:51, cited by Chuang, 1994:6).

<sup>33</sup> See for example, Freedman (1958:137), Pasternak (1976:120), Chen, C.N.(1998: 151-153).

<sup>34</sup> Cited by Chen, C.N.(1998:151) See also Pasternak (1976) and Cohen (1976).

families tremendous possibilities and variations of conducting productive and reproductive activities to their advantage in reaction to diverse socio-economic situations.<sup>35</sup> However, it makes any definition and analysis of the family problematic, as *jia* can neither be defined simply as a co-residential unit or a collective economic unit. After *fenjia* the eldest couple (parents) can keep their own household, live with the eldest son, or take turns to live with all married sons if they live in a close proximity. The unmarried sons and daughters can also live with their eldest brothers (Chuang, 1994). At times of economic hardship, a divided family can be merged again and the unemployed members can migrate back from the cities to the hometown (Wolf, A. 1981; Chuang, 1994). The timing and principles of *fenjia* are also very flexible and vary across regions and time. Some scholars argue that all sons have an equal share of common land and property (Freedman, 1979), while other scholars argue that the share of property corresponds to the economic contribution of each *fang* and the expected (future) obligations from them after *fenjia* (Cohen, 1976:57-9; Wolf A., 1981; Sung, 1981).<sup>36</sup> Despite such equity principles, the eldest male has the ultimate authority over how property is divided and he can deny the rights of inheritance of a *fang* if a son's or his wife's morality and loyalty to the father's authority is in question.

*Fenjia* is a major source of tension between generations and among members of different *fangs*. *Fenjia* threatens the unity of family derived from the ideology of continuum of descent. On the one hand, the parental authority is substantively compromised after *fenjia* and there is no guarantee that the sons would financially and physically care for the aged parents once they enjoy economic independence. On the other hand, *fenjia* renders more power to each *fang*: sons enjoy more freedom and decision-making power as new heads of their respective households; their wives no longer need to surrender to the authority of parents-in-law and other kin members. To maintain the unity of their family and to ensure their own security, the parents retain their authority both by reinforcing the value of filial piety and by upholding control over a certain degree of economic resources. For instance, if a son would demand *fenjia*, he

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<sup>35</sup> Instead of the patrilineal and patriarchal authority as Freedman and Baker argue, Fei argues that the major characteristic of Chinese family is its fluid, extensive and flexible structure (1947:40). Wang Sung-hsing also argues that the Chinese family is characterised by its relatedness (*guanxi* 關係) and not by its structure (cf. Hsu, Francis, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> For instance, Sung's research in Taiwan shows that the sons have equal shares to the land and property that their father inherited from the earlier generation, however, the land and property acquired by their father, to which the sons also contributed substantially, is divided according to each *fang*'s contribution, depending on the number of productive labour of each *fang* (1981). My own fieldwork observations in Baihe show that the son who takes up the primary care responsibility for the aged parents, in most cases the eldest son, gets a larger share. In some cases the first grandson of the eldest son gets a share equal to his father's and uncle's because he will be the male descendant to carry on the lineage. His share will only be effective after he establishes his own household after marriage.

and his wife could be accused of disrespect and lack of filial piety, and they could be condemned by other kin members, which may compromise their position in the kin group and the chance of favourable future negotiations about the division of economic resources. Other common strategies for the parents to retain control and ensure the *fangs*' respect and care is to prolong the *fenjia* process by keeping substantial parts of property and dividing them gradually; or giving a bigger share to the *fangs* they favour and who are likely to care for them. Thus the *fenjia* process often takes a very long time to complete, starting at the time of marriage of the son when he is potentially recognised as an adult and head of a new *fang* (Cohen 1976; Fricke et.al. 1994:26).<sup>37</sup> Earlier scholars are of the opinion that the *fenjia* is an event that only occurs upon the death of the father whose ultimate authority endure throughout his life (Freedman, 1966). My own fieldwork observations in Baihe confirm the view of the later scholar Cohen (1976) that *fenjia* is a *process* that takes a long time to mentally prepare for it and physically complete the division of property, and requires careful and strategic planning by the sons.

### 1.1.3 Power and positions of women in the Chinese kinship

Under the patrilineal organisational principle, a man's membership of a kin group is inherent, though his actual share of the collective property may have to be earned. Women, on the other hand, are not carriers of family lineages and have no rights of inheritance. As Margery Wolf puts it, "a woman is a temporary member of her father's *household*, but not a member of his *family*" (1972:32). Her name does not appear in the family genealogy and if she dies before marriage she may not be buried in the common grave of the lineage. Chinese women "marry out" (*chujia* 出嫁)<sup>38</sup> from the natal family and join the new family as a stranger and sometimes are considered by the husband's family as "polluting" outsiders (Fricke et.al, 1994:36-38; Stafford, 2000). It is argued that the widespread practice of geographic exogamy in China, i.e. that the spouses should be from different villages, effectively isolated the new bride from the support of

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<sup>37</sup> Earlier scholars, such as Freedman, are of the opinion that the *fenjia* is an *event* that only occurs upon the death of the father whose ultimate authority endured throughout his life (1966). Cohen considers *fenjia* as a *process* that takes a long time to mentally prepare for it and physically complete the division of property (1976). I agree with Cohen's view.

<sup>38</sup> One of the rituals during the wedding ceremony is that the father of the bride splashes water at the moment the bride leaves the natal home, which symbolises that the bride's formal tie with her natal family is cut (Wolf, M., 1972:34). This ritual became a popular saying, "*a married-out daughter is like water split*", who is gone forever and may never return.

her natal kin as she will live a long distance from them in the patrilocal system (Wolf, M., 1972; Davin, 1999).<sup>39</sup>

The above description paints a picture of women who are invisible and powerless in Chinese kinship. In fact it appears to be so in the earlier literature written by male anthropologists who emphasise the patrilineal principle and the economic functions of *jia*. As women's labour is not considered a contribution to the collective *jia*, especially in the rural economy where women are confined to domestic work as a result of the sexual division of labour in the rural community. Several female anthropologists have looked beyond the Confucian ideology and the formal kinship structure and arrive at different conclusions. Women's reproductive capacity gives them power and at the same time makes them polluting outsiders. On the one hand, the kin group can only survive and extend by bringing in a bride who will bear sons. On the other hand, marriage and the consequent birth of children disturb the existing father-son order and parental authority, trigger the *fenjia* process and threaten the family unity (Ahern, 1975).<sup>40</sup> Margery Wolf further develops a theory of the uterine family to analyse Chinese kinship from women's perspectives and challenges the dominant paradigm. In her words,

With a female focus, however, we see the Chinese family not as a continuous line stretching between the vague horizons of past and future, but as a contemporary group that comes into existence out of one woman's need and is held together insofar as she has the strength to do so, or, for that matter, the need to do so (1972:37).

A uterine family is composed of a woman, her mother and her mother's children (her brothers and sisters). Before a woman marries she is socialised by her mother and grandmother to whom she has emotional attachment. After she marries, she loses her uterine family and enters a new family of which every member, including her husband, treats her with suspicion and at times hostility. She may be able to ease off the suspicion over time through building her own uterine family by bearing a son. Over the years she invests in bonding with her own children, while building an alliance with elder women

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<sup>39</sup> Exogamy refers to a law or custom that requires people to marry someone from another geographical area, social group, family, clan, or tribe in order to prevent intermarriage between blood or other close relations.

<sup>40</sup> Ahern's studies show that the power to pollute and threaten the family is reflected in rituals and taboos built upon women's reproductivity (1975). Women's position in the husband's household was consolidated by the birth of a child, especially a son. Even when the first-born was a daughter, the fear of having married a barren daughter-in-law was relieved (Wolf, M., 1972). A recent study of child-bearing and rearing in rural China confirms these earlier findings (Li, Y., 2003).



in the affinal kin group to secure support. The mother-son bonding is not only biologically inherent, but also a result of women consciously fostering the bonding to consolidate their own power and to secure their own old-age care security. The preference for sons and differential treatment towards sons and daughters can be seen in this light (Hsiung, 2004:14). It should be noted though, that the strategic investment in bonding with sons often co-exist with the emotional satisfaction of child-rearing.

Meanwhile a woman continues the ties with her own mother, father and brothers. The latter will offer significant support to her and her children throughout her life, especially in times of festivity and conflicts. If her natal family is powerful and willing to support her, she could request their intervention if she is ill-treated by her husband's kin. However, this could only happen at times of crisis and when she can justify that she has done no wrong-doings. She would not be able to rely on the intervention of her natal family regularly, nevertheless, if her natal family is powerful she would be more respected and treated better by her husband's kin.

To be able to build alliances with elder women in the affinal kin group and to secure support from her natal family, a woman must first of all fulfil her gender roles as a good wife, mother and daughter-in-law and her "women's virtues" (*fudao* 婦道 or *fude* 婦德) must not be questioned. *Fudao* are the normative principles of being an ideal woman that is developed as early as the first century A.D.<sup>41</sup> The principles of *fudao* changes across history, and in some periods it is stricter than others. Nevertheless, chastity, obedience to husbands and in-laws, harmonious relations with sisters-in-law, an attitude of hard working and humble character are common requirements.<sup>42</sup>

A woman's ultimate goal is to separate her uterine family from the family of her mother- and sisters-in-law, that is *fenjia*, so that she can escape the domination of her mother-in-law and become the most powerful woman in the family. From this perspective, M. Wolf argues that the major source of tension in the Chinese family and the key factor causing *fenjia* is women's competition over power, not men's competition over economic resources (1972:33-40; Ahern, 1975:199). Although Wolf offers a fresh perspective on the complex power dynamics among family members and places women at the central place, I think she overestimates the power of women's "bickering" politics. The formal decision-making process carried by sons as the heads of *fangs*, and informal power play of women should both be taken into accounts.

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<sup>41</sup> The first written record of *fudao* is *Lessons for Women* (*nujie* 女誡) written by a woman writer Ban Zhao (班昭, 45-117 A.D.).

<sup>42</sup> For different criteria of *fudao* in different periods and the mechanisms of socialising women into following *fudao*, see Lin, W.H., 2004.

Wolf's theory was developed in the 1970s on women in rural Taiwan and China. With women increasingly joining the public sphere by political participation, legal protection and entering the labour market, Chinese and Taiwanese women today no longer rely solely on economic and social capitals within kinship relations and enjoy a higher degree of independence and greater negotiation power. I will discuss the modern changes of gender roles in the next two sections. The mainland and foreign brides, however, may still experience the familiar marginal positions because 1) they are more likely to be treated as polluting "outsiders" due to their constructed difference and inferiority; 2) the lack of political and social rights and limited job opportunities; and 3) the lack of support from natal kins. Because the legal framework in Taiwan places these women in the private domain of the family (to be discussed in Chapter 3), I find it useful to adopt the concept of uterine family to explain mainland brides' position and their strategies of gaining acceptance and securing support.

#### **1.1.4 Sketches of traditional ideals and practices of marriage regimes**

Despite the historical and regional differences, marriage in China shares the following general characteristics deriving from Neo-Confucian ideals.

The primary objective of marriage is procreation and the continuation of patrilineal descent continuum. A woman's status in the family is largely dependent upon her fertility and capability of producing a male heir (Thornton and Lin, 1994:21).

Marriage is early, universal and arranged by the older generation (Fricke et. al., 1994:36). The historical record shows that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the average age of first marriage for women is 17.4 and for men 22.5 (Wang W.S. 2000:29~41); and in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century women for 21 and men 23 (Zhang and Mao, 2003:143). The marital age is intrinsically linked with the economic status of the family. In general it follows the principle that men from wealthier families married earlier than those of poorer families, and women from poorer families married earlier than richer ones (ibid).

Marriage is considered to be the most important contractual relationship in Chinese society, which creates not only a conjugal unit within a family but also a permanent tie between two kin groups. The relationship between members of two kin groups and corresponding obligations are defined by the marital rites.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For a detailed description of marital rites, see, for instance, Freedman (1967:5, 11); Wolf, M. (1972); Chuang (1994).

Given the permanent nature of these contractual relations, both conjugal and between two kin groups, families take great care to choose brides and bridegrooms, based primarily on the principle of matching social and economic status of two families. The role of the go-between, or matchmaker, is essential. Parents have absolute authority concerning mate choice, and marriage is primarily the responsibility of parents to their children, that includes finding a good match and to shoulder the wedding expenses. Parents who cannot afford wedding costs and/or finding a suitable match for their sons bring shame to the whole kin group. Despite substantial wedding costs and the potential threat created by the marriage for its leading to *fenjia*, a family has more to gain by taking a woman in than by sending a woman out. Therefore a marriage is an occasion of celebration, though the bride often bears the tension considered to be caused by her entry and she is treated with suspicion (Freedman, 1967; Fricke et.al, 1994: 40).

Marriages are made in Heaven and predestined. This is best illustrated in a popular blessing to the couple at the wedding – *tien zuo zhi he* (天作之合) -- union made by Heaven. The idea that marriage is decided by fate seems to contradict the meticulous effort of finding a perfect match and “*the shrewed calculations of social, economic and political advantage that go into the making of a match*” (Freedman, 1967:11). Freedman argues that in view of the perceived threat a bride poses to the family and the permanent nature of the marital contract and alliance of two kin groups, a marriage is inevitably too much a risk that no man can afford to be blamed for its failure.

The above ideal principles are generally applied to the dominant form of marriage among the Han ethnic group. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to deal extensively with the variety of alternative forms of marriage, such as minor marriage (*simpua* 童養媳), uxorilocal marriage (招贅婚), remarriage and concubinage. Although variation often renders greater insights into underlying principles of a cultural practice, I will only describe the selected elements very briefly as the objective here is to sketch the ideals and norms as a reference to modern cross-strait marriages. I will elaborate on minor marriage and uxorilocal marriage in Section 3 of this chapter as they were widely practiced in Taiwan among the Han immigrants before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Remarriage and concubinage are considered undesirable, yet the historical record shows that they have been widely practiced all through history.

Widowed women's remarriage was widespread especially among lower class population, even at the time when the ideal of widowed women's chastity (*shoujie* 守節) was most elevated and incorporated in the legal code in the Ming and Qing period (Linck-Kesting 1985:146-52). Remarriage was accepted as a practical solution of

economic adversity for women. There were several ways of dealing with the brideprice of remarrying women: 1) to pay debts left by the previous husband or shoulder the funeral cost; 2) divide it by the deceased husband's kin (her brothers-in-law), who can also be exempted from the responsibility of caring for the widow and children; 3) equally divide it by the kin of the women's natal family and husband's family (Wang W.S. 2000: 160-161). A widow never got to keep the brideprice; she was either forced to remarry or did so in order to ensure that her young children were cared for -- either by the new husband or by the kin/brothers of the deceased husband -- in the latter case the brideprice went to the carer of the children. There were rare cases of the remarriages without brideprice -- but negotiated on the conditions such as that the new husband would care for the children from the first marriage or care for the women's parents at old age. It is obvious that the kin of both the deceased husband and the widow's natal family had incentives to push her into remarriage, as they benefited from the remarriage by either earning substantial brideprice, alleviating themselves from the caring responsibility of her, or depriving the widow and her children of their rights of inheritance.<sup>44</sup>

Concubinage is another strategy that families and women themselves adopt for survival and upward social mobility. The normative monogamous principle of marriage was established as early as during the Zhou dynasty, however, in practice concubinage was accepted though not as widespread as commonly believed and only limited to higher class families.<sup>45</sup> Concubines did not have the same rights as the legal wife, though their sons shared the same legitimate rights as the other sons. The marital rites of concubinage were elaborate. It did not aim at alliance-building of two families and the matchmaking did not follow the matching-door principle (Zhang and Li, 1996), which I will explain in section 4.2. In fact, concubines were often from a lower social class than the husband or from a family in economic hardship. Keeping ties with their natal families was discouraged and they enjoy no protection and support from them. Therefore they needed to secure their position in the new family by building their own uterine families as their security would primarily come from their sons, not their husbands.

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<sup>44</sup> Despite the obvious fact that it is the widow's kin who benefit from her remarriage, the stigma of failing to keep chastity lays on her and she has to justify the remarriage by arguing that it is a survival strategy out of poverty, such as "*yin pinkun buneng shoujie*" (因贫困不能守節), as shown in the court record in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century (Wang Y.S., 2000:161).

<sup>45</sup> The legal code of Qing sets limits for concubinage: only if the man is above forty years old and his wife bears no son the husband is allowed to take a concubine (ibid.: 78-9).

## **Late Imperial and Republican period (1900-1949)**

In the late Imperial and Republican period, due to the influence of western thinking, the “new marriage” - individuals making their own mate choice - was popular among the educated students and intellectuals in the cities. Kang Youwei was the first intellectual who proposed a systematic marriage reform that defined marriage as a contract between individuals - young men and women aged above 20, “*should select their mates based on emotional and dispositional compatibility*”.<sup>46</sup> Two intellectual leaders, Liang Qichao and Tan Sitong also waged a war against polygamy and urged intellectuals to act as examples by sticking to monogamy and free-choice marriage (Liu, S.P., 2001). However, in practice they still sought parental consent and went through traditional (normative) match-making, negotiation of marriage transactions and eventually a traditional ceremony. The stories about young couples resisting parental control over their marriage or about family disapproval of their mate choice, often caused by different social status of the couple’s family, were romanticised in the popular culture of this period. However, arranged marriage remained dominant in rural China, where the majority of population dwelled (Croll, 1981:19). This wave of marriage reform should be seen as an overall call for gender equality, coupled to the popularisation of women’s education and the anti-foot-binding movement.<sup>47</sup>

## **1.2 Marriage regimes and gender relations in contemporary China: ideals and changes**

### **1.2.1 Radical redefinition of the marriage regime during the Maoist era**

The 1950 marriage law introduced a radical change that intended to eradicate the traditional feudal marriage system. The main objectives, as clearly stated in Article 1, are to 1) abolish all laws upholding “arbitrary and compulsory feudal marriage” and introduce a marriage contract based on “freedom of choice”; 2) protect the interests of women and children and promote gender equality (cited by Croll, 1981:1). Freedom of marriage was defined as “*the provision of full rights for the individual to handle his or her own matrimonial affairs*

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<sup>46</sup> *Jiao hao ji yue* 交好之約 (皆由本人做主自擇, 情志相合, 乃立合約, 名曰交好之約....), in *Book of Harmony* (*Datongshu* 大同書), quoted by Liu, S.P. (2001:2).

<sup>47</sup> How gender equality and marriage reform constitute two of the major statements of the May Fourth movement, see Davin (1999:224 –5). Several publications address the influence of western missionaries and various alternative avenues for women to escape marriage, see, among others, Jaschok and Miers (1994).

*without any interference or obstruction from third parties and without regard for social status, occupation or property*”,<sup>48</sup> and based on the principle of monogamy (Article 1). The meaning of marriage was then constructed as a union of two free individuals living out the ideals of socialist love, that is characterized as “*broad mutual ambition, diligent study, hard work and mutual help*” (Wang Wenbin, et. al., cited by Evans, 1997: 88).

The political context at the time was that the Chinese Communists who just took over the Mainland were eager to generate political support for the new regime. As one of the earliest laws to be enacted, the marriage law was engineered with a clear goal for a consciously planned social change to break away from “feudal” China and to redefine social relations and citizenship in a new socialist China (Croll, 1981:6; Palmer, 1995:110).<sup>49</sup> Marriage was now defined as a contract between two equal individuals, as opposed to familial arrangement and parental control; the conjugal bond as the foundation of the domestic group, as opposed to other kin bonds. What remained unchanged was the underlying assumption that marriage is universal as a necessary and “natural” step for each individual (Croll, 1981:2), yet the purpose of marriage had changed from procreation to finding a life’s companion, a serious responsibility that all progressive citizens should fulfil in order to denounce feudal thinking (ibid:8).

More specifically, the 1950 marriage law denounced feudal practices by outlawing concubinage, child betrothal (engagement), polygamy, the sale of sons and daughters into marriage or prostitution, and by encouraging late marriage and condemning traditional rituals (Croll, 1981; Davis and Harrell, 1993; Yan, 1996; Evans, 1997). The marriage was then concluded not by celebration, but by registration. The Marriage Registration Regulations (MRR) punish unregistered relationship, which means that pre-marital and extra-marital sex cannot be tolerated officially (Palmer, 1995:113).<sup>50</sup>

These modernising efforts rejected both descent continuum and alliance-building objectives of marriage. On the one hand, reproduction of unilineal descent (in

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<sup>48</sup> Quotation from *Guangming Ribao*, a Beijing based party sanctioned daily newspaper, on 27 February 1957 (cited by Croll, 1981:1).

<sup>49</sup> This ideology was influenced by Marx and Engel’s theory on the link between the relations of production and evolution of marriage and family forms. Two writings from Marx and Engels were widely quoted in China, namely, *Origin of the family, private property and the state* by Engels and Marx’s letter to B.V. Aninkov. In their theory, monogamy based on the principle of free choice is the highest stage of social evolution, substituting arranged and group marriage, which can be taken to be one measure of a state’s success in founding a new society resting on socialist principles (Croll, 1981: 5-6; Davis and Harrell, 1993).

<sup>50</sup> The MRR can be traced as early as the Chinese Soviet Republic Marriage Regulations in 1931 and have been standing as an independent and important regulation up to today (Palmer, 1995: 118).

the Chinese case, a patriline) is no longer the primary objective of marriage.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the abolition of parental mate choice, child marriage and marriage transactions rejected the idea of alliances being built by the exchange of women among kin groups, (Wolf, 1985; Davis and Harrell, 1997). The “free choice”, seen in the context of socialist rather than liberal ideology, implied the principle of heterogamy – disregarding property and other socio-economic factors in mate choice. This was again engineered towards a radical change in the existing social (class) structure and reducing social stratification (Goody, 1971; Croll, 1981).<sup>52</sup> The media had frequently advocated heterogamy in order to reduce the disparity and division between the “mental” and “manual”, and the rural and urban social categories<sup>53</sup>.

Influenced by the heterogamy ideology, many young urban students opted to marry persons from the military, peasants and workers. This trend reached a peak during the later part of the cultural revolution when many red guards went to live in the rural communities. Being away from the control of the family, young intellectuals were eager to prove the zeal of their political belief, and marriage with a peasant and worker often led to promotion in the Communist party. For young people from the “problematic” classes, marriage with peasants and workers was often a saving grace. The fashion of the wedding ceremony at the time was simple and avoiding formality, with a symbolic exchange of Mao’s red book and other revolution-related objects. “Love” was not talked about, and exchange of gifts was minimal (Liu, 2001:176-186). However, many of these marriages ended tragically when the red guards returned to the cities.

Though ideological influences took precedence in the 1950 marriage law, economic policies also shaped the marriage reform. Croll argues that economic policies provided the base for strengthening the bargaining power of the younger generation, especially women, and changed the power relations that were traditionally dominated by the household head. The land reform – land was distributed among individuals rather than households – gave young family members and women potential economic independence. However, individual ownership was soon changed to collective

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<sup>51</sup> One example is the rejection of sterility as a ground for divorce (Wang, 2000; Croll, 1981: 4).

<sup>52</sup> Homogamy, that is the principle of the mate choice among the same socially stratified group, is one of the major mechanisms of maintaining or reproducing a social and class structure. (Zhang, 2003:39) Heterogamy, on the contrary, encourages the mate choice from a different social group and therefore promotes social mobility and destabilises the existing social structure. For how successful the random mating in marriage is may reflect the redistribution of land, capital and ownership of the means of production, see Croll (1981: 6). I will further discuss homogamy and different forms of heterogamy later in section 4 of this chapter.

<sup>53</sup> See for example, Women of China, 1 March 1962. (Cited by Croll, 1981:6.)

production. The cooperatives and communes in rural areas and the establishment of joint state-private enterprises in urban environments effected the separation of production from the individual and private household and provided employment for the younger generation to be away from the control of the household head (1981: 8). The new socio-economic conditions of collective land-ownership and collective welfare released young people from the caring responsibility of their aged parents. As a consequence, the economic incentives to “*bring up children in anticipation of old age*” (*yang er fang lao* 養兒防老) or to “*ensure the inheritance of family property*”<sup>54</sup> seemed to disappear. This was another factor encouraging the conjugal bond and discouraging inter-generational relations.

However, if we take a closer look, we may find that though the ideological and economic motivations were to break away from the feudal family, they actually provided opportunities for the fulfilment and sustenance of traditional family life. Communism created both contradictions and paradoxical relations between state policies and family life. On the one hand, it undercuts the power and authority of patriarchy and replaced the family farms/businesses with collectivism. On the other hand, it creates demographic and material conditions conducive to large and multi-generational households with extensive economic and social ties within kin groups in rural China. The latter actually provided an environment for the realisation of core ideals of traditional family life, but at the same time also making irrelevant many incentives for realising those ideals (Davis and Harrell, 1993:2), by providing heavy collective investment in public health, housing and education etc., replacing traditional welfare and social support provided by the family. As a matter of fact, the efforts during the Great Leap Forward to weaken the family were abandoned after a very short time (Palmer, 1995: 113). The family was still regarded as the primary institution of educating and reproducing socialist values for the new generation. What made a difference is that the family, earlier considered as a private domain, had now been reallocated to the social, public and political sphere (Croll, 1981: 6), as it was clearly articulated in a media statement that “[w]e must regard marriage not as a problem of the enjoyment of ‘private life’, but as a ‘cell’ of the entire cause of Revolution, as something important to the interests of the whole society.”<sup>55</sup>

As a result of strong state propaganda and coercive measures, child marriage and concubinage were equally reduced in urban and rural areas. However, eliminating brideprice and parental control of mate choice was more successful in the urban settings yet yielded little effect in rural areas (Whyte, 1993). The free choice marriage based on

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<sup>54</sup> *Heibe Daily*, 8 April 1959, *Tienjin* (cited by Croll, 1981: 4).

<sup>55</sup> *Takungpao*, 22 December 1956, Beijing, (ibid.: 6).



the heterogamous principle inevitably implied pre-marital courtship. The official discourse had held “making friends” as an indispensable aspect of free choice marriage, in order to select a marriage partner based on affection and love (Evan, 1997:84). Bearing in mind the sexual segregation among unmarried men and women in pre-Maoist rural China, the popular notion of freedom of marriage was little more than an invitation to promiscuity and “immorality”. There was also confusion about the definition of and distinction between friendship and courtship – i.e. limited public contacts were enough to create an expectation to marriage, and (women’s) rejection to further advancement made by men often attracted attacks of their being “loose women”. The ideological construction was not strong enough to alter normative boundaries of morality (ibid.: 85).

Though the 1950 marriage law intended to promote gender equality and protect the interests of women, the monogamous model of marriage had projected a certain ideal of womanhood and sexuality that further strengthened stereotype of sex roles. As monogamous marriage became the only relationship legitimising sexual relations, marriage and sexual relations became synonymous. The conflation of marriage and sex eventually led to criminalisation of sex outside marriage, as the 1980 marriage law enacted (see next section), and further reinforced the “immorality” of female infidelity. The enhancement of the role of sex in marriage life implicitly held women responsible for the sexual satisfaction of their husbands and harmony of sex and family life (Evans, 1997: 113-114).

### **1.2.2 Marriage regimes in the era of reform**

The post-Mao era, though most often referred to as an era of economic reform, did not only bring changes in economic policies but also led to fundamental social restructuring. Unlike the 1950 Marriage Law that aimed at gaining political legitimacy by denouncing feudal practices, the 1980 Marriage Law as well as other rapidly codified related legislation reflected Party leaders’ concern to ensure stability, order and continuity in social life (Palmer, 1995:110). The family in the post-Mao era has “regained” its central place in society, which is not driven by political ideology but shaped more by economic realities in which the family is an important unit of economic production and consumption, especially in rural areas. Thus it is in the state’s interests to enhance the status of the family by emphasising traditional family values such as filial piety, marriage fidelity and intergenerational dependence.

Next to economic liberalisation, several social policies had a particular impact on the marriage regime. First, the population policy. Government in the 1950s did not intervene in the traditional expectations of marital fertility because post-war China was in need of population growth in view of labour shortage, though the policy of late marriage had indirectly reduced the fertility rate. The birth control (limitation) campaign that started in the early 1960s, mostly promoted in the cities, achieved substantial control. However, population pressure prompted the state to take extreme measures to implement the One Child Policy in 1979. The earlier birth control campaign and the later One Child Policy, whether applying educational or coercive measures, needed co-operation from the family. It is therefore important to reinstate the family's "natural" role of reproduction.

Secondly, the reduction of public expenditures in social security and the privatisation of welfare. The collapse of the commune system and huge budget deficits led the state to cut back public health services, housing subsidies and education expenditure. By reinstating the family values, the state can easily justify these cutbacks and put the responsibility of childrearing, care for the aged, sick and needy back to the family, especially women, and assume that it is their "natural" duties of care.

Thirdly, the rapid economic growth in China is largely attributed to the uneven development and growing disparity between urban and rural China. The Household Registration System (*hukou* system) allows a huge number of rural surplus labour to work temporarily in the cities while keeping their reproductive base in the rural area. In Chapter 2 I will elaborate about this system, its rationale and the policy governing internal migration. Urban prosperity contributing to household consumption permits urban individuals to act upon preference rather than necessity (Yan, 1997:192).<sup>56</sup> As a consequence, a trend of materialism and individualism is observed (Zhang, 1999: 6; Croll, 1995:151). The gap between rural poverty and urban development as well as the relaxation of control over internal migration contributed to a huge flow of rural-urban migration. Both materialism and migration flows have a potential to increase non-marital relationships, that lead to uncontrollable population growth as more children will be born without the state's sanction.<sup>57</sup> Therefore the state is determined to punish

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<sup>56</sup> Yan argues that cultural influences from outside, by which I think she means consumerism in the west, also contribute to individualism.

<sup>57</sup> The centrality of the family in population and internal migration policy can be illustrated by the significance of the family planning certificate, which registers the number of children one (especially a woman) has and the sterilisation record. When a woman moves to another city to look for jobs, she must carry with her this certificate or she would not be able to find any work. In a sense, this certificate functions as an identification card. Before the marriage registration the prospective bride and bridegroom also have to show their family planning certificate or prove that they do not have any child. (Fieldwork

extra-marital sexual relations and to strengthen the marriage registration system as a means to put migration under control, as shown in the effort of revision of the Marriage Law in 1980.

The implementation of these policies and the solution to the problems caused by them requires a tight control over and the collaboration of the family. First of all, marriages' "natural" function of procreation was reinstated. The 1980 Marriage Law and the revision of the Constitution in 1982 both assumed that reproduction will only take place in the family when they specified that "*both husband and wife shall have the duty to practise family planning*" (Constitution, Article 19).<sup>58</sup> It also states that "*inability to carry out sexual intercourse*" constitutes a specific ground for divorce.<sup>59</sup> The Inheritance Law (1985) and Household Registration Regulation deny the rights of children born outside marriage (Palmer, 1995:114). These laws show the state's efforts to sanction reproduction within marital relations.

Secondly, the monogamy principle was reinforced, not only in terms of official marriage registration, but now extended to the regulation of sexual behaviour. The family again is the only institution within which sexual behaviour is allowed. The frequently revised Marriage Registration Regulations (MRR, 1980, 1986, 1994) are attempts to eliminate "de facto" marriages.<sup>60</sup> Extra-marital affairs and keeping mistresses (*bao er nai* 包二奶) were treated as prostitution and criminal offences. The revision of the Marriage Law in 2001 further tightened the control over concubinage (or keeping mistresses) and marital infidelity, which is often linked with political corruption.

Another function of the family identified in the 1980 Marriage Law was the task of providing protection for children and socialising them into society. Article 15 specifies that "*parents have the duty to rear and educate their children,*" also prohibiting infanticide (Palmer, 1995: 114). In Article 17 it states that parents have the duty to discipline and protect their children and to compensate those who have suffered economic loss as a result of harmful behaviour of their children (ibid:115). The family is also obliged to care for the elderly and the sick. The inter-generational reciprocal duty is clearly stated in the Constitution (1982, Article 49), "*parents have the duty to rear*

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observation and information given by the nurse in charge of family planning in Humei village, Fuqing, Fujian).

<sup>58</sup> This article is retained in the revisions of the Constitution in 1988 and in 1993.

<sup>59</sup> Rule of Supreme People's Court in 1989 under the Constitution, Article 25 of the 1980 Marriage Law (Palmer, 1995: 113).

<sup>60</sup> De facto marriages or cohabitation can be caused by administrative difficulty of marriage registration in remote areas or by the couple's unwillingness to register their marriages both in rural and urban areas (Palmer, 1995:119-121).

*and educate their children who are minors and children who have come of age have the duty to support and assist their parents”.*<sup>61</sup> The 1979 Criminal Law makes it an offence, punishable by a sentence of five years detention, for an adult child to refuse to perform her or his proper duty to support an aged member (Article 183). All these articles were absent from the 1950 law (Palmer, 1995: 116).

Despite the state's intention and interests to control the family's reproductive function and to confine sexual freedom, the state's direct control over individuals and the effects of law on the family-related issues in rural areas were lessened (Davis and Harrell, 1993; Ip et al., 2000). Family in the reform era undergoes complex and heterogeneous changes under the economic liberalisation. When explicit state policies do not enforce homogeneity as in the Mao era, the general tendency is for families to adapt their marital and welfare strategies to local economic conditions (Davis and Harrell, 1993). However, it is noted that family structures and household arrangements change more as a response to cultural factors rather than exclusively in response to new economic incentives and rationality.<sup>62</sup> Thus the economic reform era witnesses on the one hand the rapid change of familial and marital norms sharing similar features with other industrialised and developed societies, and the resurgence of pre-Maoist traditional practices on the other, with growing disparity between the rural and urban population.

### **1.2.3 Demographic features and gender roles during the economic reform era**

Partly due to the fact that the minimal age of marriage in the 1980 Marriage Law was lower than that in 1950, teenage marriage and betrothal have reappeared in rural areas, and the average age of first marriage has lowered visibly, while the average age of marriage in the urban areas grows higher.<sup>63</sup> As marriage expenses (dowry, brideprice and gifts, etc.) were no longer prohibited, the expenditures on brideprice have increased tenfold during 1980 and 1986.<sup>64</sup> However, these practices have changed form. For instance, marriage transactions are now more exchanged in cash whereas in the past they were exchanged in the form of gifts. There is also an increasing involvement of the

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<sup>61</sup> See also 1980 Marriage Law, Article 3 and 15.

<sup>62</sup> Their findings confirm the research findings elsewhere in western Africa (Caldwell), Europe and Asia (Hajnal) (cited by Davis and Harrell, 1993: 6).

<sup>63</sup> In 1978 the average age of marriage for women in the cities was 25.1 and for rural brides 22.4. By 1987 the national average has fallen to the age of 21 (*Renmin Ribao* — People's Daily, 19 February 1989, cited by Davis and Harrell, 1993:10). See also Scharping, 2003:242.

<sup>64</sup> According a national survey in 1986 in rural China. Various source, cited by Yan, 1996: 177.

brides and grooms in the negotiation, though the practice of intermediary match-making as a ritual as well as parental choice over mate and familial consultation is prevalent (Siu, 1993; Whyte, 1993; Yan, 1996).

Despite strict birth control, the desire for more than one child is predominant, especially when the first child is a girl. In urban China, due to general factors such as rising demand in consumer goods, higher educational levels and costs and increasing numbers of women entering the labour market, the one-child policy faces less resistance. Moreover, a large percentage of urban dwellers have enjoyed social security such as pensions, public housing and health care since the beginning of the implementation of one-child policy in the 1970s. Therefore the incentive of raising children with the expectation of providing for old-age security (*yang er fang lao*) is less. In rural areas the population policy faces severe resistance and families would rather pay the penalty worth more than one-year household income to have a son. As a result the birth-control measures have been relaxed in the rural areas.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless various surveys show that both the urban and rural population desire at least two children (Scharping, 2003:215), and nearly 30% of the population desires at least one son (Chen, F. 2003:126-7).<sup>66</sup> The reasons for son preference, in descending order of significance, are 1) the prevalence of the traditional perception to “*bring up children in anticipation of old age*”; 2) men in general have better opportunities for achievement in today’s China; and 3) carrying on family lineage and family names (ibid:126-9).

The one-child policy has resulted in a growing skewed sex ratio, with 108.5 in 1981 and 115.6 in 1995 (at birth, national average).<sup>67</sup> Compared with the average parameter in the world, it is estimated that there were 600,000 girls “missing” by birth every year as a result of pre-natal gender screening of the foetus and subsequent abortion.<sup>68</sup> This figure does not include the number of female infanticide - baby girls killed after birth. Such a skewed sex ratio will lead to such an excessive male marriage

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<sup>65</sup> For the differentiated population policies in urban and rural areas and its implementation, see Scharping, 2003. For fertility behaviour of rural families in reaction to the one-child policy, see Li Yinghe (2003).

<sup>66</sup> Based on the result of the second nationwide survey on Women’s Social Status in China in 2000, Chen analysed that only 18% of rural women desire at least one son, with the lower percentage among younger and higher educated women. However, 39.4 % of rural men and 30% of urban men desire at least one son.

<sup>67</sup> Sex ratio refers to the number of male in proportion to every 100 female, which is commonly used to predict demographic trends and to measure gender equality. The world average sex ratio at birth is around 105-107. China is one of countries with the highest sex ratios in the world. The figure here is from the result of the National Census in the PRC, summarised by Scharping (2003:290).

<sup>68</sup> According to official statistics, there were 120,000 missing girls at birth in 1982 and by 1989, 600,000, with the number continuing to grow every year. Missing girls refer to female babies that should have been born as compared to the average sex ratio in the world. This figure is a conservative estimate. Other statistics show that the figure can be as high as one million every year.

squeeze, that a substantial proportion of men will never be able to find a wife.<sup>69</sup> In addition, with the large-scale internal rural-urban migration, substantial numbers of Chinese men in poorer regions will not be able to marry, which will result in higher average ages due to larger shares of unmarried old men, and eventually collapsing communities in these regions. Since the 1990 census the state gradually recognised the gravity of the problem and regulations and controls for checking infant death and sex-specific abortions are implemented (Scharping, 2003).

As a result of the free-choice ideal, marriage is increasingly considered a private matter and an individual choice, as well as the freedom not to marry (singlehood) and to divorce.<sup>70</sup> Overall the percentages of single women in the total female population goes down since 1980s, yet in urban areas it increases gradually as more educated women consider singlehood as a viable choice (Chen, Fang, 2003; Li Yinghe, 1996).<sup>71</sup> The divorce rate has increased from 3.74% in 1981, 13.18% in 1997, and the divorce is increasingly initiated by women.<sup>72</sup> The increase of divorce can be attributed to the rise of women's consciousness of gender equality and autonomy,<sup>73</sup> the decline of norms of fidelity, higher expectations of emotional satisfaction from marriage and hence, more disappointment, less stigma attached to divorced women, etc.<sup>74</sup> Research shows that the primary motivation of marriage in rural China has changed from functional (economical and reproductive) to emotional (Li Yinghe, 1996; Yan, 1997).

As mentioned earlier, despite the shift of emphasis from inter-generational relations to conjugal relations, the responsibility to care for children and aged parents has been put back to the family as required by law. Although in principle both sons and daughters have an equal obligation to care for their parents, it is more common for the elder parents to live with sons and daughters-in-law under the predominantly patrilocal system (Chen, Fang, 2003). In urban China, due to the social security system built

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<sup>69</sup> Marriage squeeze refers to the demographic imbalance in which the number of potential brides does not approximately equal the number of potential grooms. When not everyone has an opportunity to marry, some will be squeezed out of the marriage market. An excess of eligible women is called a female marriage squeeze; an excess of eligible men is called a male marriage squeeze.

<sup>70</sup> According to a nationwide survey, 64.9% of men and 71.3% of women agree with the freedom of singlehood; 69.6% of men and 69.1% of women agree with freedom of divorce (Li, Yinghe, 1996).

<sup>71</sup> In the demographic categories in both China and Taiwan, "single" refers to persons who have never been married. Widowed and divorced persons are in separate categories. Therefore the figure mentioned here does not include those who have been married before and are now single.

<sup>72</sup> Source: Information Center, Institute of Women's Studies, National Federation of Women's Union. Quoted by Chen, Fang (2003:176).

<sup>73</sup> One indicator of the consciousness of gender equality is women's choice of individual career and marriage. When being asked the question "*is a good job better than a good marriage?*", only 33.7% of urban women and 38.5% rural women agree (Chen, Fang, 2003, 142-4).

<sup>74</sup> In urban China, more women than men think that they lose more than gain from the marriage (ibid.: 176-81).

during the Mao era, the children are less burdened.<sup>75</sup> Research shows that in major cities the preferred arrangement is for elder parents and adult children to live separately yet close to each other.<sup>76</sup> In this what Unger called “network family”, inter-generational members can provide mutual support and at the same time maintain independence (1993),<sup>77</sup> which is yet another example of the flexibility and changing form of the Chinese family. However, in reality, more elder parents actually live with their adult children despite the preferred arrangement of having close-by yet separate households. This is mainly because adult children cannot afford their own housing and have to stay with their parents before or after marriage. Another reason for inter-generational cohabitation is that in view of the relatively better security provided for elder citizens and lack of child-care support for young parents, there are more incentives for young working women to live with parents or parents-in-law who could help with domestic work and child-rearing (Logan, 2003: 48). In rural China intergenerational cohabitation has always been widely practiced (Shiao, 2000), though with the increasing rural-urban and international labour migration, elder parents are left at home caring for the young children while the adults leave for the cities.<sup>78</sup> To summarise, both normatively and in practice, the inter-generational reciprocal support and the ideals of *hsiao* and *fengyang* remain very strong in both rural and urban China.

#### 1.2.4 Perceptions on international marriages

The end of the Qing dynasty marked the first wave of international marriages. As small numbers of overseas students and diplomats married western women during their study, though some marriages were unsuccessful.<sup>79</sup> As a result of disputed or failed international marriages, the Imperial Education Ministry banned overseas students to marry foreign women based on the reasons that 1) it would compromise their study; 2) foreign women were by nature extravagant and lavish, and the allowance the overseas

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<sup>75</sup> Most of the retirees in urban China enjoyed the pension, housing and health care benefits set up in Mao era. Those who entered the job market after the economic reform era would not have such social security. For demographic features of aging population and their care arrangement, see England, 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Logan’s research in 9 cities (1998, 2003); Shiao’s research in Guangdong shows that 40.78% of married women are willing (yet reluctantly) to live with the elder kin, and 24.26% are not willing (2000).

<sup>77</sup> In view of the relatively better security provided for elder citizens and less child-care support for young parents, there is more incentive for young working women to live with parents or parents-in-law who could provide housing or shoulder child care responsibility (Unger, 1993).

<sup>78</sup> I will elaborate this in Chapter 2.

<sup>79</sup> The first case of an unsuccessful marriage that resulted in divorce was well documented in 1908. A former student turned diplomat Lifan filed a divorce to his British wife with the reason that his wife did not follow *fudao* (婦道) and left for Britain to visit her natal family without the husband’s approval. This incident was widely reported in the newspapers at the time and well documented (Liu S.P., 2001:30-1).

students received would not be sufficient to support their (wife's) lifestyle; and 3) marrying foreign women would prompt students to reside overseas and not be willing to return to serve the emperor (Liu S.P., 2001:34-5).

Despite the negative image of foreign women, the intellectuals in this period advocated for international marriages and considered them as an amalgamation of races and a key to reform and a means of strengthening the empire. They develop elaborate arguments derived from the examples of animal behaviours, Chinese traditions of exogamy, ancient Chinese philosophical thoughts and the historical development of the powerful nations in Europe and Japan (Dikötter, 1992:87-88).<sup>80</sup> For them the amalgamation of races is not only a natural evolutionary process but also a sign of modernity. However, not all amalgamations are desirable. Only the mixture with superior races will improve the quality of the race, and the mixture with inferior races will destroy the race. By superior races these intellectuals mainly refers to white and yellow races; inferior races are black, brown and red, or simply darker, although there are no clear definitions and distinctions proposed.<sup>81</sup> Cultural pride, aesthetic values and stereotypes are used to justify the inferiority. As Tang Caichang writes, “Yellow and white are wise, red and black are stupid; yellow and white are rulers, red and black are slaves; yellow and white are united, red and black are scattered.”<sup>82</sup> Amalgamation, as long as it is with superior races, does not constitute a threat to Chinese race. Kang Youwei proposes that western nations are concerned about the purity of their race because they are demographically a minority; Chinese with its sheer size of population do not have such a worry, and by international marriages and migration China could soon be a dominant race. Therefore China should be concerned about assimilation and unity instead of purity of the race.<sup>83</sup>

In the Maoist era international marriages were prohibited. In the era of economic reform with its “open door” policy, international marriages increase rapidly. International marriages, formally termed as “marriages with foreign nationals” (*shewai hunyin* 涉外婚姻), include marriages with overseas Chinese as well. The earlier wave of international marriages during the reform era carries a negative connotation, with a majority of Chinese women in coastal cities marrying men in developed countries. The negativity lies in the “questionable” marital motivations of women who marry for money and for securing foreign citizenship. Lack of love in the marriage and big age

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<sup>80</sup> Among the reformer intellectuals, Yi Nai and Tang Caichang were strong advocates (Dikötter, 1992:87).

<sup>81</sup> For a different classification of races and its hierarchy, see *ibid*:77-82.

<sup>82</sup> *Juedianmingzhai*:468, cited by Dikötter, 1992:81. The same view is shared by other leading reformer intellectuals such as Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei.

<sup>83</sup> *Datongshu*:122, cited by Dikötter, 1992:89-90.



gaps between foreign husbands and Chinese wives are also identified as causes of problematic marriages.<sup>84</sup>

Since the 1990s the number of international marriages has grown rapidly. In 2003 one of every three new marriages in Shanghai are international, with a growing number of Chinese men marrying foreign women. Increasingly the couples are from higher educated social groups, meeting each other through business contacts or study, and choosing to reside in China. The age gap between the couples decreases and increasingly middle-aged divorced women opt for marrying foreigners. In the 1980s the primary choice of men are overseas Chinese, including the ones in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau; as it is believed that shared cultural traditions and language would make the marriage more successful. Since the mid-1990s Japanese become a popular choice so that 40% of international marriages in Shanghai are with Japanese spouses.<sup>85</sup>

With these developments, international marriages are more widely accepted and the negative connotation decreases. A survey in Dalian city in Northeast China shows that 80% of interviewees consider international marriages as “normal” and a good choice, as long as the socio-economic status of brides and bridegroom matches and they do not marry for money. This shows that inter-racial marriages themselves are not considered problematic, rather the marital motivations and the gap between couples in age, socio-economic status and education, etc. may cause of the problems. In Chapter 2 I will further explain the demographic features of international marriages and marital motivations.

### **1.3. Marriage regimes and gender relations in Taiwan: ideal and changes**

#### **1.3.1 Traditional ideals and Japanese period: similarity and difference among ethnic groups**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the structures of family processes and relationships in Taiwan among the Han immigrants followed the general principles of Chinese families on the mainland, where kinship was a central part of Chinese cosmology, following the father-son axis and patrilineal continuum. Yet the lineage organisations and marriage regimes of Minnan and Hakka had distinct characteristics which became

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<sup>84</sup> *Bandaochengbao*, June 15, 2003.

<sup>85</sup> According to a survey conducted by Institute of Population Studies, Huadong Shida and Shanghai municipal government in 2003, quoted by *People's Daily* June 11, 2003. The survey studies the trend of international marriages in Shanghai since 1983, however, the figure here (marriages with Japanese) is between 1995 and 2003.

identity markers of these two ethnic groups (Thornton & Lin, 1994:2).<sup>86</sup> Why and how these two groups reinforce and/or reinvent these traditions in reaction to economic and social opportunities and constraints has been at the center of scholarly interests among demographers, sociologists and anthropologists alike (ibid:6, 23; Wolf, A. 1981).<sup>87</sup>

Minnan constituted the majority of the earlier waves of Chinese settlement starting from 16<sup>th</sup> century with the most intensive migration flow occurring between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Cohen argues that the strong lineage organisation of Fujian and Guangdong was not transferred to Taiwan among the Minnan group (1976).<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, the ideology of common descent is commonly utilised in social cooperation in terms of mobilising educational resources and rural labour (Ho, 1962). “Clan” - a quasi or fictive kin group defined by common surnames or regions of origins, has replaced actual lineage group (Meskill, 1979, quoted by Fricke et. al, 1994:23)

The Hakka originated from eastern Guangdong and arrived in Taiwan in the later period when the rice paddy lands had already been occupied by the Fokienese. As a result their habitat in Taiwan was concentrated in the hilly areas and therefore they were less affected by the land tenancy system. The concentration of both their places of origin and new destination explained why the lineage organisation of Hakka carries more traditional features and remains strong.

Demographic data and ethnographic accounts of marriage and gender roles in Taiwan before the Japanese colonisation (1895-1945) are virtually non-existent. Systematic household records and census by the Japanese rulers make such studies possible. In spite of the common claim and popular myth that the chauvinistic and patriarchal characteristics of Taiwanese men and families are a result of the Japanese colonisation,<sup>89</sup> no direct evidence shows that Japanese colonial system had engineered

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<sup>86</sup> As mentioned in the Introduction, the majority of Taiwanese who married mainland Chinese women are of Han ethnic groups, including Fokkien, Hakka and Mainlanders, therefore the discussion here will focus on these three groups. The ethnic composition of the cross-straits couples will be elaborated in Chapter 2.

<sup>87</sup> It is not the purpose of this thesis to address extensively the Fokienese and Hakka distinction. I will focus on their respective characteristics of kinship, marriage regimes and ideal of gender relations. For the summary of the history of their settlement, social process and conflicts as well as assimilation, see Lamley (1981), Gates (1987) and Meskill (1979).

<sup>88</sup> Cohen argues that the lineage organisation was particularly strong in Fujian and Guangdong as a result of rice cultivation. The reason why this lineage organisation pattern is not transferred to Taiwan despite similar economic activities is partly due to the fact that by the 18<sup>th</sup> century during which the massive wave of migration to Taiwan occurred, the Fokienese social organisation had been saturated from the north (China). The change of lineage organisation was also noted by other scholars, however, they argue that the system of immigration that involved intermediaries and multiple levels of land ownership that fragmented the lineage groups (Meskill 1979, quoted by Fricke et. al, 1994:23).

<sup>89</sup> The earlier mainlanders and mainland brides alike often complain that Taiwanese men are more chauvinistic than mainlanders.

policies that altered the familial organisation and marriage regimes in Taiwan. Instead, one must ask what Japanese have *not done* so that the traditional familial features and values of the ethnic groups from Southern China were retained. It is the improvement in health, expanded educational opportunities,<sup>90</sup> increased agricultural production, and improvements in transportation during the Japanese period, not the colonial policy, that contributed to the change of familial organisations and relations as experienced in other industrialising countries (Fricke et. al, 1994). Nevertheless, despite these changes, Taiwan during Japanese colonisation was primarily a rural and agricultural society and the customs of marriage rituals, inheritance and religious practices remained intact (Cohen, 1976).

Marriage was still early and near universal. Censuses conducted by the Japanese registry office shows that between 1905 and 1935 92% of women who ever married, married between age 20 and 24, and over 95% of men-ever-married married before age 35. The average age at marriage for women is 20 and for men 23 in 1935 (Barclay, 1954; Casterline 1980, quoted by Fricke, 1994:40).

Two forms of alternative marriages were exceptionally popular in Taiwan as compared with China, minor marriage (*simpua* 童養媳) and uxrilocal marriage (招贅婚).<sup>91</sup> These two forms of marriages were also practiced in Southern China, yet they were deemed as undesirable and the percentages were not as high as they were in Taiwan.<sup>92</sup> The minor marriage was an important strategy for poorer families to reduce the monetary costs of the major marriage by adopting a young girl at an early age, raising her and marrying her to a son when she came of age. The cost of raising a daughter, especially in view of her labour contribution to domestic work, was far less than the brideprice and wedding costs of major marriages, and the matchmaking fee could be saved. Other than the monetary concern, a *simpua* would be moulded into the liking of the parents-in-law and became more dutiful, and less likely to threaten the uterine family bonds between the mother-in-law and her husband. (Wolf M., 1972) Therefore the minor marriage was not limited to lower-class families, although the percentage of the minor marriage in the higher and middle class is lower (A. Wolf,

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<sup>90</sup> The only visible change on familial and gender relations that the Japanese administration brought was encouraging girls' education, and as a result, the gap between boys' and girls' attendance of the elementary school declined all through Japanese colonisation (Fricke et.al, 1994:46).

<sup>91</sup> *Simpua*, literally means daughters-in-law in Fokkien, refers to both the minor marriage and the young girl daughters-in-law. Uxorilocal marriage refers to the practice that a family that does not have any son and failed to adopt one brought a son-in-law into the household to live with the wife's kin.

<sup>92</sup> The minor marriages were also practiced in many provinces in China especially in the Southeastern China. Lang attributed it to unbalanced sex ratio -- shortage of women of marriageable age (1946, quoted by Chuang, 1994:208). Other scholars consider economic reasons as the major cause (Chuang, 1994).

1985).<sup>93</sup> The minor marriages were so popular that before 1925 more than 50% of the marriages in the Taipei area were minor marriages (*ibid.*). The minor marriages were noticeably more popular in the Minnan community than with the Hakka.<sup>94</sup>

Another variation of marriage is uxori-local marriage. This form of marriage was mainly to ensure the continuity of descendants. At least one of the sons from the uxori-local marriages would carry the surname of the wife. Though deemed less desirable and often stigmatised, uxori-local marriages were fairly frequent and constituted 22% of all registered marriages in 1906 in Taiwan (Barclay, 1954). Both the minor and uxori-local marriages decreased drastically at the later Japanese period (Wolf M., 1972), as a result of the modernisation and industrialisation mentioned earlier.

The failure of marriage that resulted in divorce and remarriage of widows were also exceptionally high in Taiwan compared with Mainland China, though both dropped drastically at the later part of Japanese colonisation (Freedman, 1958; Barclay, 1954:221).<sup>95</sup> Concubinage carried over from Chinese tradition was sanctioned by the Japanese authority and legally speaking the sons of concubines enjoyed the same right of inheritance as sons of the wife (Barrett, 1980).

Gender roles and women's position in the family were considered to be one of the major features that marked the difference between Hakka and Minnan ethnic groups. While the majority of Minnan women followed the custom of foot-binding, Hakka women did not bind their feet, which enabled them to fully participate in the agricultural labour as men did.<sup>96</sup> In the popular discourse and self-representation, no-foot-binding, Hakka women's virtues of hard-working and "toughness", and women's decision-making power in domestic affairs was often portrayed as evidence of a higher degree of gender equality within the Hakka community (as compared with Minnan).<sup>97</sup> Constable

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<sup>93</sup> Sophie Sa's research shows that the percentage of minor marriages ranged from 11% for upper-class women to 19% for middle-class to 23% for lower-class (cited by Wolf A., 1985). However, Arthur Wolf suggests that the class difference may result from regional differences. Minor marriages were far more dominant in Northern Taiwan than in the South (1985).

<sup>94</sup> Chuang's research in two nearby villages with respective Hokkien and Hakka population shows that in the Hokkien village Kanding in Northern Taiwan, before 1895 the percentage of the minor marriages was higher than that of the major marriages, and between 1916 and 1945 the percentage of the major marriages increased up to 72.2%; while in the Hakka village Liujia the major marriages were always the majority (1994: 214-20).

<sup>95</sup> Several scholars point out that the rates of divorce and remarriage were very high among the minor and uxori-local remarriages, which resulted in overall higher rate of divorce and remarriage (M. Wolf, 1972; Pasternak, 1983).

<sup>96</sup> Before 1886 the percentage of foot-binding women was as high as 93.6% in a Fokkien village in Northern Taiwan, which declined drastically since 1901 as a result of the encouragement of the Japanese authority as well as efforts of the civil movement. All through this period the percentage of Hakka women's foot-binding remained less than 1% (Chuang, 1994:190-1).

<sup>97</sup> For instance, see Liu (1998) and Jiang (1996).

notes that Hakka women (as opposed to non-Hakka women) were considered the identity marker and the reproducer of the ethnic group, both in biological and social reproduction. However, this view was emphasised by the men, particularly of the older generation, and the women themselves did not think it crucial to transmit Hakka language and culture to their children (2000:385). Chuang's research shows that in the Japanese period the Hakka families had an earlier and a higher incidence of *fenjia* as compared to Minnan families, which can be attributed to a higher decision making power of the daughters-in-law, and Hakka women had relatively higher autonomy in their reproductive behaviour (2000). However, he also argues elsewhere that there was no substantive difference in Hakka and Minnan women's decision-making power on other matters such as familial financial decisions, and the pattern of sexual division of labour – men as breadwinner and women in charge of domestic work, was the same (1994). Liu argues that Hakka women in fact shouldered more burden compared with Minnanese women because their labour contribution did not exempt them from domestic work, and although Hakka women had a great power in domestic affairs, their decision-making power was more a responsibility than a right, as they were expected to serve the interests of the kinship which is patriarchal in nature (1995:39).

### 1.3.2 Post WWII development

Compared with the radical engineering and frequent revision of the marriage law in the PRC, the Taiwanese government does not intervene in the existing marriage regime and followed the customary practices. The law regulating marriage under the Family Law in the Civil Code remained untouched for more than five decades since its enactment in 1931. The first revision in 1985 was a pragmatic effort to bring the law in line with practice but did very little to challenge the patriarchal norms. For instance, the patrilocal principle and women's adopting the husband's surname in the 1931 law was revised to make an exception for uxorilocal marriages.<sup>98</sup> In the early 1990s the women's movement identified the family law as one of the major cause of women's subordination and launched a campaign for revision.<sup>99</sup> They not only criticised the articles but also the underlying assumptions about gender roles. For instance, legal

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<sup>98</sup> Article 1000 and 1002 in 1985 revision, Civil Code, ROC. However, other articles that obviously protected the patrilineal interests, such as punishing wife's adultery (article 986) and prohibiting pregnant women to remarry after divorce (article 994) were deleted in the 1985 law.

<sup>99</sup> For the context of the development of women's movement in the post-authoritarian era, the issues they identified and how they shaped the popular awareness of gender equality, see Lu (1997) and Hsieh and Chang (2005).

experts pointed out that the combination of Article 1001 (husband and wife have a mutual obligation of cohabitation) and Article 1002 (the wife should live in the husband's residence) not only clearly formalised the patrilocal principle but also indirectly gave the husband the right to control the wife's freedom of movement and chastity, while the wife did not enjoy corresponding rights (Liu, 1995:45-9). Another example is Article 1114 and 1115, which regulated the obligations and rights to care among family members, which, under the patrilocal principle, places the parents-in-law's rights to care above the spouse's mutual care obligation; and in the case when the wife needs care, the legal primary care obligation lay on her natal parents rather than her husband and parents-in-law. In view that the physical care work is done by the cohabitating daughter-in-law, her rights and obligations are extremely skewed. As a result of the campaign organised by the women's movement in the 1990, the family law underwent major revisions in 1996 and 2002 and introduced more elements of gender equality.

One of the major differences of the marriage regime between Taiwan and the PRC is that marriage in Taiwan is defined by public ceremonies and witnesses, which then can be completed by registration (Article 982). This means that the State's intervention and recognition is secondary, and it is up to the individuals to complete marriage registration. This difference has a profound impact on the cross-strait marriages and on the legal and social rights of the mainland spouses as well as their everyday life experiences, which will be discussed in Chapter 3 and 5.

Contrary to the non-interference attitude toward civil marriages, the Taiwanese government adopted extreme arbitrary measures to regulate the marriages of military personnel. In 1952 the government imposed a marriage ban on soldiers, which was justified as a necessary act for national security in order to regain the mainland China taken over by the Communist regime.<sup>100</sup> Lin argues that the marriage ban was not meant to maintain the combating capacity, rather it was part of the restructuring of the military force and the replacement of redundant military personnel, a plan supported and financially aided by the USA government. The fact that the ban was only imposed on soldiers from the mainland China (the mainlanders) and only on low-rank soldiers and not on military officers shows that it was mainly because it was not financially feasible for the State to care for a large number of soldiers and their family members should they

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<sup>100</sup> This was what the veteran soldiers were told when the marriage ban was imposed on them, and they were asked to sacrifice for the nation. Interview with Hu, Hukou *juancun*, June 2003. The Bill of Regulation of Military Personnel's Marriage, July 31, 1951 states one of the rationales, "in order to maintain the combating capability it is necessary to control the marriage of military....." (*Lifayuan gongbao*, 23:90).

marry.<sup>101</sup> Other than these financial considerations, the marriage ban was also a means for the military government to keep a tight control over the military population by separating them from the civil population, which reinforced the ethnic divide between the mainlanders and the local population. Many soldiers expressed during my research that they could endure the harsh conditions of military life but it was not fair to demand them to stay single for the rest of their life. The marriage ban was relaxed in 1959 and completely lifted in 1974. However, by then the majority of soldiers had passed the ideal marriageable age in the local standard (average age above 35); this coupled with their poor economic condition and the lack of social networks, made it extremely difficult for them to find partners. This explains the high percentage of single soldiers as well as the bigger age gap between mainlander soldiers and their Taiwanese wives.<sup>102</sup> The high percentage of unmarried men and the phenomenon of “old husband with young wife” (*loufu shaoqi* 老夫少妻) had always been a common situation among the mainlanders, especially in the veterans’ settlement (Lin, 2003).

### 1.3.3 Demographic change and gender roles

Taiwan’s economic growth ran parallel to the restructuring of the global market. The market, once dominated by the mass production of the First World, has gradually been seized by the newly established factories of the newly industrialised countries (NICs) starting from the 1960s.<sup>103</sup> Taiwan as the largest supplier among four NICs accounts for 16% of American imports from the Third World in 1988, enjoyed a trade surplus of \$13.9 billion in 1989. Large scale export processing zones (EPZ) and small and medium scale family enterprises and satellite factories were set up since the 1970s, with 80% of the work force being young single women. The economic restructuring induced young women’s internal rural-urban migration, and being away from home and enjoying a

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<sup>101</sup> According to the Bill of Regulation of Military Personnel’s Marriage, July 31, 1951, “In order to protect the life quality of military personnel it is necessary to control their marriage..... the wages of soldiers are higher than that of the workers, and their spouses are entitled to substantial amount of subsidies. In view of the difficult financial situation caused by the war, the government is barely capable of paying the wages of the military personnel, let alone taking care of their family. ....” (*Lifayuan gongbao*, 23:90). The same bill (revised in 1952) encouraged the higher rank officers to marry (Lin, 2003:220-1).

<sup>102</sup> The 1990 population census shows that 80% of mainlander men are 10 years or more older than their spouses. (Wong, 1999, quoted by Lin, 2003:223).

<sup>103</sup> “Newly Industrialised Countries” (NICs) is a social/economic classification status applied to several countries by political scientists and economists, referring to countries undergoing rapid economic growth and industrialisation normally with an export-oriented economy. Another characteristic of NICs is a considerable flow of migration of agricultural labour to industrialised areas. Taiwan’s economic restructuring and in the global economic positions, see, for example, Bello (1993); Lee, A. (2004).

degree of economic and physical freedom has resulted in delayed marriage.<sup>104</sup> Some scholars argue that the ideology of gender roles and women being filial and loyal daughters remain unchanged; delayed marriage is not a manifestation of women's autonomy, rather it should be seen as a result of the family's incentive to keep daughters single as long as possible in order to benefit from their economic contribution (Lee, Anru, 2004; Hsiung, 1996). Another factor is the discrimination against married women in the labour market,<sup>105</sup> coupled with the lack of social security and child care support for working women (Chen F.L, 2000).

As a result of delayed marriage as well as son preference, sex ratio at birth<sup>106</sup> and among the unmarried population is extremely skewed. Table 1 and 2 show the sex ratio of the unmarried population according to age and education.

The implication of a skewed sex ratio, seen in the light of women's hypergamy and underdevelopment of the rural areas, is that men of an old age cohort and low educational background would have difficulty in marrying a woman.

**Table 1: Unmarried Population and Sex-Ratio in Taiwan: according to age (2000)**

Age group	Unmarried Population				Sex-Ratio of Total Population
	Total	Men	Women	Sex-Ratio	
15-24	3,645,205	1,939,384	1,705,821	113.6	105.6
25-34	1,676,220	1,033,940	642,280	161.0	104.6
35-44	5,76,790	305,420	170,370	179.2	104.0
45-55	137,194	80,444	56,750	141.7	101.2
55-64	37,731	25,836	11,895	217.2	96.0
Above 65	80,927	71,596	9,331	767.2	109.7

Source: Ministry of Interior, R.O.C.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> The average of female labour force participation grew sharply from 33 to 42% from 1966 to 1973 (Chang, 1995:157).

<sup>105</sup> Many low-skilled sectors and service sectors would fire women employees after they marry, or set up an article forcing them to resign after marriage or pregnancy. The labour participation of married women is as low as 30% (compared to more than 50% of unmarried women) since the 1980s, though in recent years it has increased gradually. The average of female labour force participation, though growing steadily, is substantially much lower than male (average 80%), being the lowest among the NICs and Japan (Chang, 1995:157; *Report on Women's Labour Participation*, 2005, Executive Yuan ROC).

<sup>106</sup> The sex ratio at birth was 105.8 in 1966; 107.7 in 1986 and 104.7 in 2000. Source: Social Indicators 2000, ROC, Executive Yuan, Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics.



The birth rate has also drastically declined, from 7.04% in 1951, to 3.70% in 1971, to 1.72% in 1991 and 1.40% in 2001.<sup>108</sup> The rapid decline of the birth rate triggers a panic among the policy makers in the recent years, which constitutes a major factor in the politics of the population and immigration policy, which I will elaborate in Chapter 3.

Concerning gender roles and family ideology, the majority of the Taiwanese population highly values the family. 72% of the population considers it very important to cohabit with parents after marriage, and 88% consider that they have responsibility in *fengyang* parents. 41% think it is their responsibility to carry on the family lineage by producing at least one son. 76.8% consider it very important to get married and establish his/her own family.<sup>109</sup>

**Table 2: Unmarried Population and Sex-Ratio in Taiwan: according to education background and sex-ratio**

Education Attainment	Unmarried Population			Total Population		
	Men	Women	Sex-Ratio	Men	Women	Sex-Ratio
Illiterate	36,959	12,906	286.3	271,393	825,448	32.8
Primary	143,820	51,035	281.8	1,543,355	1,725,722	89.4
Junior school	514,725	210,605	244.4	1,540,899	1,190,295	129.5
Senior High/ Vocational School	1,494,692	1,177,793	126.9	3,029,745	2,813,631	107.7
College	501,421	512,141	97.9	1,125,147	981,344	114.6
University	514,038	517,376	99.4	1,029,483	864,857	119.0
Post-Graduate	88,812	51,107	173.8	213,071	95,391	223.0

Source: same as Table 1

<sup>107</sup> Statistical Report of Taiwan and Minnan Areas (台閩地區人口統計) in 2000. Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Interior, R.O.C. The figure does not include foreign contract workers.

<sup>108</sup> Source: Household Registration Department, Ministry of Interior, ROC, 2005. For the rationale and implementation of family planning policy in Taiwan, see Selya (2004).

<sup>109</sup> These figures come from the survey of Social Change in Taiwan, conducted by Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica every five years. The quoted figure is the result of 1999.

On sexual division of labour, women's primary responsibility is considered to be caring for children and stay at home. On the question of "*husband's responsibility is to be bread winner, and wife's responsibility is taking care of the family*", 43.3% agree and 35.9% disagree. More than 60% of the population think that women do not need to work unless the economic situation of the family demands her to, and women should prioritise caring for the family and support the husband's career development. These indicators show that compared with China, Taiwanese men and women's awareness of gender equality in the area of labour participation and fairer sexual division of labour is lower, at least normatively. The gender roles of men as breadwinners and women as care-givers are still predominant despite the economic necessity that both husbands and wives' incomes are needed. In the lack of public child-care facilities, working women rely heavily on their parents or in-laws to care for children (Chang, 1995). This gives incentives to three-generation cohabitation (*sandaitongtang* 三代同堂) and preserving the value of traditional family life. What makes it different from the traditional values as sketched in the beginning of this chapter is that the motivation of *yang er fang lao* (bring up children in anticipation of old age) is decreasing and the older generations learn to be self-reliant and look for alternative care arrangements if their sons and in-laws are not willing to cohabit with and physically care for them. The women of the "middle generation", that is, the mothers-in-law whose own parents-in-law are still alive, experience frustration that they have to shoulder the care responsibility of their elders while taking care of young grandchildren at the same time, being expected to be care-givers but not able to expect the care in return (Hu, 1995:129-140). These frustrations and the expectation of being looked after by daughters-in-law are a crucial motivation for them to encourage their sons to marry foreign or mainland brides, who are believed and expected to take up caring responsibilities.

#### **1.4. Matchmaking and mate choice in contemporary China and Taiwan**

##### **1.4.1 Criteria of mate choice**

I have explained earlier that because marriage is the most important and permanent contractual relations between two individuals and two kin groups, the family takes great care in choosing brides and bridegrooms. It is well established that the Chinese mate choice follows the homogamous principle of matching the economic and social status of two families, known as the matching-door principle (*mendang hudui* 門當戶對) (Baker, 1979; Freedman, 1979; Croll, 1981; Xu, Ji and Tung, 2000), relying heavily on the go-

between, the matchmakers.<sup>110</sup> The matching-door principle implies that the socio-economic status of two families takes precedence; the individual traits of the bride and bridegroom as well as their future development are not taken into consideration. However, literature shows that individual traits, particularly women's age, physical beauty and submissive temperaments were also important considerations. This makes it possible for women possessing the above mentioned traits to marry men of higher social class. Therefore women's hypergamy ("marrying up")<sup>111</sup> is also a well-established character of the Chinese marriage regime, and marrying daughters to men of higher class is an important strategy of social mobility for families of lower class (Zhang, 2003:39).

In today's China and Taiwan, as a result of various political and socio-economic developments explained earlier, the ideal of "love marriage" has replaced the "arranged marriage".<sup>112</sup> Young men and women take control over their marital decision and parents no longer have absolute authority over their children's marriage, though their consent is sought. In contemporary China and Taiwan where the "love marriage" and the free-choice marriage are considered a norm, love is often attributed as the major reason for marriage. However, sociologists have established that "love marriage" is not free from considerations of social and economic conditions (Haller, 1981; Giddens, 1992), which reflects in the assortative mating patterns, i.e. the tendency of mate choice within the same socio-economic groups.<sup>113</sup> Different from the traditional matching-door practice, the criteria of mate choice in the modern love marriage focus on the individual's attainment and potential achievements rather than the ascribed status of the kin group (Zhang, 2003), thus the individual's education, occupation and income are often used to measure the homogamous or hypergamous patterns in modern times. Mate choice within the same social groups (homogamy) indicates a rigid social class

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<sup>110</sup> "Homogamy" refers to marriage between individuals who are, in some culturally important way, similar to each other. Homogamy may be based on socio-economic status, class, ethnicity, or religion.

<sup>111</sup> "Hypergamy" refers to a system of practice of selecting a spouse of higher socio-economic status than oneself. Specifically, it refers to a widespread tendency amongst human cultures for females to seek or be encouraged to pursue male suitors that are comparatively older, wealthier or otherwise more privileged than themselves (Amit, 1994).

<sup>112</sup> "Arranged marriage" refers to marriages where the marital decision and mate choices are made by parents, with or without consulting the prospective brides and bridegrooms. The term carries a connotation of being feudal and traditional especially in China, where it is often equated with blind marriages (*manghun* 盲婚) or *baoban hunyin* (包办婚姻). In Taiwan the term arranged marriage has a more neutral connotation that often refers to marital choice made by parents but with the potential couple's consent. I will elaborate on the meanings of these terms in Chapter 4.

<sup>113</sup> Assortative mating is a biological term appropriated by sociologist to describe the mate choice based on sameness (positive assortative mating) or difference (negative assortative mating).

stratification; preference of mates from higher or lower social groups (heterogamy) indicates a higher degree of social mobility (Tsay, 1996; Xu , Ji and Tung, 2000).

In China, the radical social-engineering process aimed at bringing social equality during the Maoist era encouraged heterogamy, resulting in what Croll called the hypergamy of political status system, the mate choice based on political orientation.<sup>114</sup> The political status in this era is based on two criteria; (Communist) party membership and family class origin (Croll, 1981; Whyte and Parish, 1980). The earlier measuring criteria of the family social status such as land ownership and intellectual background became negative, and proletariat and rural origins became assets, therefore it can be said paradoxically that in order to marry up and to enhance one's political status, one must marry down to someone of lower social-economic status. This can be illustrated by large number of educated youth marrying illiterate workers and farmers during the Cultural Revolution as mentioned earlier.

In the post-Mao era, assortative mating based on political status declined and the social status regained significance, though the measuring criteria for social status are different in rural and urban areas. A urban residence and household registration is much more favourable than a rural one, and almost all the urban and rural registration is inherited and rarely earned.<sup>115</sup> In urban China, other than the individual achievement such as educational attainment and occupation, a work-unit (*danwei* 單位)<sup>116</sup> affiliation is also an advantage as it provides social security such as pension and housing. These three criteria (education, occupation/income and social security) are interlinked, in the sense that those who are better educated are more likely to obtain a job of higher occupational prestige in the state sectors that comes with security (Xu , Ji and Tung, 2000). In the rural areas, social status is more associated with the family rather than with individuals. Land ownership, income and the status of one's kinship<sup>117</sup> are important considerations in mate choice, as families with better economic and social

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<sup>114</sup> Croll classifies two status systems, political status system and social status system. She defines the status system as "*the degree of formal recognition or honors conferred upon an individual by the government and the Communist Party*" (1981:86).

<sup>115</sup> I will explain the household registration system (*hukou*), the policies of regulation internal migration and rural-urban divide, and its impact on mate choices in Chapter 2.

<sup>116</sup> *Danwei* is the name given to a place of employment in China. In the Maoist era it often referred to state-owned enterprises, governmental offices or in other public sectors. Working in a *danwei* often means a permanent working contract and various subsidies such as housing, pension, health care and education for the employer's children. The term remains in use today in general to refer to a place of employment, and social benefits are less common now.

<sup>117</sup> The power of kinship is measured both in the number of kins and in their economic and political status.

capital have a bigger influence on local politics and have better opportunities in business ventures in the economic reform era.<sup>118</sup>

Quantitative research shows that despite constant government efforts to promote social equality through heterogamy, marriage in contemporary China is highly homogamous, and women's hypergamy is still observed. The degree of educational and occupational assortative mating has increased over time, particularly in urban China. This means that the majority of Chinese women tend to choose their prospective partners from the same or higher educational and occupational status (Xu, Ji and Tung, 2000:71). A nationwide survey shows that high degree of educational and occupational homogamy is not only observed between spouses, there is also a high degree of correlation between parents and children as well as between the spouses' parents and parents-in-law. The findings show that the higher education parents have, the more they are likely to 1) invest in their children's education and encourage them to pursue high education; 2) demand their children to choose a spouse from the same or higher educational and occupational backgrounds; and 3) take the educational and occupational status of the parents of potential spouses into account as well (Zhang, 2003:43-4).

In terms of personal traits, a nationwide survey in China shows that both men and women value "character and decency" highest in their mate choice. There exists a gendered difference in mate choice, in that men value women's physical beauty and temperament more, while women value men's capabilities and economic conditions. Both men and women do not value the family's social status very highly.<sup>119</sup> Rural women place economic conditions and the family's social status higher, while urban women think temperament and education more important. In terms of the perception of "temperament", men desire gentle and tender women, and women look for expressiveness and awareness of gender equality in men. Urban women explicitly demand a future husband to be willing to share domestic work (Chen, Fang, 2003:149-54). Another survey in Guangdong shows that trust-worthy character and decency is the most desirable trait in mate choice, which is placed higher than love and companionship (Shiao, 2000).

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<sup>118</sup> Several studies show that the social stratification has stabilised and even further widened in the later part of the economic reform era. This means that the economic growth in China in fact makes social mobility more difficult, and it is almost impossible for farmers and rural labours to move upward the socio-economic status (Wang C.G. et. al, 2004).

<sup>119</sup> Survey of the Change of Chinese Women's Normative Values in the Era of Economic Reform, conducted by the Zhonghua Women's College, 1997. The criteria of mate choice for men (to choose a wife) are, according to ranking, 1) character; 2) temperament; 3) physical appearance; 4) talent and capability; 5) family's social status; 6) education; 7) economic conditions, etc. For women, 1) character; 2) talent and capability; 3) temperament; 4) economic conditions; 5) physical appearance; 6) family's social status; 7) education, etc. (Chen, 2003:149-54).

Similar trends are also observed in Taiwan. Tsay's pioneering research shows that despite the drastic increase of women's schooling, the educational levels of husbands of all age and educational cohorts are higher than their wives'.<sup>120</sup> However, the disparity between husbands' and wives' educational attainment is not high. It is more likely for a man to marry a woman with an adjacently lower educational level, and it is virtually impossible for an elementary-level woman to marry a university graduate man. Similarly, women also tend to marry men in higher classes, measured by the occupational status.<sup>121</sup> While it is observed that women of lower classes, such as farmers and unskilled manual workers, tend to marry men of the same group, those of middle and higher education marry men of an adjacently higher class (Tsai, 1996:261). Tsai's research confirms Tsay's finding, adding that Taiwan's ethnic homogamy is rather widespread although it has been slightly decreasing over the years (ibid).<sup>122</sup>

Although the quantitative research uses individual achievement as a measure and does not take into account the collective economic and social resources of the families, its findings are sufficient to show that the ascribed status inherited from the family, such as ethnicity and the parents' education levels, affect mate choice substantively. This is to say that the cultural value of matching-door principle and women's hypergamy still persist in today's Taiwan and China despite the political intervention, industrialisation and the improvement of women's education and economic independence that increased individual freedom and reduced parental authority concerning mate choice.

#### **1.4.2 Matchmaking principles and matchmakers**

Traditionally, Chinese marriages are arranged by the kin groups of both sides, often with the help of matchmakers. Matchmaking was a sophisticated process, taking into

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<sup>120</sup> Women with university degrees or above are more likely to marry men of the same educational levels. Women with junior high school and junior college degrees tend to marry "up". Women's hypergamy is also related to age in that the younger a woman gets married, the more likely she will marry up (Tsai, 1996:261-2).

<sup>121</sup> In this research, Tsai measures social classes in Taiwan according to the wife and husband's current occupation, which he divided into six categories: High Non-Manual, Routine Non-Manual, Self-Employed, Skilled Manual, Unskilled Manual and Farm Work (ibid., 268-271).

<sup>122</sup> Tsai uses a multivariate method to analyse the correlation between ethnicity and education in mate choice in Taiwan between 1980 and 1992. She classifies Taiwan's ethnicity in two major groups, i.e. Taiwanese and Mainlanders. I assume that Hakka and aborigines are included in the Taiwanese group. Her research finds there are only 4% of mixed marriages between these two groups (1996: 312). The strength of this categorisation is to show how a politically engineered process of ethnic divide indeed affects mate decision; the weakness is that it fails to reveal patterns of intermarriages between subgroups and the differences between age cohorts.

account social status, wealth and reputation of two families, age, (potential) labour contributions and personal traits of both brides and grooms such as appearance and temperament. When a potential match is found, the horoscope (*bazi* 八字) of the prospective bride and bridegroom will be matched to ascertain the approval of Heaven. If Heaven approves of this union, the families proceed to negotiate the brideprice and dowry, sharing of the wedding costs as well as other logistic matters of the wedding arrangement. In view of conflicting interests, an intermediary is required to allow the negotiation to proceed without any loss of face to both parties (Freedman, 1967:10), which can be a rather time-consuming process. Therefore, Chinese matchmakers have two main tasks: 1) introducing the interested parties to one another, and 2) negotiating the dowry and the brideprice as well as making the wedding arrangements. It is common that a successful match involves more than one matchmaker, one who is in charge of the introduction and another one who does the negotiating (Jordan, 1999). In today's China and Taiwan, introduction via matchmakers is less required, although the role of the "introducer" (*jieshoren* 介紹人) is normative and his or her presence is required in the wedding.<sup>123</sup>

Who are the matchmakers? Ethnographic studies of matchmakers are very limited and the image of matchmakers in popular literature is extreme diverse and at times conflicting. Matchmakers can be men or women, friends or kin of either bride or bridegroom, servants or unrelated professionals. The most important quality of the matchmaker is his/her social network, diplomacy and social reputation. Very often a matchmaker is an elder woman in the community because their social network and negotiation skills are valued (M. Wolf, 1972; Harrell, 1981 quoted by Jordan, 1999). Matchmakers are called *meiren* (媒人, or *muailan* in Fokkienese) in Taiwan and *hongniang* (紅娘) in China, the latter carries a romantic connotation of a person who, against all odds, determines to unite two people destined to love each other.<sup>124</sup>

Even in the limited work on matchmakers, scholars have different views on matchmakers' images and their expected tasks. Freedman describes the matchmaker as a broker in the marriage market who must know which boys and girls are available for matching and how the parity of "gates and doors" of different families allows them to

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<sup>123</sup> If the couples meet by themselves, they often ask an elder person with a high social prestige, often their teacher, boss, or local elites to act as their introducer in the wedding. This custom is especially observed in Taiwan. For more discussion of these two tasks and the description of matchmakers in the classic and popular literature, see Jordan (1999:324-26).

<sup>124</sup> *Meiren* literally means "matching person". *Hongniang* (紅娘), literally means "red maiden", is the name of a famous character in the story of "The Romance of the Western Bower" (西廂記) written by Wang Shifu in Yuan Dynasty. *Hongniang* is a chambermaid who arranges communications between her mistress and a young scholar (Jordan, 1999:340).

be linked. In return for his fees and commission, he is held accountable for the quality of the brides and grooms and for the success of the marriage, at least in its initial phase. Matchmakers are hated and blamed for mismatching or concealing information such as mental or physical defects. In reality, the family seldom takes the risks without verifying the information from their own network or rumours (1967:12).<sup>125</sup> Jordan observes that matchmakers often hesitate to acknowledge profit-making as their primary purpose and present the matchmaking as a selfless and voluntary act. Because marriage is made by Heaven, matchmaking is considered to be a good merit and the rewards coming from Heaven would be reflected upon oneself or one's offspring. Although it is customary for parents of both bride and bridegroom to give gifts or cash in a red pocket (*hongbao* 紅包) to matchmakers, it is not common for matchmakers to demand or even discuss the matchmaking fee, as it would contaminate the voluntary motivation. This is even more so if the matchmaker is closely related to the families of prospective couples. In the act of negotiating the dowry and brideprice the matchmaker should mediate without favouring either party and without considering his/her own profit (Jordan, 1999).

The institutional forms of matchmaking such as marriage introduction bureaus, web-based friendship clubs and various commercial or non-profitable associations aim at matching singletons. They enjoy growing popularity and are well-accepted especially in the urban areas. These institutions are mainly utilised by individual men and women who intend to find a potential marital partner, and not by parents. They mainly fulfil the function of the introduction by charging a small fee for providing such a service, but do not engage in negotiation of brideprice and dowry as well as the wedding arrangement.

### 1.4.3 Marriage transactions

Sociologists argue that marriage is a means of upward social mobility for women and their birth families. Becker's "exchange theory" sees marriage as a market, in which economic goods and services are exchanged. Females offer the characteristics sought after by males in exchange for the characteristics and status they desire from males (Thadani and Todaro, 1984). It was because of this conceptual framework of seeing women's bodies, labour and services as commodities that marriage transactions were banned in the 1950s Marriage Law in China. After this ban was lifted, the customs of

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<sup>125</sup> Freedman refers to the "professional" matchmakers who do matchmaking on the regular basis. However, there are also matchmakers who are requested occasionally to match their acquaintances and they are not held responsible as much as the professional ones.



brideprice and dowry are resurgent and the expenditures on brideprice have increased tenfold between 1980 and 1986 in rural China (various source, cited by Yan, 1996: 177). In urban China the dowry and brideprice also substantially increased following the economic development.

Anthropologists in Chinese Studies have different views on marriage transactions. It is well established that marriage transactions are part of the gift giving culture that plays a leading role in social life, especially in maintaining, reproducing and modifying the conjugal relations as well as relations between two kin groups (Whyte, 1993; Yan, 1996). Their purpose can be diverse and multifold; as an evaluation of women's labour (Freedman, 1972; Becker, 1979); as alliance-building between two kin groups (Yan, 1996); as a symbol of status competition (Harrell and Dicky, 1985); as status enhancement (Ebrey, 1986); and as two kin groups' investment in a common fund for the new conjugal unit, *fang*, in preparation for their *fenjia* (Goody and Tambiah, 1973). To understand the functions of a particular marriage transaction, it is necessary to analyse the flow of transactions, the quantity and forms of a gift, who are entitled to use it and how it is negotiated in the context of socio-economic conditions of two families.

Brideprice (*pinjin* 聘金)<sup>126</sup> generally refers to the flow of gifts or cash from the groom's family to the bride's. Dowry (*jiazhuang* 嫁妝) refers to the flow of gifts or cash from the bridal side, which normally goes to the bride or the married couple. The relative weight of exchange reflects the social status of two families, with the higher status group stressing dowry while the lower ones stressing brideprice. As the exchange of dowry and brideprice is often a public display, it inevitably becomes a status symbol not only for the two kin groups involved, but also for the wider community. The competition over social status by giving or demanding higher dowry and brideprice and by organising extravagant weddings has escalated in the more affluent areas (Siu, 1993). The dowry symbolises the social status and the backing of the brides' family, which will affect her position in her husband's family. A bride with small or no dowry would be looked down upon by her in-laws (Fricke et.al., 1994:35). In the economically fast growing towns, it is considered losing face to negotiate a dowry (Siu, 1993:172). In poorer regions where there is a shortage of women, families (poor or rich alike), compete to offer higher brideprices.<sup>127</sup> The actual value of transactions varies greatly

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<sup>126</sup> "Brideprice" in earlier anthropological literature was used to describe the money from the groom's family to the bride's, which enables the bride's brother or other male kin to marry, thus it referred to two flows of transactions. Later the term "bridewealth" was adopted to refer to one flow from the groom to the bride (Siu, 1993: 167). However, in this thesis I use "brideprice" to refer only to the transaction between the groom's family to the bride's at the time of or prior to the wedding.

<sup>127</sup> The shortage of women is a result of skewed sex ratio and rural-urban migration explained earlier.

across the nation, however, it is reported that the brideprice easily reaches half a year's household income (Chen, Fang, 1985). There are occasional news reports of tragic stories of men committing suicide because they cannot afford to pay the brideprice for the son. In view of the substantial amounts of money in marriage transactions, the whole family has to pull resources together and save for years to enable one of the sons or daughters to get married. Part of the resources has to come from the prospective brides or bridegrooms themselves, thus young men or women have to work to pay their own marriage. This new trend has given young people greater power over their marital decision. There is an increasingly direct participation of brides and grooms in negotiating transactions (Siu, 1993; Yan, 1996).

Marriage transactions can also be a form of gift exchange with the purpose of building alliance between two kin groups. Whether the marriage transactions are seen as alliance-building or as exchange of commodities (women), the anthropological discussions can offer some insights. Mauss's distinction between *personalised* gift-giving and *impersonalised* commodity exchange has been widely accepted (1966). As Gregory elaborates, "*commodity exchange establishes objective quantitative relationships between the objects transacted, while gift exchange establishes personal qualitative relationships between the subjects transacting*" (cited by Yan, 1996: 12).<sup>128</sup> Another way to determine the nature of marriage transactions is to see whether they are part of the long process of consolidating two groups with a continuous flow of gifts and counter-gifts, starting from the betrothal and lasting all through the married life (Goody, 1990; Siu, 1993).

#### **1.4.4 Marital decision: fate and/or agency?**

In so far I have explained the co-existence of the ideal of love marriage (the emotional aspect) and the sociological pattern of assortative mating and hypergamy (the rational choice). I have also mentioned that the concept of "love" is more associated with companionship rather than to romance and passion. Earlier I have mentioned that one of the major characteristics of Chinese marriages is that they are made in Heaven and predestined. What is the role of the concept of fate in mate choice? How do we

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<sup>128</sup> However, some anthropologists argue that the radical opposition between gifts and commodities is a result of the ideological construction of pure gift and the romanticisation of gift relations in non-Western societies (Parry and Bloch, cited by Yan, 1996:13).

understand a heavenly union when it fails? To answer this question I will start by taking a closer look of Chinese concept of fate (*ming* 命).<sup>129</sup>

Fate, an unknown yet determining external force of life, should not be confused with fatalism. Fatalism is the idea that “what happens has to happen”, involve a sense of necessity (Solomon, 2003: 435; Giddens, 1991). Fate can be understood as “the forces that limit or are thought to limit human freedom” (Knight, 2005:276), which does not exclude completely the potential of human will or action to alter, resist or accept the work of the forces – in other words, it acknowledges human agency. Lin illustrates this concept by explaining two related concepts in a local idiom *mingyun* (命運, mia-un in Fokkienese),

*Ming* is a person’s predestined nature imposed by the forces of heavenly bodies. Natural forces predetermine a person’s overall direction of life and its major events from the moment that an individual is born. Meanwhile, “*un*” [*yun*] is the person’s invisible and unseen vitality or spirit which fluctuates following the mystical operation of time directed by the movement of stars (Lin, 1998:552, quoting Yang, 1961).

*Ming* is often used by women to explain the gender-based oppression and women’s inferiority in China (Knight, 2005:273). For a young bride, when there is nothing much she can do to decide who she should marry and how she would be treated by complete strangers, accepting her fate and trying to make the best out of it is a survival strategy, is what she learns early on as a girl from her uterine family (Wolf, M., 1972). In today’s China and Taiwan, with the increasing consciousness of gender equality, women take more control over their lives. Accepting fate is deemed as a sign of backwardness and weakness.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, the matter of finding a perfect mate and the timing of marriage remains a popular subject of fate consultation. Family, marriage, career and health are four major criteria of measuring whether one has a good *ming* (Lin, 1998:552). Consulting horoscopes or fortune(fate)-telling for prospective mates, on the one hand, can be explained as a continuation of a cultural belief that justifies the immense risks involved in such a significant, life-changing decision. On the other hand,

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<sup>129</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to study this concept extensively especially its historical development and its manifestation in the religion. I will limit my discussion on its implication in the marital decision and the mate choice.

<sup>130</sup> For instance, a renowned writer, Ding Ling, wrote, “But whereas in the old society they would probably have been called pitiful and meagrely fated, today their tragedy is seen as self-inflicted sin, as what they deserve.” (Thought on March 8, 1942; translated by Barlow, 1989:319 and quoted by Knight, 2005:272.)

it can also be seen as a strategy of risk assessment and management in the increasingly insecure and changing modern world (Giddens, 1991; Chiu, 1993).<sup>131</sup>

The predestined marital partners are believed to be bounded by *yinyuan* (姻緣 marital *yuan*). *Yuan* or *yuanfen* (緣分) is yet another concept derived from fate,<sup>132</sup> which stresses the binding affinity between two persons, and at times, between a person and an object. It can be widely applied to explain relations between lovers, friends and parents-children. *Yuan* also has an element of human agency, in that two persons may be destined to meet each other, but it takes them to recognise the existence of *yuan* and to cherish and develop the relationship. *Yuan* is often used to describe the positive aspect of the human relations. When the affinity disappears or when a marriage is ended, it is said that the *yuan* has died (*yuanjin* 緣盡). When a marriage goes sour yet one chooses to stay in the marriage, one justifies this by saying that he/she is indebted to the other party from the previous life and has to return the debt in this life by enduring the suffering (*qianzhai* 欠債, *huanzhai* 還債) (Lee, 1998).

These idioms and concepts help explain why the matchmaking practice remains popular in today's Taiwan and China. With the concepts of *ming* and *yuan*, how the prospective bride and bridegroom meet and whether they have sufficient courtship prior to marriage does not matter much. If they are believed to be brought together by fate, the companionship can be developed later. It does not contradict the norm of free-choice, rather it relieves couples and their families from a frightening burden of responsibility.

### 1.5 New framework of Chinese relatedness

Kinship studies in anthropology have undergone a shift since the 1960s with the ground-breaking work of Schneider, who successfully demonstrated that Eurocentric assumptions were at the heart of anthropological kinship studies (1968; 1984). For instance, one of the basic premises in kinship studies he challenged was the overarching meaning that all cultures would give to the Euro-American interpretation and prioritisation of biological kinship as the form of recognised procreation. Following Schneider's critique, further debates and insights have developed within anthropology,

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<sup>131</sup> Fate consultation has experienced a revival in Taiwan. For a discussion and context see Chiu Hei-yuan (1993).

<sup>132</sup> The origin of the term *yuan*, particularly when it is referring to lovers, is not clear. It is said that it is also influenced by Buddhist thoughts, closely related to the concept of karma and reincarnation.

that alongside the “structure” of kinship, attention is paid to the more informal aspects of intimate domestic arrangements of everyday life.<sup>133</sup> Carsten recently developed this theme further by introducing the concept “cultures of relatedness”<sup>134</sup>, in which she attempts to move away from the pre-given Eurocentric analytical opposition between the biological and the social on which much anthropological study of kinship had rested (Carsten, 2000; Strathern, 1992). While noting the overemphasis on the formalistic aspects of kinship studies, she elaborates the theme of a renewed focus on the everyday, small, seemingly trivial and taken-for-granted acts, coupled with an openness to indigenous meanings of kinship terms. In doing so she uncovers certain dynamics of interaction within the kinship domain, which had tended to be overlooked due to the existing overemphasis of the formal aspects of (in this case) patrilineal kinship structures.

Following these trends, there is a renewed interest in theorising the concept of relatedness in Chinese societies.<sup>135</sup> Among them the concept *yang* (養), proposed by Charles Stafford, is useful in theorising the parent-child relations that challenges the traditional lineage theory. *Yang* literally means “to raise” or “to care for” and in the context of parent-child relations it involves mutual obligations of providing for each other with material assistance and emotional support. *Yang* has a temporal aspect - “cycle of *yang*” - parents provide *yang* to children knowing that they will be provided for when they are old, and it is children’s obligation to “*fèngyang* (奉養)” – respectfully care for – their parents. *Yang* is not necessarily subordinated to the notion of patriliney, because it can be applied to social kinship (foster parents/adopted children) and the absence of *yang* may end biological kinship (Stafford, 2000).

Compared with the concept of filial piety (*hsiao* 孝), *yang* can better capture the dynamic of inter-generational relations in the life course. *Hsiao* stresses one-dimensional, children-to-parent obligation and obedience. A concept central to Confucian ideas and its political application, *hsiao* can be extended as the individual’s obedience and loyalty to the nation (*zhong* 忠). Both are central to the socialisation process and much highlighted in the classic and modern education system in both the PRC and Taiwan (Fricke et.al., 1994:29; Hsiung, 2004). By stressing the unconditional

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<sup>133</sup> For the overview of the development of kinship studies, see Holy 1996.

<sup>134</sup> “Relatedness” is broadly defined to include any kind of relation that would not normally be considered as kinship, such as neighbors, friends, but also informal sides within kin relations (Carsten, 2000; Stafford, 2000). In this context, Smart further calls for attention for the theme of anthropology of friendship (2000). See also Overing and Passes (2000).

<sup>135</sup> Such as gift-giving, reciprocity, *ganqing* (感情 – feelings or affection) and *renqing* (人情 – moral norms and human feelings), see Yang (1996:139-145); *guanxi* (關係 – personal networks), see King (1991); Riley (1994); Yan (1996); Smart (2000).

authority of the parents and elders, the concept of *hsiao* takes authority as given, and overlooks the parents', particular the mother's strategy to establish their authority and to ensure that they are cared for. *Yang*, on the other hand, explains the complexity of the cycle of reciprocal care obligations and the strategy of women building support in the uterine family discussed earlier. In short, the nurturing for children and filial piety are not given, they need to be fostered or cultivated. The same principle applies to the Chinese notion of friendship,<sup>136</sup> which is strategically cultivated and invested, involving mutual interests.

Recent scholarly work along this line argues that relatedness is a similar force, alongside patriliney, which characterises Chinese society. At times though, it overrides patriliney especially in Chinese immigrant communities. In view of drastic changes and disruptions to family structures and values in the past few decades in China (as a consequence of radical measures brought by socialist ideology followed by economic reforms) and in Taiwan (as a consequence of rapid industrialisation), I will use the concept of relatedness to analyse the power dynamics between members of cross-border families.

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<sup>136</sup> In Chinese terminology there are several idioms describing the different levels of friendship, that can be concluded as *guanxi* (Smart, 2000).



## Chapter 2 Migration in contemporary China

This chapter deals with my first research question: the marital and migratory motivations involved in cross-strait marriages. I start by reviewing the literature of migration scholarship and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the existing scholarship in search of a theoretical framework for understanding marriage migration. Then I move on to discuss the structural macro-factors pushing women into marriage migration in China. By structural macro-factors I refer to economic (under)development in China contributing to internal rural-urban migration and government policy controlling population movement in China. By studying these factors I develop a linkage between internal labour migration in China and international marriage migration from China.

Then I take a close look at *who* enter cross-strait marriages, i.e. the demographic profiles of cross-strait couples. Despite of insufficiency of the statistical data, I manage to sketch a picture of their age, socio-economic backgrounds (education and occupation), place of origin, ethnicity, etc. in comparison with couples of Taiwanese marriages and with Southeast Asian (SEA) brides and their husbands. These data and comparisons will be used to examine in later chapters whether the images of cross-strait couples in the popular discourse (Chapter 3) and perception towards them in local communities (Chapter 5) can be supported by evidence. From these data it is established that compared with local marriages and other cross-border marriages, two distinct demographic groups stand out in cross-strait marriages. One is veteran soldiers, most of them above 80 years old without prior marital experience, who marry middle-aged Chinese women who are widowed or divorced, often with children from previous marriages. The other is middle-aged men, who are slightly older than the average marital age in Taiwan, marrying Chinese women at their 20s or early 30s who have not been married before. These two groups have very different marital and migratory motivations and marital experiences.

Having explored structural factors of migration, I go a step further to explore the individual and socio-psychological factors, from which I discover that the aspiration towards a better life, be it material, emotional or concerning the improvement of social position, is the main driving motivation. Emphasis on individual motivations in the context of social relations and positions is a result of my theoretical choice that pays attention to people's capacity of taking actions and developing strategies in the migration process, rather than being driven by structural and economic factors. However, after taking into account both structural and individual motivations, there is still a gap to be filled in order to explain why some people move and some don't. My



research findings show that whereas in many cases marital decisions and mate choices seem to be coincidental and not rational – which is often attributed to fate and *yuenfen* by the couples themselves,<sup>137</sup> the matchmakers who introduce these couples play an important role in marital decisions and mate choices. This meso-level analysis (mediating between macro- and micro-factors) will be carried out in Chapter 4.

## **2.1. Literature review of marriage migration**

### **2.1.1 Working definitions and clarification of terminology**

Migration is, by a general definition, the movement of people from one place to another. It has a clear spatial dimension, though implicitly it also implies the mobility of political, social and economic status of the people who move, as the concept of space implies “a sort of container for a socially, politically and economically relevant construct” and the process of movement requires the transfer of economic resources and expansion of social networks. Migration often implies “a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence, usually across some type of administrative boundary”, thus it is most common to classify migration by the types of the boundary (Faist, 2000:17-19), such as rural-urban migration, internal migration, international and transnational migration, among which the latter two terms refer to the crossing of the national borders not only as a spatial movement but also as the gain or loss of citizenship, political and social rights and entitlements. Two related terms *emigration* and *immigration* indicate the permanent loss or gain of citizenship, which seemingly denotes a change of status, though often involving a very long process. *Immigrants* refers to people who settle in the receiving country permanently, wishing to acquire or already having acquired citizenship of that country, while *migrants* generally refers to people who migrate temporarily and are not entitled to political and social rights.<sup>138</sup> Migration that is not sanctioned by the nation-states involved is called *irregular migration*, which generally but not exclusively occurs in international migration.<sup>139</sup> One common form of irregular migration is human trafficking and smuggling, which involves exploitation and confinement of the victims and organised crime.

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<sup>137</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.4.4.

<sup>138</sup> The distinction between immigrants and migrants is problematic, blurred and subject to different definitions by different States or at times by different authorities within one State. As the concept of citizenship and national borders is a modern construct, historically when foreign slaves and labourers were brought into frontier regions and colonies on a large scale, their political, social and cultural rights, duration of stay and location were of little concern to the authorities. In more recent developments, the distinction between immigrants and migrants is often not marked by the temporal aspect but by their race and class (Cheng, Lucy, 2004).

<sup>139</sup> In some cases moving from one region to another requires permission from the state or local authorities, for instance, the rural-urban migration in China.

It is also common to categorise migration by motivation, which can be roughly divided into *forced* and *voluntary* migration; the former includes refugees and human trafficking, and the latter includes labour migration and marriage migration. Studying why people migrate constitutes the major body of migration theories. There are two major types of problematics when classifying migration by motivations. First, it regards migration as a one-off event, following linear direction and driven by rational choices, and people have one primary motivation for migration. This assumption does not take into account the combination and changes of motivations during the migratory process across time as well as the limited opportunities rendered to migrants to fulfil their motivations. Secondly, it takes for granted that the place/country of origin is the best and ideal place that people fit in and feel a sense of cultural affinity -- if one moves one must be pushed into or pulled out of a place due to political upheavals or out of economic necessity. This is reflected mostly in the push-and-pull migration theory (Faist, 2000:19), which I shall explain later. This assumption certainly does not fit in with the marriage migration especially in patrilocal and exogamous societies<sup>140</sup> where women's moving to another village and being uprooted from their familiar social network is considered a part of their natural life course. Nevertheless, in view of the risks and costs of the transfer of economic resources and social ties enabling migration to take place, as well as the permanent change of life situation that migration brings about, it is reasonable to argue that generally people who migrate should believe or are made to believe that their life would improve by the action of migration, immediately or in a long run.

Other ways of categorisation comprise the pattern and frequency of migration. *Seasonal*, *circular*, and *returned* migration refers to migrants moving between the places of origin and migratory destinations either periodically or as part of a migratory process, which challenges the assumption that migration is an one-off and permanent event (Hugo, 2003). *Chained* and *network* migration refer to migration mediated via social and kin ties that trigger a flow of movements from one locality to another, sustained over a period of time. Study of these patterns of migration emphasises constant transfers of economic and social resources in both directions and sustained social relations between two communities across national borders -- in which the term "transnational" is used instead of "international" migration.

The complexity of categorisation inevitably makes the statistics and analysis of the scale of migration difficult and inaccurate. The conceptual framework derived from

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<sup>140</sup> For a definition and discussion of exogamy in China, see Chapter 1, 1.1.3, footnote 13. Davin argues that marriage for Chinese women is in itself a migration experience (1999). See also Palriwala and Uberoi, 2008.

the innate limitation of each definition leads to a different focus on migration patterns, causes and migrant behaviours. In addition to methodological and conceptual difficulties, the migrant population is often invisible unless the phenomenon of migration is perceived as a grave social problem, thus the statistics collection and research conducted often reflect utilitarian concerns of the policy-makers and the public, which in turn affects the research orientation and academic discourse. In Section 4 of this chapter I will analyse critically demographic data of cross-strait marriages in Taiwan, how they are categorised and collected and how it reflects the policy concerns of various authorities. Below I will review the development of migration theories and its shift of conceptual frameworks with attention paid to marriage migration.

### **2.1.2. Situating marriage migration theory in the development of migration theories**

As mentioned earlier, most of the migration theories aim to give explanations as to why people migrate. These theories approach causes of migration from three levels: micro-, macro- and meso-levels. Micro-level analysis pays attention to individual motivations and subjectivity, how individuals seek security, well-being and aspire to improve life situations through migration. Macro-level analysis emphasises structural factors, including demographic and ecological (population growth and land availability), political (repression, war, ethnic conflicts, etc.), economic (poverty and lack of employment opportunities, etc.) and cultural factors (stigmatisation and desire of life-style). Meso-level analysis deals with collectives and social networks, which are often mentioned in the micro-level analysis, but in the meso-level one focuses more on the *“form and content of the relationship rather than on the properties or attributes of the actors or positions”*.<sup>141</sup> How structural, external factors and individual agency and subjectivity interact and shape human behaviours has been one of the most puzzling quests not only in migration theory but also in the overall development of social science theories (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1977).

Three waves of migration scholarship applying these levels of analysis with different conceptual focus can be identified (Faist, 2000). The first generation adopts the push-and-pull model in the context of industrialisation. On the one hand there are demographic, political and economic factors pushing people out of emigration regions and countries, and on the other hand factors attracting and pulling migrants into immigration regions/countries. The push and pull factors are often analysed

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<sup>141</sup> Summarised from Faist (2000:30-35). Quotation in p. 33.

independently within a national or administrative boundary, and the migration is seen as a linear *flow* from the sending regions/countries to receiving destinations (2000:11). The second generation of migration scholarship, inspired by the World Systems Theory,<sup>142</sup> argues that migration is not only a result of the structured global political and economic hierarchy developed through colonial ties, trade and political influence, but also contributes to dependency relations and widening gaps between the emigration and immigration regions/countries. This theory sees migration not as a flow but as a *system*, which is intrinsically linked with other political, economic and social exchange and interaction between the centre and periphery (ibid:12; Cheng and Bonacich, 1984; Hsia, 1997). This conceptual shift implies that migration is not a one-time event, but a “circular, interdependent, progressively complex, and self-modifying system” (Faist, 2000:51), thus explaining why migration often triggers a chained reaction and is difficult to stop.

Both of these two theoretical streams focus on macro-structural factors. What they could not explain is why some people move and why some do not, and why so few people move to so few places, considering that large numbers of the population are affected by the same push and pull factors and are in the same peripheral position. Furthermore, these two waves of scholarship explain why people move, but they do not discuss why people continue to stay and develop their future security both in the emigrant and immigrant countries. The third generation of migration scholarship aims at answering these questions by developing a meso-level analysis that stresses the crucial role of collective action, social networks and social capital (ibid:3-5, 51-2). By social capital, I adopt Bourdieu’s definition, “the aggregate of the actual and potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (1986).<sup>143</sup> It is argued that that social capital is locally specific and difficult to transfer across national borders, thus, a “transnational social space”, or in simpler term, “migrant network”, is created by the migrants to sustain, create and transfer social ties, which will mediate the

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<sup>142</sup> Developed mainly by Wallerstein during the mid-1970s following a neo-Marxist intellectual tradition (Wallerstein, 2004). The key idea of this theory is that the modern world is a system capitalist in nature. In the post-colonial era, countries and regions are positioned as core, semi-periphery and periphery, and an international division of labour and capital flow is established and reproduced to ensure the domination of the core and the dependency of the periphery. Other World System theorists include Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi and André Gunder Frank.

<sup>143</sup> Other scholars, such as Putman, Coleman and Fukuyama have also developed and utilised the concept of social capital with various focus. I adopt Boudieu’s definition due to his conceptualisation of the connection of social capital, economic capital and cultural capital (education and knowledge, also commonly referred to as “human capital”), and how these different forms of capital are interchangeable, and can be activated across time.

flow of economic and cultural capital (information) (Faist, 2000:200-1; Jackson et. al. 2004; Willis et.al. 2004).

With the focus on the migrants' network and transnational social space, migration studies depart from the earlier political-economist framework and focus on the migrants' individual or collective identity, their social network across national borders and their integration in the receiving countries. This coupled with the existing scholarship on diaspora in Literary Studies and Cultural Analysis focusing on cultural identities, a new wave of scholarship attempts to problematise and extend the concept of "citizenship" earlier defined narrowly as political membership and rights within a nation-state, as well as to explore how existing social and kinship networks are transformed by transnationality (Ong, 1999; Castles and Davidson, 2000). Migration theories in the making go beyond the study of why people move, and extend to why they stay, who stay behind and how they move constantly in-between (del Rosario, T, 2008).

The study of women, gender and migration is also part of these waves of migration scholarship. In the earlier push-and-pull model, women's migration was seriously understudied and marriage migration is put under family migration. This literature assumes that it is natural for women to join their husbands and family members in migration and they do not play a role in the decision-making of migration (Tseng, 2006). It is also partly because in many societies up to today women are not supposed to travel alone and are not considered as active economic actors. In the second-wave scholarship, scholars start to pay attention to women's labour migration, particularly in the electronic and garment sectors and in domestic work both in internal and international migration.

Commercial marriage migration, commonly termed the Mail-Order Brides (MOB) phenomenon, started to receive attention from women's movements as well as from immigration policy makers in Europe, North America and Japan in the past decades. However, scholarly efforts only started about ten years ago (del Rosario Virginia O., 1994; Glodava & Onizuka, 1994; Robinson, 1996). Earlier work points out the link between the MOB phenomenon, sex tourism and sex trafficking (Barry, 1995). Others associate it with female labour migration, particularly in domestic work (Hsia, 1997; Wang, 2001; Chang, 2002). There is a strong tendency to put female labour migration, trafficking and commercial marriage into the same analytical category and to identify the political economy of gender and the international division of labour in a market-oriented economy as its root-causes (Wijers and Lin, 1997; Derks, 2000; Piper, 1999). Other scholars argue that there is a direct link between trade relations, trade dependency, capital flow and commercial marriages (Hsia, 2002; Han, 2002). This

scholarship is clearly influenced by the second-generation migration scholarship based on the world systems theory and globalisation theory. Whatever macro-factors are identified, it is commonly agreed that the commercialisation of marriage migration is a product of globalisation, which is widening the gaps between developed and developing countries, causing social stratification within richer countries, and most important of all, creating gender inequality both locally and globally. It is also commonly agreed that commercially arranged marriages turn women and marriage into commodities, placing women in vulnerable and exploitative situations.

Both in the conventional migration theory and in the perceptions of the state and popular representation, economic gains are regarded as the primary motivation for cross-border marriages. The studies of Asian women's labour migration show that women often migrate not only for the economic benefits for themselves but also for their family. It is argued that Asian women are socialised to be filial daughters and caring mothers sacrificing for their parents, husbands and children (Lee, C.K., 1998; Lee, Anru, 2003; Parrenas, 2001; Pun, 2005; Jacka and Gaetano, 2004; Gilmartin and Tan, 2002). In the case of marriage migration, such economic motivations cause moral uneasiness. On the one hand, women who marry in order to alleviate themselves and their family from poverty are considered to be victims either in feudal practices or in the globalisation process. On the other hand, women who marry not out of economic necessity, but as a choice for better economic opportunities, are considered morally questionable. Such a dichotomy exists in the public discourse, academic scholarship as well as in common perceptions in China, Taiwan and elsewhere.

Influenced by diaspora studies and studies on transnational families, another stream of studies on cross-border marriages paid attention to subjective experiences of displacement, victimhood, cultural hybridity and identities of immigrants (Breger and Hill, 1998; Ong, 1999). Narratives of female immigrants have enriched diaspora studies and thanks to their contribution, gender relations are widely recognised as an important dimension of shaping and reproducing cultural identities of immigrant or ethnic minority communities. However, as this stream of scholarship mainly concerns the political, economic and social life of immigrants in the receiving society, little attention is paid to what happened prior and during migration processes. Similar to the first-wave scholarship focusing on push and pull factors, women are again treated as dependents of their husband's earlier labour migration. Despite the analysis of cultural hybridity, diaspora studies seem to take for granted common ethnicity, culture and language as dominant factors in the mate choice (Davis and Harrell, 1993). They also largely neglect the analysis of economic resources involved in and generated from migration processes.

To fill the gap, a new wave of scholarship in geography is emerging that places the changing social positioning before and after migration at the centre of analysis in the migratory process, that is, to evaluate migrants' "positions within power hierarchies created through historical, political, economic, geographic, kinship-based and other socially stratifying factors" (Pessar and Mahler, 2001:6; Massey, 1994). Massey's concept of "gendered geographies of power" not only analyses the process of changing social positioning but also studies the degree of control that migrants have during the migration process. Constable's first edited volume of cross-border marriages in Asia follows this line of inquiry and further proposes the concept "paradoxical hypergamy" – that migrants may find that their economic position and opportunity have improved after migrating to a richer country, however, their social positions in the receiving society and in the husbands' kin groups are lower than those prior to migration in their sending society (2005; Oxfeld, 2005). This stream of research particularly challenges the economistic and rational explanation of migration motivations and decisions. The advantage of social positioning gained in the migratory process does not only explain why people move, it also explains why people stay in a marriage and in the place of migratory destination.

What is missing in the studies of marriage migration is the rich scholarship of anthropological studies on women's position and gender relations in kinship, labour and household. This ranges from the description and meanings of marital rites, financial transactions and gift exchanges in a given community, the link between women's status and their productive and reproductive labour, sexual division of labour, negotiations within a support network, women's experience in the life cycle, and gender power relations within kinship systems (Moore, 1988). In addition, anthropological kinship studies have received a revival of interest with attention paid to the more informal aspects of intimate domestic arrangements of everyday life (Holy 1996; Carsten, 2000). The interrelation between gender, ethnicity and citizenship is also explored (Collier and Yanagisako, 1987). Integrating anthropological approach on human relatedness into existing migration studies helps to clarify to what extent the experience of migrant women overlaps with or departs from the general experience of women in married life.

Among the vast amount of research on cross-border marriages in Taiwan,<sup>144</sup> two Taiwanese scholars provide theoretical explanations on the phenomenon of marriage migration. Hsia is the first Taiwanese scholar working on Indonesian brides in Taiwan. (2002). She adopts the World Systems Theory framework and argues that cross-border

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<sup>144</sup> Between 1994 and 2004, there are at least 22 journal articles, two reports, four conference papers, one doctoral thesis and 13 master's theses on cross-border marriages in Taiwan written and published by Taiwanese scholars alone.

marriages are yet another commodity under the distorted international capitalist system. Under this system and its international division of labour, Taiwan is positioned as semi-periphery and Southeast Asian Countries as periphery. On the one hand, in the semi-periphery countries, with the decline of the manufacturing sector and the introduction of migrant labour, low-skilled men lost jobs and were marginalised in the local marriage market. On the other hand, with the decline of the agricultural sector and underdeveloped industrialisation, women in the periphery countries were driven to work abroad as domestic workers and entertainers, thus constituting the phenomenon of “feminization of migration” (Piper, 2005; Chiu, 2003). Commercially arranged marriage, Hsia argues, is part of this migration system where centre and semi-periphery countries benefit from the low-paid domestic work (domestic migrant workers) or unpaid reproductive labour (foreign brides), while the periphery countries benefit from the remittances and tourism (2002:161-164).

Wang goes a step further to develop the linkage between the productive and reproductive labour market and argues that foreign brides fulfil both functions (2001). He and his students also do research on marriage brokering agencies in Vietnam and how they relate to the trade relations between Taiwan and Vietnam, in which they conclude that cross-border marriages are a form of commodification of women (Wang and Chang, 2002).

## **2.2 Internal and international marriage migration in China**

### **2.2.1 The policy controlling population movement: the *hukou* system**

In the first few years after the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, the freedom of migrating within China was protected. As part of the Communist regime’s effort to cut away from feudal traditions,<sup>145</sup> the 1954 Constitution of the PRC and the following household registration measures emphasised citizens’ rights to choose place of residence and the rights to migration within the country (Zhang Yulin, 2002:12). As a result of the state’s policy on industrialisation that led to rapid urbanisation and rural surplus labour, the rural-urban flow of migration had soon reached a level that the urban housing, public infrastructures and food supply could not cope with.<sup>146</sup> It became clear

<sup>145</sup> Household registration systems (*hukou zhidu*) had been practiced in China as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. serving three main purposes: military service, tax and land distribution (Huang, 2002:42).

<sup>146</sup> The urban population had increased from 57.65 million in 1949 to 99.49 million in 1957 (Zhang Yulin, 2002:14-15). Zhang Yulin summarised and analysed the major factors of the rural-urban migration during this period, 1) industrialisation in major cities led to shortages of labour and the urban governments and industries openly demanded rural labours; 2) traditional manual sectors in agricultural and small townships collapsed due to the industrialisation policy, and as a result people in these sectors went to major cities to look for jobs; 3) natural disasters in rural areas; 4) the gap of income and life quality



to the political leaders that the migration flow had to be regulated. In 1956, various governmental departments issued nine measures limiting rural-urban migration within a year, and in January 1958, the Regulations of Household Registration was enacted, which is considered to be the strictest control of population movement among modern states that affected 85% of total population living in the rural areas (Zhang Yulin, 2002; Skeldon, 2000; Davin, 1999:5, citing Cheng and Selden, 1994; Chan, 1999).

The household registration system (*hujī zhìdù* 户籍制度, or commonly referred to as *hukou* 户口) was developed based on both the old system in Imperial China and the labour registration system of the USSR (Dutton, 1992, cited by Davin, 1999). It classified every household as “agricultural” and “non-agricultural”, which created a fundamental social and economic division (Davin, 1999:5; Wu and Treiman, 2002:2). Although the system entailed a spatial hierarchy between major cities, medium sized cities and townships, all the way down to the rural villages (Davin, 1999:6), the major division was between rural and urban population, what is commonly referred to as the “dual structure”.<sup>147</sup> The dual structure refers to the situation that people of urban *hukou* were entitled to housing, food rationing, pension, health care and better employment opportunities, while the rural *hukou* holders did not have any of these benefits as they were expected to be taken care of by the communes. An agricultural *hukou* was not defined by occupation, but by the place of origin (not place of birth), and it was extremely difficult to change a rural *hukou* to an urban *hukou*. One example is that in its original design the children born to mothers with a rural *hukou* inherited the status from the mother, even if they were born in the cities from fathers of urban *hukou*. The rationale of this peculiar principle, which is against patrilineal and partilocal traditions, as Davin explains, is to contain the flow and volume of rural-urban migration, as it is more likely to have larger numbers of rural women attempting to “marrying up” with urban men (1999:6-7).<sup>148</sup> Children in rural *hukou* were not entitled to education and other care benefits, therefore they were forced to be raised in the rural areas. The state-

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between urban and rural areas increased; 5) rural collectivism caused dissatisfaction among peasants and prompted them leaving rural homes. Zhang holds the view that the “urban problems” were not the only reason for the state to formulate and enact a radical policy prohibiting people’s movement in the mid 1950s, the political will to implement rural collectivism as part of socialist ideals played an equally important role (ibid:15-18, 21).

<sup>147</sup> In China it is commonly called “dual social structure” (Huang, 2002). However, some western scholars emphasise the spatial hierarchy and have called it “a caste-like system of social stratification” (Potter and Potter, 1990; Davin, 1999; Lary, 1996).

<sup>148</sup> In Chapter 1 I have explained the principle of women’s hypergamy and marriage as a common strategy of social mobility for women and family.

sanctioned migration is called *hukou* migration. The non-state-sanctioned or temporary movement of the people is called floating population (*liudong renkou* 流动人口).<sup>149</sup>

This system was effectively implemented from the 1950s to the early 1980s, mainly through state control of employment, food rationing and education. In the era of economic reforms, with the abolition of the commune system, increasing numbers of rural surplus labour, further urbanisation and shortage of urban labour, as well as a large scale of layoff workers from the former state enterprises in townships, minor measures of relaxation of population control were introduced.<sup>150</sup> However, the *hukou* system and the dual structure continued to be implemented until today despite the constant call for relaxation and abolition.<sup>151</sup> By the end of the 1990s, the urban floating population had reached 70 to 90 million,<sup>152</sup> and reached soon 100 million at the turn of the century,<sup>153</sup> which is perceived as a grave social problem called “blind flow” (*mangliu* 盲流). As a result, the government, particularly the municipal governments, have adopted even stricter control on population movement although the law enforcement is far from effective, resulting in the marginalisation of the peasant migrants in the cities.<sup>154</sup> Several scholars argue that by maintaining the rural-urban divide, China could maintain its labour competitiveness in the world economy without paying for the social and reproductive cost, thus the *hukou* system is key to the rapid economic development and political and social stability (Davin, 1999; Solinger, 1999; Wang, 2004; Li, 2003). Despite its unfairness and difficulty of implementation and the rising protest against this dual system, the state lacks the political will to abolish or relax the population movement control.

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<sup>149</sup> According to Chinese conceptions, the “floating population” consists of people who have not in fact “migrated,” officially speaking. Instead, in Chinese parlance, their chief characteristic is that “they float and move,” implying that they are not, and will not become, a permanently settled group. Indeed, two distinct official Chinese terms differentiate the two types of transfer: “floating” in Chinese is *liudong* (which could also be translated as “mobile”); “migration” is *qianyi* (Solinger, 1999:15). Statistics: *ibid.* 17-22.

<sup>150</sup> For instance, the State Council allowed peasants to establish small urban businesses such as shoe-repair shops, barbershops and restaurants in the 80s (Wu and Treiman, 2002). Another measure is to allow rural *hukou* holders to obtain the “self-supplied food grain” *hukou* in small towns, enabling them to do small business and work in small local enterprises as long as they take care of their own food ration and accommodation (Jacka and Gaetano, 2004:18).

<sup>151</sup> For a summary of the relaxation measures and debates of calling for abolition, see Huang (2002:41) and Wang (2004).

<sup>152</sup> For a comparison of different estimations, see Solinger (1999:19-20) and Ma (1997).

<sup>153</sup> Jacka and Gaetano (2004:1).

<sup>154</sup> For the image and stigma of floating populations and peasant migrants in the cities, see Solinger (1999); about conditions of children born without legitimate urban *hukou* from peasant migrants, see Han (2000).

### 2.2.2 Trends of women's internal labour and marriage migration

As a result of the strict *hukou* system, the greater part of the population movement in the Maoist era was involuntary and state-sanctioned before the mid-1980s (Davin, 1999:11, citing Wang, 1994 and Ma, 1994).<sup>155</sup> Davin classifies three types of migration in this period. The first is planned economic migration, which includes labour migration, evacuation for natural disasters and development projects, as well as education. The second type is politically motivated migration, including state-assigned migration from densely populated areas to sparse frontier areas, punishment of political dissidents, as well as intellectuals and red guards (an estimated 20 million) who were sent to villages for re-education during the Cultural Revolution. The third category is spontaneous migration, including rural-urban labour migration and marriage and family-reunion migration that were originally not sanctioned by the state though some were legalised with the relaxation of measures. The former two often involves rural to rural or urban to rural movement, while the later is from rural to urban and is more permanent.<sup>156</sup> In the category of economically motivated migration, planned or spontaneous, male migrants clearly outnumbered women, however, in the marriage and family-reunion migration, predominantly women moved. The low percentage of women's migration can be explained by cultural perceptions and women's position in society. Women were certainly then considered more vulnerable and needed to be protected and supervised, therefore women seldom travelled and migrated alone, especially single women (Davin, 1999). This pattern was the same as the migration trends in other developing countries.

The reform era sees a rapid increase of women migration both in labour and marriage or family-related migration. The 1990 Population Census shows that out of 34 million migrating population, 43% were female and 57% were male, while another survey shows that migrant women had outnumbered men (Davin, 1999:27).<sup>157</sup> This increase can be explained by the demand for female labour in the Special Economic Zones and in the service sector in Southern and Eastern coastal cities (Jacka and Gaetano,

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<sup>155</sup> On the lack of data and difficulty of interpretation, see Davin (1999:10-11).

<sup>156</sup> Peasants who were recruited to work in the city were often given a temporary status that ended when the contract ended, and they were not entitled to the social protection as the urban *hukou* holders. In the 1960s and 1970s, large number of skilled urban workers were assigned to work in large-scale development projects in rural areas, when their contracts ended they were given rural *hukou* and were not able to return to the city again. The people who had higher education often had employment in the cities and obtained permanent urban *hukou*. However, they constituted a small percentage and the majority of students of higher education were originally from urban areas (Davin, 1999: 14-15). Lary also shares Davin's categorisation (1996).

<sup>157</sup> In another small-scale survey the percentage of women is much higher. According to the 1987 National Population Survey, between 1984 and 1987, of a total 21 million of migrant population, women comprised 55.7% (Davin, 1999:27). The different results are due to the different sampling methods and definitions of migration and registration in data collection (Davin, 1999; Gaetano and Jacka, 2004).

2004). In the Pearl River Delta region and the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, an overwhelming majority of migrants are young single female.<sup>158</sup> Surveys also show that among the labour migrants women are younger and less often married than men, women migrants being concentrated in the 15-19-year-old age cohort and men in the 24-25 age cohort (ibid:19-23).<sup>159</sup> As the 1980 Marriage Law regulates that the marriageable age is 22 for women, the majority of these migrant women are single when they first migrate. In the media and policy discourse they are called *dagongmei* (young working girl 打工妹).

Marriage migration in the reform era also increased rapidly in number and in distance between origin and destination of migrants. The 1990 population census shows that more than 4.3 million of women migrate to marry, which comprises 28% of overall female migration in China (Gilmarin and Tan, 2002:204), of which it is estimated that more than 1 million are inter-provincial (Wang and Hu, 1996, cited by Cheng & Wan: 2003:31).<sup>160</sup> Marriage migration constitutes 14.2% of all inter-provincial migration, of which 90.8% comprises female migrants. The preferred destinations of marriage migration in general follow the spatial hierarchy created by the *hukou* system as mentioned earlier, that is, from major cities as the most favourite to medium sized cities and townships down to rural villages. A clear trend is also observed of women from inland provinces marrying men in the coastal cities (Davin, 1999:143-5). It is also noted that the majority of women in inter-provincial marriages move from rural to rural locations, as it is still extremely difficult to change the rural *hukou* to the urban *hukou*, and those few women who managed to marry and migrate to major cities were more likely to live in the outlying rural areas of the cities rather than the cities themselves (Gilmarin and Tan, 2002:204).

In terms of demographic profiles of women in inter-provincial marriage migration, the 1990 population census shows that 40% came from a farming background and 30% had worked in factories before they migrated. Their age is lower than the average marital age of women, and they have lower education than the average as well (Cheng and Wan, 2003: 31-2).<sup>161</sup> The primary motivation for marriage migration is economic improvement, with many of the female marriage migrants living

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<sup>158</sup> For a compilation of various figures in different cities in the zone, see (2004: 19-22).

<sup>159</sup> According to the 1994 survey of labour migration from 75 villages in 11 provinces, conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, PRC, 83% of women and 55% of men were aged below 30 years old. The 1995 household survey, also conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, shows that women aged under 18 comprised 65.8% of the labour force in Sichuan and 55.6% in Anhui (quoted by Jacka and Gaetano, 2004:23).

<sup>160</sup> Another scholar estimated 2.35 million marriage migrations between 1982-1990 (Yang, 1994, cited by Cheng & Wan, 2003: 31).

<sup>161</sup> This is based on a survey conducted in Hebei province; 60% of migrant married women are illiterate or semi-illiterate.

in extremely poor economic conditions before marriage. The men they married generally belong to the lower class of the destination community (Cheng and Wan, 2003; Gilmarin and Tan, 2002; Davin, 1999).

The above-mentioned patterns follow the patrilocal, exogamous and hypergamous principles of traditional Chinese marriage as discussed in Chapter 1. Scholars consider the new wave of marriage migration in China as a strategy for social mobility and fleeing poverty, which it is in essence the same as the traditional norm. There are a few aspects deviant from the traditional practices. First, other than the individual attainment and familial social status of the bridegrooms, the urban residence and *hukou* is also an important and desirable criterion of mate choice for women. Secondly, the distance of marriage is far greater. Long-distance marriages inevitably require go-betweens. Due to the distance and lack of a shared social network among the brides and bridegroom's kin groups, the safeguard and verifying mechanisms to ensure a good match by the relatives would not work properly, therefore the go-betweens are often entrusted with heavier responsibilities. Women who married over a far distance are usually more vulnerable and face more difficulties in adjusting to the life in the husband's family, partly due to the lack of social support, and unfamiliarity with local customs and languages (Davin, 1999:147-9), as well as the stigma attached to women from other provinces, particularly from the underdeveloped regions. Thirdly, while women increasingly take control over their marital choice by migrating to richer regions and have better life opportunities, a small percentage of women were trafficked into marriage migration or sold into sex trade.<sup>162</sup>

### **2.2.3 Rural women's life in the cities and their marital choices**

Migration experiences can be at the same time empowering and disempowering for rural women, in China and elsewhere. On the one hand, women who leave home escape from the authority of the parents or of in-laws, build their confidence and capability in dealing with challenges, and establish their own social network and friendship outside the kinship network. They develop a degree of autonomy although they are expected to and would be likely to comply to be a docile and pious daughter by sending most of their income home (Jacka and Gaetano, 2004). On the other hand, women without a proper urban *hukou* lack legal and social entitlements and are vulnerable to deception,

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<sup>162</sup> The trafficking in women is widespread. While the actual figure of trafficking in women is difficult to estimate, a report claims that 33,000 women were abducted and sold between mid-1993 and 1995 (Evans, 1997:170). This figure only includes the physical kidnapping, not manipulation of consent and cheating. Evan noted that in these reports the definition of sex or marriage trade is not clear, as the custom of marriage transaction can be interpreted as trade, and women can easily "sell" themselves willingly.

abuse and exploitation in the working place or in the new family while their body, sexuality and labour is devalued. Some officials in the Women's Federation hold the view that marriage migration offers women opportunities for the improvement of life as labour migration offers to man, and they argue that women should have the freedom to choose despite potential abuse and vulnerability (Davin, 1999:148).

Rural women's positions in the cities are not only affected by their working and marital conditions, they are constructed as different from and inferior to modern, independent urban women. Sun's research on the representation of rural *dagongmei* in Anhui shows that in the official media, such as the Women's Federation and party-affiliated newspapers, *dagongmei* are portrayed as pious submissive daughters who do not challenge patriarchal gender norms and familial values with the assumption that if they migrate they soon will return to the rural home to serve their natal family. *Dagongmei* who do not fit into this image and seek independence are deemed morally degraded, while the same rebellious urban women would be considered emancipated. The commercial press that aimed at urban readership, in contrast, either depicted *dagongmei* as voyeuristic and socially and sexually transgressive, or appeal to the sympathy of the middle-class readership by emphasising the misfortunes of individual *dagongmei*. In both cases migrant women are symbols of moral and social inferiority, lack of agency and self-determination (Sun, 2004). Many popular magazines and books especially depicted many *dagongmei* ending up as mistresses or "kept women" (*ernai 二奶*) of China's new urban rich or businessmen from Hong Kong and Taiwan (Jiang, 2003).

The majority of young *dagongmei* long to continue to work in the cities and eventually become a city dweller. The urban life offers them autonomy, self-respect and respect from her rural kin, and the life-style that is not only related to material well-being but also associated with moral and social superiority. However, their job opportunities decrease as they grow older due to their lack of working skill and comparatively low education level. The only way for them to be able to settle down in the cities is marrying to a man of urban *hukou*, yet only a very small number manage to do so (Liu, 2002). The majority of them have to return to hometown when reaching marriageable age, however, living and working in the city has increased their awareness of gender equality and economic independence. They consider the men in their villages patriarchal, culturally backward and economically lacking of prospect. In addition, they also hesitate to surrender themselves to the authority of rural parents-in-law and other kin members -- the life they are well aware of and probably would like to escape. This coupled with the marginalisation and lack of opportunities in the city, international marriage became an option, probably an easier option than marrying urban men.

## 2.3. Demographic features of cross-border and cross-strait marriages in Taiwan

### 2.3.1 Some notes on statistical data and methodology

Before I analyse the demographic characteristics of cross-strait couples and families, it is necessary to explain how the statistical data are generated and collected, and the difficulties of interpreting them. The statistics at the national level are from various governmental departments in Taiwan, while the local statistics in my fieldwork site are collected by myself at the Household Registration Office at Beihe and Hukou township, supplemented by the general statistics published by the Household Registration Department of Tainan and Hsinchu County government. In addition, I conducted a household survey in Chungshing village, an informal settlement populated with veteran soldiers.<sup>163</sup>

Demographic data in Taiwan are centrally coordinated by the Household Registration Department under the Ministry of Interior, with offices at township and county levels. The sources of these data are the registration of permanent citizens as well as general censuses conducted every five years. As Taiwan does not apply any policy regulating the internal movement of its citizens, the household registration does not necessarily correspond to the place of residence, therefore although national statistics are fairly accurate the local-level registration at times is not. In principle, temporary residents should register themselves at the local police station of the place of residence. Migrant population (*liudong renkou* 流動人口) therefore is under the authority of the National Police Agency, which is also under the Ministry of Interior. The foreign spouses of Taiwanese nationals are also considered *liudong renkou* and until they acquire permanent residentship, they are not part of the household registration system (*ruji* 入籍). Their statistical data are coordinated by the Foreign Affairs Unit under the National Police Agency. Spouses from the People's Republic of China are another matter. Because of the fact that they are not considered foreigners nor Taiwanese nationals, the responsible authority of their movement is the Immigration Office, also under the National Police Agency. Before the phenomenon of foreign and mainland brides was perceived as a social problem in Taiwan, data of these departments and offices were neither compiled nor coordinated. Data from the Foreign Affairs Units (of foreign spouses) and the Immigration Office (of mainland Chinese spouses) only exist at the national level that indicates only the overall numbers and their original nationality. Although the local Household Registration Office has individual entry

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<sup>163</sup> See fieldwork description in Introduction, p. 12-16.

records for the registration of international marriages, the total number and demographic profiles of foreign and mainland spouses were not computerised nor compiled before the year 2001, thus leaving the detailed and historical analysis at the local level virtually impossible. Data of Taiwanese nationals who married foreign and mainland spouses, in terms of their age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background were completely lacking before 2003.

Furthermore, as the various units and offices apply different criteria for data collection, their data are not always compatible. The data from the National Police Agency for both foreign and mainland spouses aim at controlling migrant population and ensuring that they do not turn into illegal migrants, so their statistics are categorised according to the spouses' residential status, short-term or long-term, and it only includes spouses from some Southeast Asian countries and the PRC.<sup>164</sup> The Mainland Affairs Council, the authority in charge of cross-strait interaction, has figures of all Mainland Chinese people residing in Taiwan but could not establish the total number of cross-strait marriages, especially the people involved from the PRC. The number of spouses from Southeast Asian countries can only be acquired from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Chapter 3 I will elaborate further on the categorisation and related policies; here I will give an example of how policy-driven statistics can be misleading for our purposes: Because for years most of the mainland spouses were granted short-term visiting visas for family reunion, they may enter or stay twice a year for different reasons, for instance, once for visiting the husband and another time for visiting parents-in-law. The data from the Mainland Affairs Council only provide the numbers of applications and visas granted in total sum, which is much higher than the actual number of cross-strait marriages. In addition, due to the quota system (explained in Chapter 3), after 1996 mainland spouses can only apply for a long-term residential permit after two years of marriage and during these two years they have to travel between the PRC and Taiwan several times. Therefore authorities were not able to establish their movement and place of residence. In view of these complexities, government officials were not able to answer questions as simple as to the exact number of cross-strait marriages and how many mainland spouses reside in Taiwan at a particular point of time. The lack of reliable data leaves room for exaggeration of the

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<sup>164</sup> The term *waiji xinniang* (foreign brides) is almost synonymous with Southeast Asian brides, while *dalu xinniang* distinctly refers to brides from the PRC. These terms, first used by the media and carrying stigmas and stereotypes, became a social and demographic category (though in official statistics the word "brides" is changed to a neutral "spouses"), as if cross-border marriages with nationals from economically developed countries and from South Asia would not constitute cross-border marriages. This is mainly due to the fact that brides from Southeast Asia and the PRC, and not from other countries, were deemed an alarming development and constituted social problems that had to be put under control by the authorities – specifically the Police. In Chapter 3 I will analyse the process of problem construction in detail.



scale of cross-strait marriages, which is often used by politicians and academics alike to justify restrictive policies towards mainland spouses. One example is that one renowned scholar argues that the gap between the number of mainland spouses' applications for a visiting visa and a long-term residential permit is evidence of rampant "bogus" marriage and a high rate of failed marriages. It seems that he is not aware of the policy and methods of statistical data recording; therefore he does not take into account multiple entries.<sup>165</sup> It was not until 2003 that the Ministry of Interior decided to conduct a national survey on all foreign and mainland spouses and subsequently published a report in 2004 that contains detailed demographic data of foreign and mainland spouses and their Taiwanese spouses. However, this survey, though intended as a national census, only managed to acquire questionnaires from less than half of all foreign and mainland spouses, and the surveying process was not without problems and bias.<sup>166</sup>

### **2.3.2 Numbers and sex ratio of cross-border marriages – a historical overview**

Despite these constraints, these statistics when used with caution can indicate some clear trends in the numbers, sex ratio, socio-economic background and age gap with respect to both the Taiwanese and mainland spouses. Table 3 shows the total number of foreign and mainland spouses (regardless of gender) from each country in each year from 1994 to 2004.

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<sup>165</sup> Shue and Lin, 2003: 2

<sup>166</sup> *Survey report of the living conditions of foreign and mainland spouses*, Ministry of Interior, ROC, June 2004. The number of effective questionnaires: Southeast Asian spouses: 82,358; mainland Chinese spouses: 93,551.

When the survey was conducted I was doing my fieldwork in Beihe township and witnessed and participated in part of the survey. The survey was carried out by the staff of the local Household Registration Office who received inadequate preparation and had to finish the survey in a period of just a few weeks. Although they were required to visit the houses of foreign and mainland spouses and interviewed them in person and filled out a questionnaire, most of the time the staff were not able to locate the spouses during the working hours. In another township in Tainan county, some staff were attacked or harassed by the Taiwanese husband of a foreign bride. The county government therefore decided to bend the rule from the central government and asked the staff to conduct interviews by telephone. Due to time constraints and lack of human resources, the staff in average finished a telephone interview for a questionnaire in five minutes, and instead of talking to the foreign and mainland spouses themselves they often talked to the parents-in-law and other relatives.

**Table 3 Estimated number of cross-border marriages (CBM) with Southeast Asian and PRC nationals in Taiwan: according to nationality**

	Vietnam	Indonesia	Philippines	Thailand & Myanmar	Cambodia	PRC	Foreign/mainland spouses (sum of left)	Total Taiwanese marriages	% of CBM among total marriages
1994	530	2,247	1,183	870	---	7,177	12,007	---	---
1995	1,969	2,409	1,757	1,301	---	7,926	15,362	---	---
1996	4,113	2,950	2,085	1,973	---	9,716	20,837	---	---
1997	9,060	2,464	2,128	2,211	---	12,115	27,978	---	---
1998	4,644	2,331	544	1,173	---	15,014	23,706	145,976	16.24%
1999	6,790	3,643	603	1,184	---	21,165	33,385	173,209	19.27%
2000	12,327	4,381	487	1,259	875	26,474	45,803	181,642	25.22%
2001	12,340	3,230	377	1,389	567	32,438	50,341	170,515	29.52%
2002	12,823	2,602	389	1,664	632	28,906	47,016	172,655	27.43%
2003	11,566	2,746	193	1,997	644	34,991	52,137	171,483	30.40%
2004	11,953	2,683	260	1,773	890	10,972	28,531	131,453	21.70%
Total	88,115	31,686	10,006	16,794	3,608	206,894			

Various sources compiled by the author<sup>167</sup>

As shown in Table 3, the percentage of cross-border marriages with Southeast Asian and PRC nationals has grown so rapidly that by the year 2000 it has reached more than 20% of all marriages of Taiwanese nationals, and by 2003, over 30%. In some rural areas, for instance, Baihe Township, the percentage is as high as 37.1% in 2003. This means that in the period 2000-2004 more than one out of every four marriages in Taiwan was a cross-border one.<sup>168</sup> In 2002 one out of every eight children in Taiwan was born in a cross-border family.<sup>169</sup> Although the total number of foreign spouses and

<sup>167</sup> PRC 1994-2001 is provided by the Cross-Strait Exchange Foundation, ROC; PRC 2002-2005 from the Ministry of Interior Affairs, ROC (Weekly Statistic Bulletin, Ministry of Interior Affairs, 95:3, 2006). Foreign spouses 1994-2004 is the number of visas issued to foreign spouses by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The number of foreign and mainland spouses is the sum of previous columns, which does not include marriages with other foreign nationals other than Southeast Asia and the PRC. The total number of the marriages in Taiwan, including local and international marriages, is from Statistics Department of Ministry of Interior. The percentage of cross-border marriages among all Taiwanese marriages is calculated according to the figures in this table, however, the percentage figures published by Ministry of Interior, only available after 2001, is slightly different from my figures yet without much discrepancy (Weekly Statistic Bulletin, Ministry of Interior Affairs, 95:3, 2006).

<sup>168</sup> Source: Household Registration Office, Baihe Township, Tainan County, Taiwan, 2003.

<sup>169</sup> Source: *Report on the measure of assistance for foreign and mainland spouses*, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Taiwan, May 2003.

their children still constituted a very small percentage of the total population in Taiwan,<sup>170</sup> the percentage of cross-border marriages among the total of marriages is higher compared with the neighbouring East Asian countries.<sup>171</sup> This explains why the scale and growing speed became a striking phenomenon compared to other receiving countries of marriage migration.

Chart 1 indicates more clearly the growth and decline of spouses from each country. Prior to 1994, the number of Indonesian spouses constituted the largest number among the Southeast Asian brides; the Filipino and Thai spouses had a lower yet steady presence; and starting from 1995 Vietnamese spouses became the most popular choice for Taiwanese men and the number has grown rapidly. Since the early 1990s the mainland Chinese spouses have constituted more than half of all cross-border marriages, and in 2003, as high as two-thirds. It should be noted that the drastic decline in 2004 of spouses from all countries and particularly the mainland Chinese spouses is mainly because year 2004 is considered a bad year for marriage (Shue and Lin, 2003).<sup>172</sup> In 2005 the number grows again.

The above figures include both sexes. Table 4 below shows the gender percentage of all foreign spouses and the sex ratio. It can be observed that among Southeast Asian and mainland Chinese spouses more than 96% are women who marry Taiwanese and reside in Taiwan, with the exception of Thailand, where male Thai spouses constitute one-third.

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<sup>170</sup> Up to the end of 2004, the number of the mainland spouses and their children's applications for various residential permits reached more than 150,000, which does not include the spouses married less than two years and their children born in Taiwan (Immigration Office, Ministry of Interior, January 7, 2005). This number constitutes less than 0.7 % of total population in Taiwan.

<sup>171</sup> The past ten years have witnessed a rapid increase of the intra-Asia flow of the cross-border marriage migration particularly between Southeast Asia and East Asia. In Japan, the number of international marriages has been steadily growing since the 1970s and by the year 2000, one in every 22 registered marriages is an international marriage, representing 4.5% of the national total, with Chinese and Filipina female spouses on the top of the list (Curtin, 2002). In South Korea, the number of international marriages rose 38 percent in 2004, which constituted 11 % of the newlyweds that year (Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare, South Korea, 2004). The phenomenon of "brides from Asia" (*Ajia no hanayome*) in Japan, "Chosonjok brides" and "mixed marriages" in South Korea and "foreign and Mainland brides" (*waiji/dalu xinniang*) in Taiwan, all catch huge media attention, cause public panic, and challenge these societies whose popular attitudes and immigration policies are based on mono-ethnic principles.

<sup>172</sup> The year 2004 is *guluannian* (孤鸞年) in Chinese lunar calendar. It is believed that marriages of this year have less than usual prospects for being successful.

**Table 4 Number of foreign spouses acquiring long-term residency: by gender and nationality, 2005**

country/region	total	men	women	sex ratio
Vietnamese	57,939	133	57,826 (99.8%)	0.23
Indonesia	9,631	327	9,304 (96.6%)	3.5
Thailand	9,037	3,118	5,919 (65.5%)	52.6
Philippines	3,772	331	3,441 (91.2%)	9.6
Cambodia	2,422	6	2,416 (99.7%)	0.24
other SEA	1,818	797	1,434 (78.8%)	55.6
South Asia	257	214	43	497.7
Japan and Korea	2,948	1,227	1,721	71.3
PRC	112,564	2,688	109,876 (97.6%)	2.45
North America	1,787	1,374	413	332.7
Australia & NZ	295	219	76	288.1
W. Europe	640	563	77	731.2
Others	978	673	305	220.6

Source: Ministry of Interior, ROC, 2005<sup>173</sup>

Table 4 indicates that the cross-border marriages between Taiwan and more economically developed regions, such as North America and Western Europe, male foreign spouses clearly outnumber women. The degree of economic development seems to correspond to sex ratio.<sup>174</sup> This seems to fit the pattern of women's hypergamy, as explained in Chapter 1, however, the hypergamy principle does not apply to marriages between Taiwanese women and Thai and Southeast Asian men. Thai men constitute the highest proportion (32.17 per cent) of all foreign male spouses of Taiwanese nationals residing in Taiwan. This corresponds to the fact that Thai men constitute the majority of the foreign male workforce under the guest (contract) worker policy. From my limited observations in my fieldwork sites, Thai men seem to meet and decide to marry when they come to work in Taiwan and later choose to settle there. One possible explanation is that the majority of Thai men work in the construction and manufacturing industries, and the value attached to their work is higher than the value attached to domestic

<sup>173</sup> The PRC figure includes Hong Kong and Macau citizens, source from Immigration Office, Ministry of Interior, 2006; The figures of the other nationals are from Weekly Statistic Bulletin, Ministry of Interior Affairs, 95:3, 2006, summed up by myself.

<sup>174</sup> The highest sex ratio, however, is among marriages with South Asians. Without existing research and lack of demographic profiles I am not able to speculate about the factors why there are predominantly South Asian men marrying Taiwanese women and residing in Taiwan.

work.<sup>175</sup> Thai-Taiwanese marriages, as well as the marriages between Taiwanese women and Mainland Chinese men, break the traditional patrilocal pattern in Chinese society and pose a challenge to the study of changing interrelations in the patrilocal system, with its associated aspects of economic and social status and gender relations.<sup>176</sup>

### 2.3.3 Age and age gap

According to the *Survey Report of the Living Conditions of Foreign and Mainland Spouses* (2004), the average age of mainland Chinese spouses is 33 and of Southeast Asian spouses 27. Although this statistic is collected at the time of the survey, not at the time of the marriage, it might still be useful to compare it with age distribution of Taiwanese women, as shown in Chart 2.

The majority of Taiwanese women marry within the age span 25-29, with an average marital age of 28 in 2004.<sup>177</sup> The Southeast Asian women in comparison are much younger, with the majority marrying between 20-24 or earlier.<sup>178</sup> The ages of mainland Chinese women are more evenly distributed, centring on the age groups 25-29 and 30-34, with higher proportions in each age group above 35, particularly the group 60-64 and above 65.

The average age of Taiwanese men who marry Southeast Asian and mainland Chinese women is considerably higher than the Taiwanese average. The average marital age of Taiwanese men in 2004 is 33, while the average age of the husbands of mainland Chinese women is 45 and that of Southeast Asian spouses is 39. This shows that as far as age is concerned, Taiwanese men who marry foreign and Chinese brides are likely to belong to the group who has disadvantageous positions in the marriage market. Chart 3 below shows that the peak marital age of Taiwanese men is at the age group 25-29, and the husbands of both foreign and mainland women are mostly in the age group 35-39. It should be noted that there is a higher proportion of men at the age groups above 70 in cross-border marriages, which shows that aged widowed men and veteran soldiers tend to marry foreign and mainland Chinese women, as they would have difficulty marrying Taiwanese women.

As the Taiwanese husbands of cross-borders marriages are older than average Taiwanese husbands and their wives younger, the age gap of cross-border couples is

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<sup>175</sup> See, for example, Ding's work on images of domestic work/ers in Taiwan and China (2002). I will elaborate on the differential perception toward prospective wives and domestic maids and how it affects mate preference later on.

<sup>176</sup> On this aspect, I am indebted to Dr. Rajni Palriwala's comment.

<sup>177</sup> Weekly Statistic Bulletin, Ministry of Interior Affairs, 94:20, 2005, Ministry of Interior, ROC.

<sup>178</sup> Because the age shown in Chart 3 is at the time of survey, it is reasonable to deduct the average years of marriage. The Survey Report shows that 62.7% of SEA spouses were married less than four years.

bigger than that of local Taiwanese marriages. The average gap of local marriages in 2004 is 5 years,<sup>179</sup> and the average age gap of both cross-strait marriages and cross-border marriages is 12 years.<sup>180</sup> In fact, the age gap is considered to be the major problem causing the abnormality and vulnerability of the cross-border marriages in Taiwan. How the problem of the age gap of cross-border marriages is represented in the public discourse will be discussed in Chapter 3; how the couples themselves experience and cope with the age gap will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The figures at the local level provide a more accurate picture: the average marital age of mainland Chinese women in Baihe is 28.96, and that of Taiwanese husbands is 41, with an average age gap of 12 years; Vietnamese women in Baihe married at 22.62 and their Taiwanese husband at 35.92, with an average age gap of 13 years.<sup>181</sup> In Hukou *juancun*, the veteran soldiers marrying mainland Chinese women age on average 75.73, and their wives 46.67, with an average age gap of 29 years.<sup>182</sup>

#### **2.3.4 Socio-economic status: education and occupation**

Sociologically speaking, income, occupation and education attainment are the most common criteria to measure the social-economic status of individuals or groups. In this research I do not draw primarily from quantitative data to measure the socio-economic status, my focus is to place these actors in the kinship network and social relations and to study their power position. Nevertheless, these objective measurements affect their self-perception, their position in the marriage market as well as how they are perceived by the general public. Here are a few indicators.

Charts 4 and 5 show the educational levels of foreign and mainland spouses and their husbands as compared with all Taiwanese. Southeast Asian spouses have the lowest educational attainment, centring at primary school and junior high school. The majority of Taiwanese received education up to senior high school level and the percentages of college and under/post-graduates are higher than that of Southeast Asian and mainland spouses. Mainland Chinese spouses are in the middle, with the peak at the junior high school level.<sup>183</sup> Their Taiwanese spouses, centring at high school, also have

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<sup>179</sup> Same with footnote 26.

<sup>180</sup> From the Survey Report, 2004:41.

<sup>181</sup> Source: Household Registration Office, Baihe, Tainan county, Taiwan, October 2003. Unpublished information. The figure contains all mainland and foreign brides registered in Baihe during 1992 till 2003. The Cambodian women have an even lower average marital age: 21.3; and the biggest average age gap with their husbands: 15.5.

<sup>182</sup> Household survey carried out by myself in 2003.

<sup>183</sup> It should be noted that the very low percentage of college and university level of the mainland Chinese spouses might be a result of the Taiwanese policy that does not recognise the diploma higher than the

a lower educational attainment than average Taiwanese. Taiwanese spouses' percentages at the college and university levels are much lower than average Taiwanese's.

**Table 5 Reported social categories of Taiwanese spouses**

<b>Social categories</b>	Aborigines	veteran soldiers	mentally/ physically handicapped	low-income	others
<b>percentage</b>	0.9%	9.6%	9.0%	2.6%	80.3%

Source: Survey Report 2004 (multiple categorisation possible)

Tables 5 and 6 show that contrary to popular images and assumptions of the policies toward cross-border and cross-strait marriages, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, only a very small percentage of Taiwanese spouses of cross-border marriages are from extremely disadvantaged social backgrounds, i.e. old, sick and unemployed. The accuracy of these data is questionable, as it is answered by the interviewees themselves without verification, and in view of the questions designed (the choices available and assumptions carried with them) it is likely that the interviewees would not acknowledge their lower socio-economic backgrounds and prefer to present themselves as “ordinary” and “normal” by concealing their employment status. In this sense, the survey sheds more light on how the Taiwanese society and particularly policy makers perceive cross-border marriages than that it provides objective measurements.<sup>184</sup>

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high school level from the PRC. Therefore, in reality the educational level of the mainland spouses should be higher than the result of the survey.

<sup>184</sup> The survey is part of the national project Measurement of Taking Care of Foreign and Mainland Spouses by several governmental departments. Details see Chapter 3.

**Table 6: Employment of Taiwanese spouses**

<b>employment conditions</b>	<b>%</b>
unemployed	7.76%
employed	45.72%
temporary jobs	5.99%
stable jobs	39.73%
unknown	0.8%

**Among those who have stable jobs**

agricultural and fishing sectors	11.15%
industrial sectors	44.55%
service sectors	40.75%
public administration sectors	3.55%

Source: Survey Report 2004

**2.3.5 Previous marital experience and co-habiting kin (children and parents)**

Table 7 shows that the majority of Southeast Asian spouses do not have prior marital experience – 97% is married for the first time. This is much higher than the average Taiwanese – out of all Taiwanese married in 2004, 82.1% of the males and 88% of the females were married for the first time.<sup>185</sup> The mainland Chinese spouses, in comparison, have a very high percentage of prior marital experiences, around 20% had been married once or more; among them, nearly 25% of male spouses had married in China before.

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<sup>185</sup> Weekly Statistic Bulletin, Ministry of Interior Affairs, 94:20, 2005.



**Table 7 Marital experiences/status of mainland and foreign spouses in percentages**

	Total number	First marriages	Second marriages	Married three times or more	Unknown/unanswered
Total	175,909	87.6%	11.4%	0.3%	0.7%
SEAsian spouses	82,358	97.0%	2.6%	0.1%	0.3%
Male	4,243	86.5%	12.3%	0.8%	0.5%
Female	78,115	97.6%	2.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Mainland spouses	93,551	79.3%	19.1%	0.5%	1.1%
Male	4,161	73.9%	24.0%	0.3%	1.8%
Female	89,390	79.5%	18.9%	0.5%	1.1%

Source: Survey Report, 2004:26, table 8, rounding differences may occur

With regards to children, the survey in 2003 only studied the children born with Taiwanese spouses and completely ignored children from previous marriages, which, again, reflects the policy-driven assumption that the children of non-Taiwanese citizens are not of the concern of the state. In reality, as I will argue in the following chapters, children from previous marriages are matters of great significance in marital decisions, negotiations of marriage transactions (dowry and brideprice or other obligations) and in legal and living arrangements. Many of the children born of the previous marriages of either Taiwanese or mainland spouses are legally adopted, live with the couples and shoulder or are expected to shoulder the care responsibility for the cross-strait couples. They are entitled to inherit the property and the pension. The survey report shows that 70.8% of Southeast Asian women have children with Taiwanese husbands with the average of 1.5 children. Southeast Asian women married to low-income and handicapped Taiwanese men tend to bear more children (i.e. > 1.5 on average). Only 50% of mainland Chinese women have children with Taiwanese and the average number of children is also 1.5. Thus mainland Chinese women who married veteran soldiers, low-income and handicapped Taiwanese men tend to have a lower (than Southeast Asian) average fertility rate,<sup>186</sup> which can be interpreted as mainland Chinese women having a higher autonomy in their reproductive choices.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>186</sup> Survey Report, 2004:26-27, table 10

<sup>187</sup> For an analysis of fertility behaviour of Southeast Asian brides (excluding mainland brides), see Yang and Schoonheim (2006). The same trend can be observed in South Korea (Kim, 2006).

### 2.3.6 Means of introduction

Although the images of cross-border marriages in Taiwan are largely associated with brokered marriages (or commercially arranged marriages, *maimaihunyin*), the way the couples meet each other is rather diversified. Many couples meet while travelling or via business contacts, which in common perception this would be regarded as a “love marriage”. Nevertheless, it can safely be argued that in Taiwan, the majority of cross-border couples are introduced with a prior motivation of marriage. The 2003 survey report shows that 46.5% of the Southeast Asian spouses and 60.8% of the mainland Chinese spouses are introduced to their Taiwanese husbands by friends and relatives. The percentage of brokered marriages of Southeast Asian spouses is far higher (35.9%) than that of mainland Chinese spouses (only 9.6% said that they went through marriage brokers). The figures of both Southeast Asian and mainland Chinese spouses show that the higher educated and older aged spouses are less likely to use marriage brokerage.<sup>188</sup> My own survey in Baihe shows that 55% of all Vietnamese brides were matched by marriage brokers, 37% were introduced to their future husbands by relatives and friends, and only 7% met their husbands on their own, although it has to be noted that their marriage brokers are quite possibly their relatives and friends. In Chapter 4 I will elaborate on the matchmaking practices and the role of matchmakers in the cross-border marriages and problematise the dichotomous distinctions between a love marriage and a commercially arranged marriage.

### 2.3.7 Ethnic composition and place of origin

Most mainland Chinese brides are of the Han ethnic background with very few exceptions from ethnic minority communities. Their places of origin are rather diverse, with the biggest number from the coastal province Fujian as well as a few inland provinces such as Sichuan and Hunan.<sup>189</sup> Unfortunately, the statistical data available on the bride’s place of origin do not indicate whether they have a rural or an urban *hukou* in China, therefore the information on familial social background and life experiences of the brides prior to marriage could only be gathered in my ethnographic fieldwork. Most Indonesian brides are Chinese of the Hakka ethnic group, and come predominantly from Kalimantan (Hsia, 2002). Only one fourth of all Vietnamese

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<sup>188</sup> Another survey report commissioned by the Mainland Council Affairs in 1999 shows that 53% of all cross-strait couples are introduced by friends and relatives, 39% are “love marriages” and only 7 % have been matched by brokers (Chen, 1999).

<sup>189</sup> One-third of all mainland Chinese spouses come from Fujian province in the period 1992 to August 2003. Source: Immigration Office, National Police Agency, Ministry of Interior, ROC. Unpublished data acquired by myself and the estimation done by myself.

brides are ethnic Chinese,<sup>190</sup> the majority comes from Southern Vietnam and 54% from Ho Chi Min City (Wang, 2001).

As for Taiwanese men, the Hakka ethnic group has a very distinct preference for Hakka women. This applies to both the local marriages and cross-border marriages. A large percentage of brides in Hakka-populated areas in Taiwan are Hakka women from Kalimantan, Indonesia and eastern Guandong, China. In veterans' settlements, the majority of veteran soldiers and second-generation mainlanders prefer mainland Chinese women from their native regions in China. Compared to Hakka, Hokkien Minnan and mainlanders, the percentages of cross-border and cross-strait marriages in the aboriginal communities are rather small. The Hokkien men and families seem to have no clear preference concerning the ethnicity of the prospective brides. On the one hand, some Hokkien families consider that shared language and culture is a key factor for a successful marriage and therefore opt for mainland Chinese women rather than Southeast Asian brides; on the other hand, Vietnamese and Cambodian women are also increasingly popular among Hokkien families. In terms of geographical location, the data available only indicate the administrative county and/or cities where the cross-border couples are registered, it is therefore not possible to identify whether the couples live in industrial or rural areas. Nevertheless, it is established that the areas where the sex ratio is higher, such as veterans' settlements and rural areas, the percentage of cross-border marriages is also higher. This shows that cross-border marriage is, to a certain extent, a response toward marriage squeeze and shortages of marriageable women in the localities. However, not all areas with a high sex ratio and shortage of women embrace cross-border marriages. The areas populated with aborigines have the highest sex ratio in Taiwan,<sup>191</sup> yet they have the lowest percentage of cross-border marriages.

The ethnicity and place of origin of cross-border couples in Taiwan echo the question posed by Faist (2000)<sup>192</sup>: why are there so few people migrating to so few places? Shared ethnicity, language and culture may explain the popularity of mainland Chinese brides, but if ethnicity is a major criterion for mate choice, why are there so many Vietnamese and Cambodians of non-Chinese ethnicities? Equally puzzling, why are there so few Filipina and Thai women? Earlier I have discussed theoretical frameworks developed by several scholars who place marriage migration in the context of the global socio-economic hierarchy and linkages between women's labour migration and marriage migration in the context of trade and capitalist development. It is obvious that their macro-structural analysis has its limits in explaining these

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<sup>190</sup> According to the father's ethnicity.

<sup>191</sup> Wufong town in Hsinchu county, where the majority of the population are aborigines, has a sex ratio as high as 134.4. Source: Ministry of Interior, Taiwan, 2003.

<sup>192</sup> See p. 67.

questions. My research will go a step further to explore the linkage and difference in women's labour migration and marriage migration by applying a meso-level analysis.

#### **2.3.8 The links and differences between domestic labour, sex work and women's marriage migration**

Earlier I mentioned that Taiwanese-Thai marriages have a higher proportion of foreign men than the other Southeast Asian cross-border and cross-strait marriages and Thai men constitute the highest percentage (32.17%) of all foreign male spouses of Taiwanese nationals residing in Taiwan. This corresponds to the fact that Thai men constitute the majority of the foreign male workforce as a result of the guest (contract) worker policy. If we follow the globalisation framework, migrant workers and foreign spouses should share the same peripheral position and are driven by the same push and pull factors of migration. However, the numbers and origins of migrant workers and that of foreign spouses do not correspond in Taiwan, as shown in Table 6.

The majority of migrant domestic workers in Taiwan are Filipina and Indonesian, with an increasing number of Vietnamese women. While the Indonesian migrant workers are predominantly not ethnic Chinese, the Indonesian brides are predominantly ethnic Chinese. It would appear that ethnicity is a key factor in mate choice, and that Taiwanese men prefer ethnic Chinese wives. This suggests that cross-strait marriages should be conceived as marriages within the Chinese diaspora rather than as mail-order brides or cross-cultural marriages. However, ethnic preference cannot explain the growing number of brides of non-Chinese ethnicities from Vietnam and Cambodia. My observation in the fieldwork shows that it is very rare for Taiwanese men to marry foreign women who are already doing domestic work in Taiwan. The favourite destinations for sex tourism for Taiwanese men is Thailand, the Philippines, and in recent years, the PRC. However, fewer Thai and Filipina women marry Taiwanese men.

**Table 8 Number of foreign spouses and foreign migrant workers by sex and nationality**

Nationality	Foreign spouses		Foreign migrant workers	
	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Vietnam	104 (0.2%)	42,731 (99.8%)	11,079 (17.5%)	52,226 (82.5%)
Indonesia	236 (2.2%)	10,426 (97.8%)	6,542 (13.23%)	42,911 (86.77%)
Thailand	2,024 (33.1%)	4,090 (66.9%)	84,408 (82.49%)	17,919 (17.51%)
The Philippines	307 (8%)	3,523 (92%)	23,806 (28.58%)	59,479 (71.42%)
Total (including other nationals)	6,292 (8.4%)	68,159 (91.6)	125,855 (42.18%)	172,537 (57.82%)

Source: Various sources compiled by the author<sup>193</sup>

That is to say, maids and prostitutes seldom become wives, despite ample opportunities for daily contact.<sup>194</sup> When Taiwanese men and families have intention to marry a foreign or mainland Chinese women, they do not look around among the female migrant workers in Taiwan; rather, they go to matchmakers and/or marriage brokers. Contrary to the cases of mail-order brides in Japan, North America and Europe, in Taiwan the marriage market, the domestic labour market and the prostitution market are differentiated.<sup>195</sup>

Why should an unknown “docile, young and beautiful” Vietnamese woman, and not an equally “docile, young and beautiful” Indonesian woman working in the neighbourhood, be a potentially good wife? Apart from the international political economy of gender, there is another influential factor driving women into the cross-border marriage market. Shared culture and language is an advantage. However, the choices made available by brokers/matchmakers are often crucial in mate choice. It is the role of the mediator – the marriage broker and/or matchmaker – that determines, for instance, why an ethnic Chinese Indonesian woman might decide to marry into a Taiwanese family rather than into a more affluent Hong Kong family. The role of matchmakers and marriage broker industry will be elaborated in Chapter 4.

<sup>193</sup> For foreign spouses see: National Police Agency, Ministry of Interior, ROC, December, 2002. On foreign migrant workers: Bureau of Employment & Vocational Training, Executive Yuan, ROC, March 2004. The earlier published data on foreign migrant workers do not indicate gender.

<sup>194</sup> Another possible explanation is that Taiwanese men are not a preferred choice for Filipina and Thai women compared to Japanese, American and European men. However, in view of the large number of Filipina domestic migrant workers in Taiwan, the small number of Filipina brides confirms the differentiation between the marriage market and the labour market.

<sup>195</sup> The differentiation of marriage market and labour market and the marriage brokerage practices in South Korea, however, shares a striking similarity with Taiwan. Whether it is due to the same cultural perception of mate choice or whether it is due to the development of marriage brokerage industry in East Asia, can only be answered by further investigations.

## **2.4. Motivations for cross-border marriage**

Earlier in this Chapter I have sketched some macro-structural factors of cross-strait migration. In this section I will discuss social-psychological motivations, which are shaped by both cultural norms and structural constraints. The emphasis on the individual motivations, in the context of social relations and positions, is a result of my theoretical choice emphasising people's capacity of taking actions and developing strategies amid macro socio-economic and demographic factors. Social-psychological motivations point to how life-course factors such as age and previous marital and child rearing experiences, as compared to other demographic factors such as education, class, and place of origins, play a role in marital and migratory experiences.

### **2.4.1 Why marriage and/or remarriage?**

In Chapter 1 I have explained that universality is the major character of Chinese marriage, which implies that when the external conditions permit, marriage is a necessity rather than an option, and for most of Chinese and Taiwanese men and women, marriage before a certain age is a natural part of life-course. Though there is a growing trend of late marriage and choice of singlehood among educated, urban, young and middle-aged women both in Taiwan and China, the social pressure of marriage is immense and the marital status is intrinsically linked with personhood, especially for women.

For mainland Chinese women, two distinctive groups based on age and prior marital experiences possess very different attitudes and approaches towards their marital and migration decisions. For younger woman without prior marriage experience, the decision of or pressure into marriage normally comes first, and the migration choice comes later with the process of mate choice. Their primary motivation for marriage is to find a good husband who can offer them welfare and security, both materially and emotionally for themselves and for their future children. For the older, widowed or divorced women, the opportunities offered by migration come first in the chain of decisions and marriage then is often the means to migration. They also look for reliable men who are willing to offer security and economic support to them and their children from previous marriage(s), however, if the husbands are not economically well-off, they are prepared to work hard and support themselves and their children. In the latter case, the job opportunities and income at the migration destination is the most important consideration. Some of the widowed or divorced women only thought about remarriage after their children grew up and

established their own families. Remarriage can offer a degree of autonomy and even a sense of adventure.

*My sons all grew up and went away to do business. My youngest daughter is now 16 and she also left home to Shenzhen to work in a beauty parlour. They are very good to me and always send money home. I know they will take care of me when I am old, but it is different when I earn money and get to keep it for myself. I don't want to rely on them. I am still young and I can work. And I have been staying in this town for my whole life, doing any shitty [mainly agricultural] work to death to raise my children. How it is time for me to see the world! I am not sure my [Taiwanese] husband will be good but I believe that a woman at my age can manage and make the best of it!*<sup>196</sup>

For divorced and widowed women with younger, school-age children, the well-being of the children is the primary concern.

*After the divorce my heart was broken and I did not intend to marry again. I don't trust men anymore. I worked in the market selling some food products. Life was tough but I managed. One day he [Taiwanese husband, a veteran soldier] approached me and asked whether I would like to take care of him as a nanny (baomu). He promised to take care of my son. At that time my son was about to go to high school. He is such a smart boy. I knew that with my meagre money I earned by selling [food] in the market I would not be able to afford his education. I want the best for him.....because he [the son] is the only one I can depend upon. So I moved in with him in Sichuan and take care of him. After three years we got married.*<sup>197</sup>

Taiwanese men's marital decisions are also influenced by life-course and previous marital experiences. A young man is often pressured into marriage as it is considered to be his parents' obligation to find him a wife. The primary motivation for arranging him a good marriage is for carrying on the family lineage, which as explained in Chapter 1, is a justification of his personhood and membership in the ancestral continuum.

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<sup>196</sup> Interview with Fang, Humei village, Fuqing town, Fujian province, January 2004. Fang is a widow aged early 50s and with four children. Bracketed words added by myself.

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Chen, Hukou *juancun*, June 2003. Chen is a divorcee aged at mid-40s and married to a veteran soldier aged 78. Chen has a son from the previous marriage now living in Sichuan, China, studying in an expensive private boarding school. In China, *baomu* refers to both carers of both children and aged people.

*When I was younger [before mid-30s] I never wanted to get married. I am the youngest son and my brother was already married and had sons, so I don't feel pressure of carrying on the family line. I had many girl friends, you know, I was very popular..... Then four years ago my father became very ill and passed away quickly. At his deathbed he said to me that the only thing he worried was that I had no aim in my life and I did know what I wanted to do. He said that marriage would do me good. After my father passed away, I felt that I suddenly had grown up. I wanted to settle down and build a family and then have a career [chengjia liyie]. I decided to get married not for my parents but for myself. I wanted to turn into a mature and responsible man.*<sup>198</sup>

Men of middle age who have previous marital experiences and younger children often remarry to find someone to raise the children and care for aged parents. The other members of the family might object to the marriage because bringing in a new woman may cause a threat to the family unity and power dynamics, or they might encourage it because there is a need for bringing in a woman to shoulder the care responsibility.<sup>199</sup> In this case the sexual gratification from and the care labour of the brides, not procreation and continuation of the family lineage, is the primary motivation.

For men of older age, particularly for veteran soldiers who were never married before, the major motivation for marriage is to find a “companion for old-age” (*zhouge laoban* 找個老伴). The companionship in this case involves explicitly the emotional support, which also implies the actual physical care (not financial) and more implicitly, sexual pleasure. Though finding a companion for mutual care at old age is widely accepted and justified in Taiwanese society, the veteran soldiers’ motivation for companionship is heavily scrutinised and morally condemned as a way of exploiting women and having a carer for free, in a veteran’s own word, “*We need someone to care for us at old age. It is cheaper and easier to marry a mainland/foreign wife than hiring a maid. However, it all depends on luck to find someone who is willing to care for us. It is not easy.*”<sup>200</sup> The story of Chen<sup>201</sup> mentioned earlier also shows that the veterans are rather explicit about their marital

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<sup>198</sup> Interview with Gan, Hukou county, May 2003. Gan is a Hakka man. After the death of his father, at age late 30, Gan married a mainland Chinese woman from Hainan. After he decided to marry he joined a matchmaking tour and met his wife there. They had been married for three years and had two young children.

<sup>199</sup> See discussion in Chapter 1, 1.1.3.

<sup>200</sup> Interview with Gan, head of Zhongxin village, Hukou town, July 2003. Stigmas on old veterans and their cross-strait marriages will be discussed in Chapter 3 and 5.

<sup>201</sup> See footnote 197.



intention of finding someone to care for them and not differentiating the roles of nanny and wife.

In summary, for both men and women, care and security for themselves and for their children is the primary motivation for marriage or remarriage. Shaped by cultural perceptions, women are expected to give care physically and emotionally, while men are expected to receive emotional and physical care while providing economic support, which is linked to the inter-generational and reciprocal *yang* and gender division of *yang* as discussed in Chapter 1. Based on this principle, men and women of different age and with or without prior marital experiences develop different prioritised concerns and strategies, depending on the economic resource available. Cross-border marriages are one of the many strategies they adopt to ensure the fulfilment for care and security.

#### **2.4.2 Why leaving home and marrying abroad?**

Having discussed marital motivations, the next question is, *why crossing the borders in order to marry*? This can be answered by two sub-questions: Why leaving home and why going to Taiwan? Though the push and pull factors often work together to prompt people's migration decisions, they can also work independently. Women may decide to leave home due to dissatisfaction and constraints experienced in the home communities without having a clear idea where to move to. In this case the timely encounter with a prospective Taiwanese man or a matchmaker may play a crucial role in the decision. The mate choice and marital decision are often attributed to fate (*yuenfen*).<sup>202</sup>

As explained in the earlier section, many young women have left home to work in the towns and cities as *dagongmei* and experienced relative (economic and sexual) autonomy and urban life-style. When *dagongmei* grow older, the "marriageable age" approaches or passes and social pressure of marriage increases.<sup>203</sup> Those who work in low-skilled, labour intensive industries and the service sector start to experience the limits of future job prospects in the cities. Most of them do not want to return to and settle down in their rural home town in view of the disadvantages of rural *hukou* and economic opportunities and life-style in rural areas. Except for those who have higher education and work in managerial positions, the only chance of *dagongmei* to obtain an urban *hukou* is by marrying an urban man, which is probably more difficult than marrying abroad. This dissatisfaction is caused by both the

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<sup>202</sup> For a discussion of fate (*yuenfen*) in marital decisions, see Chapter 1, 1.4.1.

<sup>203</sup> The perception of universal marriage and desirability of women in the marriage market in China, see Chapter 1, 1.1.4 and 1.2.3.

growing stratification between the periphery and the core within China, and the embedded cultural norm of hypergamy.

The decision of leaving home can also be a result of dissatisfaction toward men and sexual division of labour in the home community, *“I despise the men in my hometown. They are so lazy. They just sit there the whole day gambling the money away. They are promiscuous, and never take care of their family. When I worked in the hotel [prior to marriage] the manager liked me. He is good-looking and quite rich. But I don’t trust him. Men working in this business know how to say sweet words but they cheat on you at your back.”*<sup>204</sup> Another mainland bride told me that she did not like the men in her hometown because they are chauvinistic and never share household chores. When I asked her whether she was aware that Taiwanese men were also known to be chauvinistic and did not do household chores, she said, *“Well, I heard it before. But I thought at least he looks more reliable and decent, and maybe I can teach him to do it [household work].”*<sup>205</sup> The discontent with the men/families of the same village has been found in exogamous societies to justify women’s out-marriage, which is not unique to today’s China.

The dissatisfaction and constraints experienced in the home communities can be caused by personal circumstances in the context of social sanction in the kin group and the community. For instance, women who were divorced or who broke up with their boyfriend would escape from their kin and start afresh in a new environment.<sup>206</sup> Two women, one from Qingdao in Northern China and one from Hainan island in the South, respectively told me that they left home because they could not stand the corruption and harassment of the local police whom they had trouble with, if they would continue to stay at the home their family business would suffer from it.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Interview with Aping, February 2004, Baihe. Aping is from Quonghai city in Hainan province. She had a vocational school degree and worked as a hotel manager in Guangdong, Haikou and Quonghai. Although her career went well, she found it difficult to find a man who was trust-worthy and could match her education and income in China as a potential husband. She then developed an idea of marrying an overseas Chinese. By chance she joined a matchmaking meeting where she met Su from Baihe and decided to marry right away. At the time of marriage Aping aged 27 and Su aged 37. Aping’s story and life experiences will appear in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

<sup>205</sup> Interview with Jin and Yan, Baihe, February 2004.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Xinxin in Chuanghua, April 2004. Xinxin is from a middle-class family in Suzhou city. She graduated from a famous university and held a university degree in business. After graduating from university, she worked in a textile trading company in Suzhou, where she met her husband. Xinxin’s husband is a wealthy Taiwanese businessman whose family runs a medium-size textile enterprise with several factories both in Taiwan and China. Soon after they met, Xinxin’s husband, age 29 at that time, proposed to Xinxin, age 25. Xinxin’s parents objected to this marriage. At the time of my interview, she was married for nine years and had two children. She lives with her husband’s extended family in a rural locality in Chuanghua county. Xinxin’s story and life experiences will appear in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Liu, Taipei, May 2002; Interview with Yan, Baihe, February 2004.

### 2.4.3 Why going to Taiwan? Aspirations towards migratory destination

Most of the brides knew very little about Taiwan. They tend to paint a rosy picture of their migratory destination and opportunities they have when they venture into the unknown. Taiwan, for many brides, represents modernity, prosperity and freedom, as represented in the Taiwanese soap operas which are very popular in China. Their imagination of Taiwan and desire to be part of it is not much different from their imagination of the life style in the West and in major Chinese cities (Jacka and Gaetano, 2004; Constable, 2005).

Aping recalled why she was convinced to choose a man from Taiwan:

*That was the second time I went for the matchmaking meeting [when she met her husband]. A month ago I was matched to a Singaporean man [via telephone and pictures]. He was a bit old, but he seemed to be fine. My mother had visited Singapore once. She liked the clean and broad streets and shopping malls there. Both she and I thought that it would be nice to marry a Singaporean. This Singaporean man seemed to like me, but suddenly he stopped contacting me. I don't know why. Then, I met this matchmaker and she persuaded me to meet the Taiwanese men's matchmaking meeting. I thought, well, if I cannot go to Singapore, Taiwan is also ok. Little did I know that Baihe is even poorer and smaller than my hometown!"<sup>208</sup>*

Xinxin had a similar experience:

*On the way home from the airport, when he [my husband] drove [the car] out of the city and further and further into the countryside, my heart sank..... He told me that he did not live in the big city, but I did not expect that it was this remote and isolated. I thought that Taiwan was modern and full of tall buildings and busy streets. I am a city girl. How was I going to survive in the countryside?"<sup>209</sup>*

Some other brides have more information about Taiwan, mainly from their sisters and friends who had married to Taiwanese men earlier. Women who enter the cross-strait marriages are often conscious of the risks involved. The existing social ties in the destination country play a crucial role in their decision-making, for they know that if something goes wrong they can always find support there.

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<sup>208</sup> Same as footnote 204.

<sup>209</sup> Same as footnote 206.

## 2.5. Concluding remark: why cross-border marriages?

In this chapter I attempt to provide some explanations of why Chinese women opt to marry Taiwanese men by exploring the push factors, both structural and individual. I argue that Chinese women's marital decision has to be placed in the contexts of the internal migration policy, the rural-urban divide, the experiences of internal labour migration and the limitations they experience in their life-course. Similar to Piper's findings, I discover that poverty alone is not to be singled out as the motivating factor for migration (1999). Rarely does the potential bride marry because she or her family is in need of cash; rather it is for overall betterment of life.<sup>210</sup> The term "betterment" implies dissatisfaction or limitation experienced in the home country/region as well as the aspiration or imagination toward the migratory destination, which may be caused by multiple aspects of life other than seeking economic opportunity. The majority of mainland Chinese brides in Taiwan have experiences of internal labour migration to urban areas,<sup>211</sup> and many have earned a medium income and are financially independent. Many perceive the cross-border marriage migration experience as an extension of their earlier experience of internal migration. A general feeling of a lack of prospects on the labour market and life opportunities that limits women at a certain age, combined with the cultural norm of hypergamy, drives these independent women to move into an uncertain and risky world.

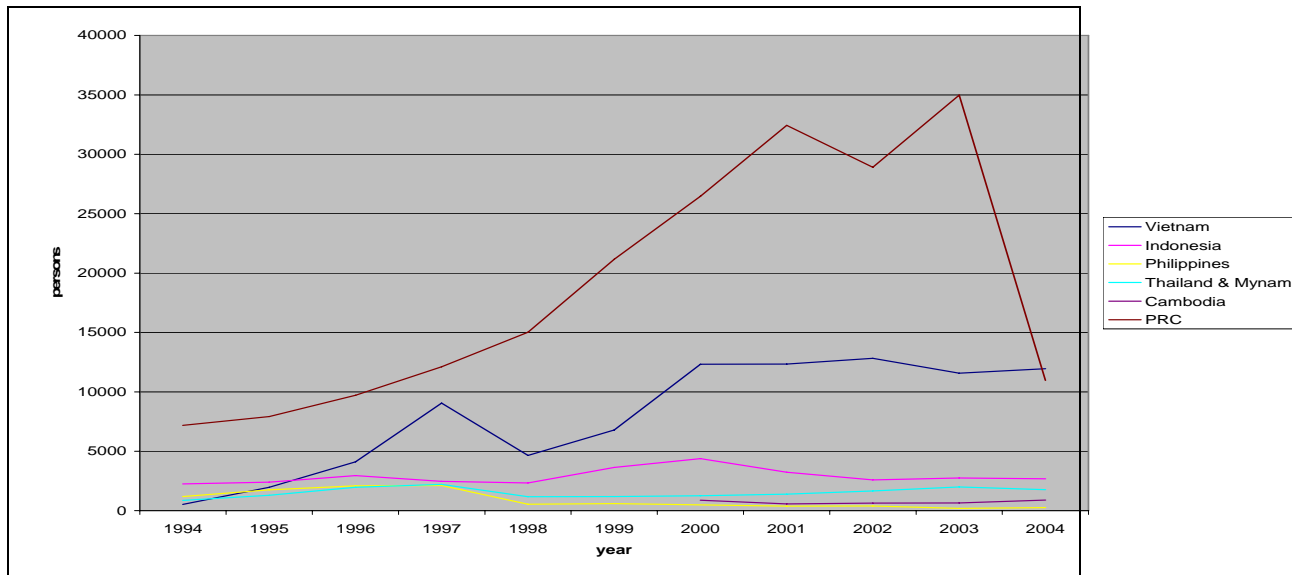
Having addressed the question of push and pull factors and marital motivations, the next question needs to be asked is, why Taiwan, and how to get there? In Chapter 3 I will analyse the political, economic and social interactions between Taiwan and China and study the factors that contribute to or discourage cross-strait marriages, as well as the development of the policies regulating cross-border marriages. In Chapter 4 I will follow the third wave of migration scholarship and explore the meso-linkage of marriage migration, that is the matchmaking operations. By looking at the meso-link I will address the question of commodification and trade marriage.

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<sup>210</sup> I am inspired by Delia Davin to use the term "betterment" instead of "long-term economic welfare" (2006).

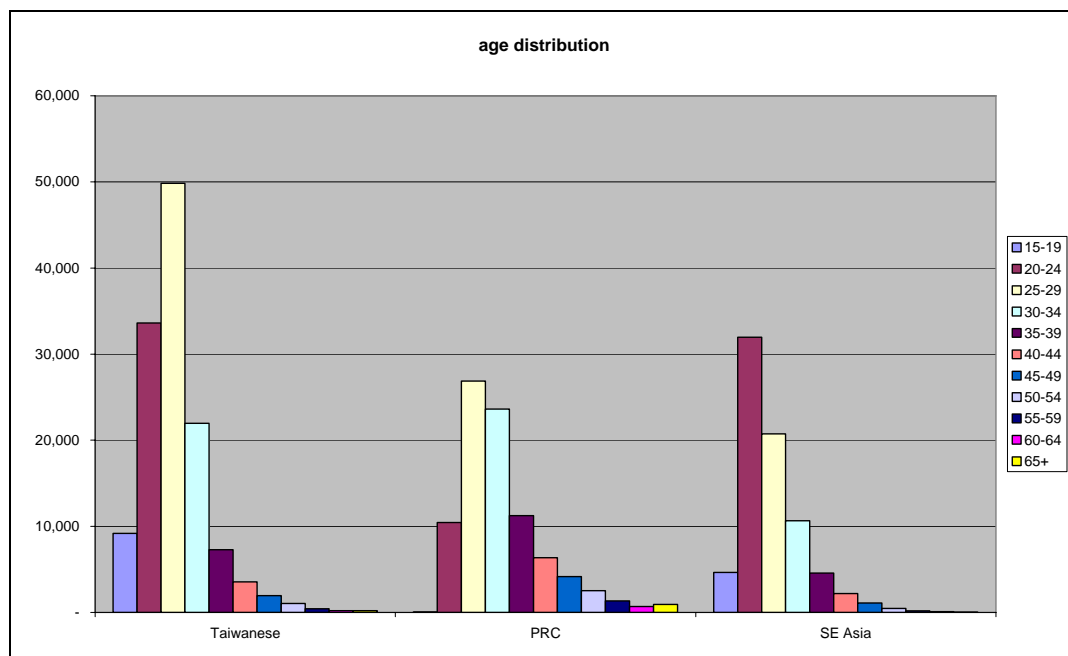
<sup>211</sup> According to my fieldwork. Han's research on Mainland brides shares the same observation (2002).

**Chart 1 Number of cross-border marriages with Southeast Asian and PRC nationals in Taiwan: according to nationality**



Source: same as Table 3

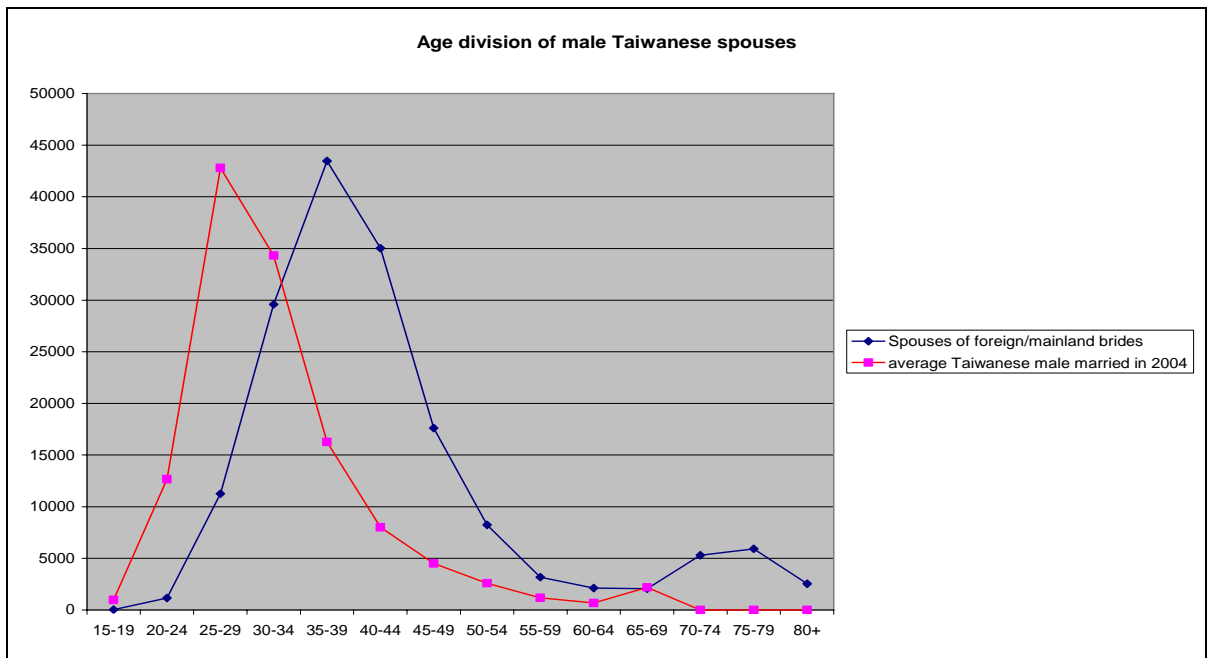
**Chart 2 Age distribution of foreign and mainland Chinese female spouses**



Source: Ministry of Interior, ROC, 2004<sup>212</sup>

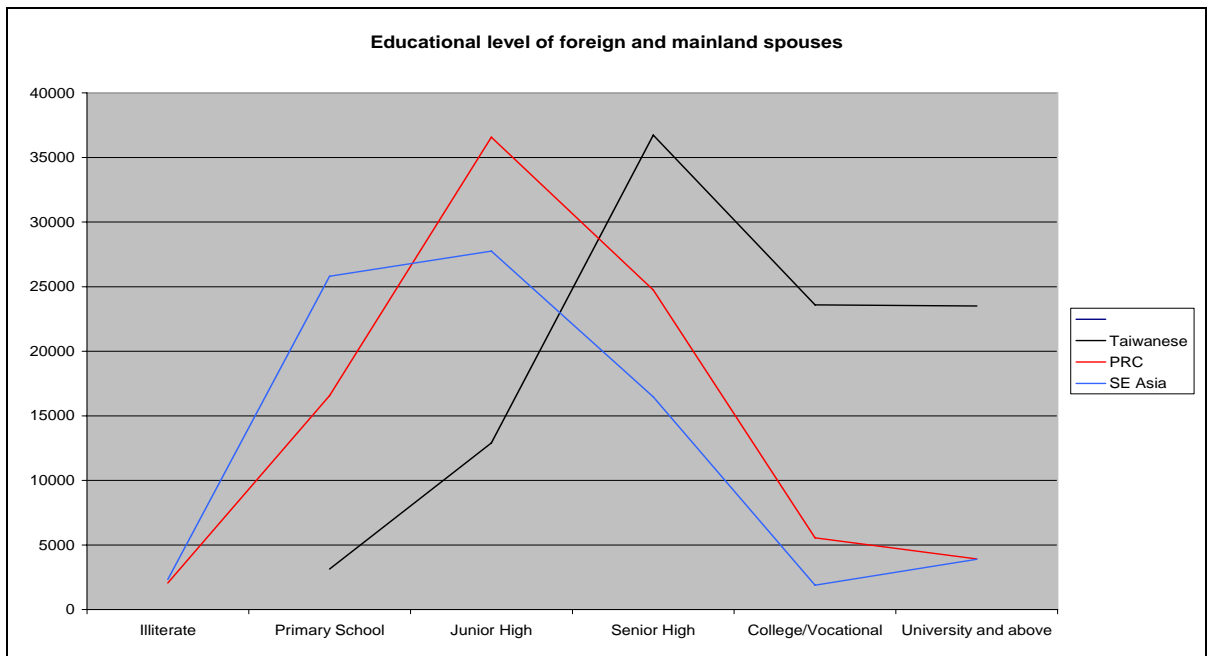
<sup>212</sup> The statistics of Southeast Asian spouses and mainland spouses are from the *Survey report of the living conditions of foreign and mainland spouses*, June, 2004. See footnote 14. The Taiwanese figure is used here as a reference to the age structure of Southeast Asian and mainland Chinese spouses, taken from the Taiwanese people married in the year 2004 alone. Source: ROC Statistic year book, 2004, Ministry of Interior.

**Chart 3 Age distribution of Taiwanese men in cross-border marriages**



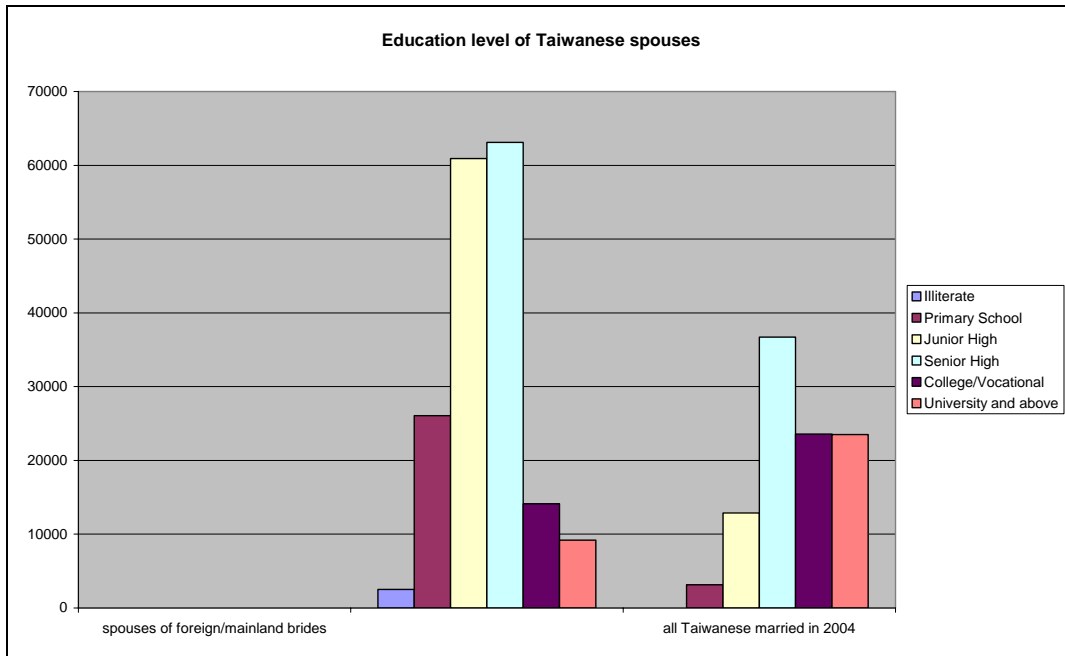
Source: same as chart 2

**Chart 4 Education level of foreign and mainland Chinese spouses**



Source: same as Chart 2

**Chart 5 Education level of Taiwanese spouses**



Figures include both men and women. Source: same as Chart 2

### Chapter 3 Popular discourse and politics of cross-strait marriages in Taiwan

*“Why does the Taiwanese government only care about Taiwanese businessmen and never care about us?”*

*“Why do the Taiwanese media only report that dalumei love money, and never report that we have no friends and relatives when we marry in over here?”*

*Ms. Zhang and Ms. Yin*<sup>213</sup>

#### 3.1 Introduction

By the time I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork in 2003 and 2004, a particular kind of image of mainland brides, of being greedy and morally questionable, had become dominant in Taiwan. However, as this chapter will show, the public opinion was less hostile toward mainland brides when Taiwanese society first received mainland women in the 1990s, and the media representation of cross-strait marriages contained more diverse and positive images. Where does the negative stereotype of greedy and sexually immoral women come from? The period between early 1990 and 2004 marks a drastic change in Taiwan’s political scene in terms of democratisation, regime change, changing and polarised national identities. This chapter examines whether and how these political developments and cross-strait relations influence the public discourse on cross-strait marriages and the images of mainland brides.

The central question of this thesis is to study what kinds of border lines that divide the we-group (Taiwanese) and the they-group (mainland brides).<sup>214</sup> This chapter focuses on the border line in the policies and media representation. What is the nature of this border? Is it based on national identity, ethnicity, cultural difference, social positions or gender roles? Or a combination of all above? I will analyse the policies regulating cross-strait marriages as well as the image of cross-strait marriages and mainland brides represented in the mainstream newspapers in Taiwan. I divide the development in four periods based on main policy orientations, namely, the policy regulating cross-strait marriages. The periods according to the policy orientations somehow correspond to the change of the direction of the mainland policy in Taiwan. These four periods and their policy orientations can be schematized in Table 9.

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<sup>213</sup> Quotations in a news article entitled “*Mainland Brides Do Not Adopt to Life Well; Miss the Time When They Were Unmarried*”, written by a journalist who interviewed two mainland brides Ms. Zhang and Ms. Yin, Jan.15, 1999, the *United Daily*, p. 13. English translation by the author.

Lack of friends and relatives (wuqinwugu 無親無故); Marry in over here [to Taiwan] (jiaguolai 嫁過來). I adopt a literal translation to imply that in the patrilocal system a woman does not only marry a man but is also being uprooted and moves into a new place and new kinship.

<sup>214</sup> See Introduction, p. 3-4 (Schutz, 1972; Bauman, 1990).



**Table 9 Summary of orientations of policy governing cross-strait marriages**

Period	Cross-strait Politics and domestic politics	Policy orientation	Key concerns and issues	Dominant images of Mainland spouses
Pre-1992	From stand-off to relaxation; Chinese nationalism	No contact, illegal contact; legalization	<u>National security</u> Smuggling; bogus marriages	Romance. Victims of poverty, communism and smuggling
1992-1996	From political optimism to divergence and economic interdependence; Birth of Taiwanese nationalism	From resistance to acceptance	<u>National and social security</u> Residential status and inheritance	Taiwanese wives and daughters-in-law
1996-1999	Growing Taiwanese nationalism; polarized ethnic division and national identities	From acceptance to assimilation	<u>Population quality</u> Rights to work and welfare provisions	Beneficiary of Taiwan's wealth and welfare resources; cheap labour; victims
2000-	Political hostility; growing Taiwanese nationalism	Immigration control and contained citizenship	<u>Immigration screening</u> Bogus marriage; sex work	Prostitutes, spies, problematic wives and mothers

The policy governing cross-strait marriages in Taiwan is the Act Governing Relations between Peoples of the Taiwan area and the Mainland Area (AGRPTM), which has undergone ten revisions between 1992 and 2003, practically every year. This act regulates all aspects of interactions between citizens of the ROC and that of the PRC. I will focus on the articles related to cross-strait marriages and its by-laws. I draw on the record of debates and discussion in the process of the making and revision of the in the gazette of the Legislative Yuan, *Lifayuan gongbao* (立法院公報), as well as statements and reports of political leaders and various government offices. In view that the making of these policies has been driven by pressure from civil society, I also study news reports in mainstream newspapers.<sup>215</sup> They are supplemented by interviews with several organised groups of cross-strait couples and my participant observation in their activities and demonstrations.

### **3.1.1 Working definitions of key concepts: nationalism, citizenship and social exclusion**

When I develop this scheme (Table 9) I first look at the policy governing cross-strait marriages itself and consciously leave aside the political events in cross-strait interaction and domestic politics. The reason for doing so is to test whether these political developments have direct influences on the policy and image-shaping. The result is a striking correlation between political regime change (presidential elections) and the shift of policy orientations. This shows that the national identities and nationalism indeed have direct influence on the policies governing and images of cross-strait marriages. In contrast, the policies regulating other cross-border marriages (between Taiwanese and Southeast spouses) and migrant workers are not directly affected by the regime change. I therefore choose the concepts of nationalism, citizenship and social exclusion in my analysis.

Nationalism is a highly contested and fluid concept. Here I adopt a working definition of nationalism as a political movement or a collective sentiment that believes that a nation has the right to constitute an independent political entity, and that the political boundaries of this entity are congruent with cultural boundaries (Gellner, 1986). It holds that the members of this political community have a degree of homogeneity that differentiates them from the non-members. The commonness can be defined in terms of ethnicity, shared history and memory, culture in terms of

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<sup>215</sup> List of laws, regulations and official statements consulted, see Appendix 2. The textual data of media representation come from news reports, columns and editorials of major mainstream newspapers in Taiwan as well as features in popular magazines and journals. The newspapers include the *China Times*, *United Daily*, *Central News Daily*, *Independence Evening Post*, and the *Liberty Times*.

language and customs, religion, or a common destiny (Anderson, 1993; Wachman, 1994; Eriksen, 1995).

It is argued that nationalism is a distinctive and a very powerful way of categorizing people that is different from other primordial forms of social organisations such as kin groups, religion and local communities. It is distinctive because it no longer relies on the close contacts of its members, but on abstract ideals and symbols as well as legal and social systems at a very large scale, and demands for individual equality and civil rights. In this community the state is given a mandate to maintain a social order and to define who has membership and who is excluded from it. Arbitrary measures and at times violence are justified to uphold a degree of social cohesion (Eriksen, 1995; Wang, Fu-chang, 2003). Another characteristic of a national community as different from other social organisations is that it often associated with a physical border and relies on the willingness of its members to cooperate and their ambition of exclusive self-rule (Wachman, 1994: 25). Gellner argues that a nation is a primary form of social organisation that has replaced the older, primordial groups, while other scholars are in the view that there exists a degree of continuity and co-existence between these primordial groups and a nation.<sup>216</sup>

As it is often difficult to articulate why and how this group of people belong together based on abstract principles, the criteria of membership are often defined by “what is not” rather than “what is” and it often requires symbols and rituals to call for an emotional affinity and sense of belonging of its members. Gellner therefore claims that “nationalism proceeds nation” (1983, quoted by Wachman, 1994:24) and Anderson calls a nation an imagined community (1993). Various forms of nationalisms demand different criteria of membership and principles of mobilisation. To name a few, ethnic nationalism (or ethnonationalism) defines the nation along the line of ethnicity and shared ancestry. The membership of the nation is therefore hereditary, often along the patrilineal line. The political legitimacy of the state is derived from maintaining the ethnic purity and its association with the ancestry by asserting itself as the carrier of lineage or as representatives of the “homeland”. Cultural nationalism defines the nation by a shared culture, manifested in the forms of language, customs, religion and history. In contrast to ethnic nationalism, the membership of the nation in cultural nationalism is neither entirely voluntary nor biological; it can be acquired by learning and assimilation processes. In cultural nationalism the state maintains its political legitimacy by preserving the cultural heritage and highlighting a glorious past, as well as by transmitting the knowledge

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<sup>216</sup> Anthony Smith (1986) claims that nationalism is rooted in earlier ethnic communities, though the means that the state employs to reinforce the symbols are different from the one of earlier communities. Anderson (1993) considers that nationalism share more similarity with religion and kinship rather than with modern ideologies such as liberalism and socialism.

and memories of the cultural heritage through education (Townsend, 1996). Civic nationalism regards its members as individual citizens who are willingly and voluntarily participating in the community based on democratic rules. The state gains its legitimacy because it is given mandate to carry out the will of the people. In contrast to cultural nationalism, civic nationalism emphasises a common destiny or future and solidarity among its members (Eriksen, 1995). These forms of nationalisms can be observed in today's modern nations either as a distinctive pattern or as a combination. For instance, it is argued that modern Chinese nationalism is a combination of ethnic nationalism and cultural nationalism, in that on the one hand it regards the majority of Chinese as descendents of a common ancestry, and on the other hand it emphasizes the uniqueness of China's history and civilisation, although the trace of the republican ideas of individual citizenry and the socialist ideal of organising the society along the class line are still discernible (Townsend, 1996; Fitzgerald, 1996).

It is in the context of nationalism that I use two interlinked concepts: citizenship and social exclusion. The concept of citizenship has travelled far and has been used rather differently and is contested by scholars in the fields of political science, migration studies and gender studies. Here I define citizenship in a narrowed sense as the membership to a national community, and citizens as the bearer of rights and entitlement as defined by the nation-state. In this chapter citizenship is seen as a manifestation rather than a pre-condition of nationalism. Similarly, I adopt a narrow definition of social exclusion as the "denial or non-realisation of the civil, political and social rights of citizenship" in this chapter (Walker and Walker, 1997:8), though in Chapter 4 and 5 I discuss other forms of social exclusion that is not visible in the public sphere. As I am concerned with the question how mainland brides are accepted or excluded in the political and social life in Taiwan, I am interested in whether and under what conditions the existing population and political actors in Taiwan consider mainland Chinese immigrants in Taiwan as a member of Taiwanese society. The rights and entitlements that mainland Chinese brides enjoy are used as indicators of their membership articulated in the policies and public debates.

In migration studies and studies of global changes, the concept of citizenship has been increasingly applied to refer to universal human rights outside the scope of nation-state (Sassen, 2005; Castles and Davidson, 2000). Other than the influential categories of civil, political and social/economic citizenship proposed by T. H. Marshall (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992),<sup>217</sup> the concept is being extended to

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<sup>217</sup> Marshall's concept of citizenship was developed in the context of the formation of the welfare states in the post-war (WWII) Europe and within the framework of the modern nation-states. For an overview of the historical development of the concept since the ancient civilization and their philosophical basis, see, for instance, Castles and Davidson (2000).

describe the cultural identities and belongings of migrants and ethnic minorities within a nation (Castles and Davidson, 2000).<sup>218</sup> However, in this thesis I will not address the aspect of cultural identity and the collective actions undertaken by the mainland brides and cross-strait families in order to assert or claim their rights. In other words, I will focus on how the citizenship of mainland brides is defined, which aspects of rights and entitlements are granted to them and which are not, and how these decisions are justified

Despite the usefulness of Marshall's treatment of citizenship as right-bearing and his categorisation of citizenship in civic, political and socio-economic rights, I will not adopt his widely accepted definition of citizenship as "full and equal membership in a political community" (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992: 50-51). One of the major critiques of Marshall's idea is its projecting a universal paradigm and ignoring the historical specificity and variations in different countries (Chhachhi, 2004). For instance, the political rights in many nations have only been expanded to women and ethnic minority until very recently, and up to now many still do not enjoy full social and economic rights. For migrants and immigrants, the political rights do not always exist before social-economic rights (Castles and Davidson, 2000). Civil rights refer to the right to be treated equally by the law, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and to be protected from discrimination based on gender, origins and race (Castles and Davidson, 2000:105-6). Political rights refer to the rights to vote and to stand for offices of government, freedom of association and freedom of information (ibid: 108). Social rights include the right to work, equal opportunities in education and employment, entitlement to health services and welfare benefits (ibid: 110).

Citizenship based on membership of a nation inevitably differentiates who is "in" and who is "out", and who is entitled to what aspects of rights and who is not (Kapur, 2006). This leads to another concept, social exclusion, which is defined as "a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes" (Madanipour et.al, 1998:22, quoted by Byrne, 2005:2). Another side of the coin of social exclusion is social inclusion – to include the initially excluded groups. Citizenship is not a set of static rights, or a status which is given and unchanging. The inclusion and exclusion is often a process (Molyneux and Razavi, 2002; Chhachhi, 2004) that not only involves

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<sup>218</sup> Some scholars propose to differentiate active and passive citizenship (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Chhachhi, 2004). The active citizenship often involves identity and the sense of belonging, either as an assertion of being a member or as a distinctive group among the larger community (Castles and Davidson, 2000; Lister, 2003).

the state but also other social actors. The concept of social exclusion allows me to study how social actors other than the state view cross-strait marriages and develop the images of mainland brides. I will focus on the process of how the criteria of inclusion and exclusion have changed in the four periods mentioned above (Table 9). In other words, how do mainland brides “become citizens” or will they never gain full citizenship as full members of the Taiwanese community.

### **3.1.2 Chinese nationalism and ethnic boundaries in Taiwan**

Wachman discerns two forms of nationalism in Taiwan in the post 1945 political development: Chinese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism. Chinese nationalism is instigated by the Nationalist party (Kuomintang, KMT) after retreating to Taiwan from the mainland, which asserted itself as the guardian of Chinese (Han) culture.<sup>219</sup> The basis of Chinese nationalism is restoration of a glorious past and Chinese civilisation and unification of mainland and Taiwan. Taiwanese nationalism, on the other hand, is a movement geared toward building a nation and in the making in the post-authoritarian era after the late 1980s (Wachman, 1994:26-27). Both forms of nationalism characterise themselves by defining who the nation and its people are not. For the Chinese nationalism it is against the Communist regime in China; and Taiwanese nationalism is against the KMT regime and its Chinese nationalism. For both nationalisms, the People’s Republic of China and mainland Chinese are defined as “the other” but in different ways. Although democratization marks a clear cut in the rise of Taiwanese nationalism, it is too simplistic to argue that these two nationalisms are creation of the ruling political regimes, Chinese nationalism by the KMT and Taiwanese nationalism by the current ruling party Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

The origins of KMT nationalism in Taiwan can be traced back to the Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s nationalism (minzuzhuyi) as part of his “Three Principles of the People” (sanminzhuyi). Although Sun abandoned the idea of “racial nationalism” right after the revolution of 1911 and advocated for “five races under one union” (wuzhu gonghe 五族共和), his earlier discourse of race as lineage as well as the discourse of race as nation seem to be taken by the KMT.<sup>220</sup> When the KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949,

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<sup>219</sup> The classification of these two nationalisms is somehow oversimplified as these two nationalisms did not develop at the same time and the current of Taiwanese nationalist sentiments developed during the Japanese colonial period.

<sup>220</sup> Sun’s nationalism, which is influential to republican intellectuals but also highly contested in the KMT, is often reduced to racial nationalism in which Chinese nation is considered a biological entity composed primarily of Han descendents, and other ethnic minority groups can be assimilated. This narrow view is not only adopted by the KMT regime but also misunderstood by several scholars (Townsend, 1996; Dikotter, 1992: 123-5).

it justified its rule by building Taiwan into a model province for China's modernisation. Later in the 1960s, it started to justify its political legitimacy by claiming to be the rightful descendents of the Chinese race as well as asserting cultural legitimacy as the defender and reviver of Chinese culture. On the one hand the KMT regime portrayed the Communists as "Communist Bandits" (gongfei 共匪) who not only occupied the Motherland by deceptive means but also destroyed the Chinese cultural heritage and traditions, hence the KMT mandated itself a sacred mission of rescuing the people on the mainland from political suppression, poverty, and cultural deprivation. This discourse was heavily embedded in the educational system and everyday life. As a result the Taiwanese generally regarded the Mainland Chinese as economically and culturally backward and as victims of a suppressive political and social system (Wachman, 1994; Tsai and Yu, 2001). On the other hand, the KMT reinforced dominance of Chinese history and culture by unifying languages (Mandarin) and educational curricula, and employing rituals and symbols to generate feelings of patriotism. The means and process of sinicisation have been well documented and analysed by scholars (see, for instance, Chun, 1996; Hsiao, 2000). In this chapter I am more concerned with how these measures create boundaries between ethnic groups who develop polarizing identities and what its impact on Taiwanese nationalism in the later period is.

Today in Taiwan, it is commonly acknowledged that there are four major ethnic groups, that is, Minnan, Hakka, aborigines and mainlanders. However, the discourse of "four major ethnic groups" came into being only in the early 1990s.<sup>221</sup> Ethnic boundaries and conflicts have existed long before the KMT regime came to Taiwan. The conflicts among aborigines and Han settlers arriving in the different periods all through the late Ming and Qing dynasty are well documented (see, for instance, Gates, 1981; Chen, Chuang and Huang, 1994; Ka, 2001). Except for the aborigines, the majority of the Chinese settlers in this period were from Fujian and Guangdong provinces and belonged to the Han group. The "ethnic groups" in question are more like extended and fictive lineages or clan organisations whose members (and their ancestors) come from the same locality or region in China and speak the same dialect. The perceived difference between two lineage groups coming from nearby regions in China can be as big as the difference between groups from different provinces, and the conflicts resulted in fighting over practical interests such as economic resources and land ownership (Lin, 1990; Wang, Fu-chang, 2003). A closer term is perhaps the "provincial identity" (shengji 省籍), identity associated with a locality or locality of ancestral residence to describe such categorisation

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<sup>221</sup> According to Wang Fu-chang (2003), the term "four major ethnic groups" was proposed by a DPP legislator Ye Julian in 1993.

(Chang, 1993).<sup>222</sup> The categorisation of two distinctive groups of pre-1949 Han settlers, Minnan and Hakka, is a very recent development in the 1960s or 1970s. It originated from the registration system in the Japanese colonial period that classified Taiwanese according to their ancestral origins, hence Minnan (Southern Fujian) and Hakka (Guangdong).<sup>223</sup> Nevertheless a Minnan during the Qing and Japanese period was unlikely to refer to himself as Minnan unless he encountered a Hakka (Wang, Fuchang, 2003).

After the Japanese colonial period, the KMT largely adopted the same registration system based on ancestral provincial origins. At this time two groups became distinctive: “Taiwanese” and mainlanders. “Taiwanese”, here referring to the existing population before 1949, referred to themselves as “local provincial people” (*benshengren* 本省人) and called newcomers “people from other provinces” (*waishengren* 外省人) which is often translated as mainlanders in English. The KMT’s registration system based on provincial origins does not reflect this categorisation. Consider the situation: when a Taiwanese whose ancestral origin is Southern Fujian encounters a Hakka whose ancestral origin is from Northern Fujian, they would refer to themselves and to each other as Minnan (literally meaning Southern Fujian) and Hakka. However, when they encounter a mainlander who is also from Fujian province but came to Taiwan after 1949, the Minnan and Hakka would refer to themselves as local (Taiwanese) provincial people and call the mainlander an outsider. The division between local and outsider becomes a fixated category that even the second-generation mainlanders who were born in Taiwan call themselves outsider (*waishenren*). The provincial origin and categorisation of Taiwanese and mainlanders are inherited via patrilineage both in household registration system (and demographic statistics) and in the common perception. A child of inter-“ethnic” marriages of a mainlander father and a Minnan mother is classified as a mainlander regardless his/her own cultural identity and usage of language. This taken-for-granted categorisation is rarely problematised in the demographic analysis and scientific research on difference between ethnic groups who draw from the official statistics (Lin and Lin, 1993:103-4).

What causes the division between Taiwanese and mainlanders, if not the demographic categorisation? Chang argues that the relation between Taiwan and the mainland is historically asymmetrical; China in the centre and Taiwan at the periphery,

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<sup>222</sup> In fact, the term *shengji* could not accurately describe such identity associated with a locality as I have just argued that the local identities do not necessarily correspond to provincial boundaries. The provincial identity is a result of registration system which I will elaborate in the following sentences, but later become a power categorisation.

<sup>223</sup> According to Wang, the Japanese registration system the classification of these two groups was based on the dialects they speak. It is confusing that the dialects do not always reflect the actual ancestral origin. A small number of Hakka actually came from Northern Fujian province (2003:25-28).



and mainlanders are the dominant rulers and Taiwanese the dominated (1993: 243). This asymmetry reflected in the political arena is the underrepresentation of “Taiwanese” in politics, governmental offices, civil servant, military and educational positions both at national and local politics and within the KMT party. The central-level, decision-making positions were largely controlled by the mainlanders (ibid; Lin and Lin, 1993; Lin, 2002; Wang, Fu-chang, 2003). In the economic arena the asymmetrical relation is less obvious and more complex. On the one hand, mainlanders have advantages in access to public sectors and can achieve better social mobility via education. The retired military officers and their children, civil servants and teachers, the majority of whom are mainlanders, enjoyed better welfare provisions and educational and job opportunities (Gates, 1987; Tsai, 1996). On the other hand, in the industrialisation process “Taiwanese” were doing better in the private, commercial sectors due to their advantages in land ownership, capital and mobilisation of human resources via social networks (Chang, 1993). A nationwide survey on socio-economic status of mainlanders, Minnan and Hakka in 1991 confirms that the mainlanders were better represented in the public sector, Minnan in the manufacturing and trade sector and Hakka in agricultural and fishing industry. “Taiwanese” were doing better in the small and medium size enterprises and mainlanders had advantages in large enterprises and often held managerial positions (Lin and Lin, 1993; c.f. Wu, 2001). In the social and cultural arena, according to the same survey, the mainlanders had higher education levels, Hakka second and Minnan the lowest. Although concerning educational levels all three groups have been improved over the years, the gap between them still exists. Taken into account educational level, it is not surprising to discover that mainlanders and Hakka have higher household incomes than Minnan on average.<sup>224</sup> Although Mandarin was the official language in politics and education, Fokkienese was commonly used in the private sector and business network in which mainlanders were often marginalized (Chang, 1993; Lin and Lin, 1993). Unfortunately, the survey does not take into account the aborigines, whose political and socio-economic positions were the most marginalised (Chen, 1993).

Overall, the division in political, economic, social and cultural positions between mainlanders and “Taiwanese” does exist. However, scholars widely agree that before the rise of Taiwanese nationalism in the early 1990s, which I will discuss shortly, the ethnic division existed only at the level of national politics and was not so obvious in social and cultural life in Taiwan (Wu, 1993; 2001; Chang, 1993). One strong piece of evidence is the large number of inter-marriages between ethnic groups.

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<sup>224</sup> For statistical data of educational levels and household income according to ethnicity, see Lin and Lin (1993: 130-136). Lin and Lin think that other than educational level, the wives’ labour participation rate also affects the household income substantially. Women’s labour participation in the mainlanders’ group is much higher than that of Minnan and Hakka.

Sociologically speaking, inter-cultural or inter-“ethnic” marriages are used as an indicator of the degree of social integration and interaction between different ethnic groups (Yi and Chang, 2006). If this were true, the large number of inter-marriages and the frequent social interaction between mainlanders and “Taiwanese” would prove that the ethnic division in Taiwan was no longer a prominent feature of the Taiwanese society before the 1990s. Following this argument, a common view in the popular discourse is that the tension between ethnic groups is created by the politicians for their political gain, and in day-to-day contacts the ethnic differences are not visible (Chang, 1993; Wang, Fu-chang, 2003).

Other than the political process, the formation of ethnic boundaries can result from the consciousness of distinctive cultural identities and marginalised social positions of the group members. The aborigines’ movement and the Hakka movement in the 1980s were examples of revived ethnic boundaries. Aborigines and Hakka did not want to be labelled as “Taiwanese” in opposition to mainlanders and demanded that their distinctive language and culture be acknowledged. In the 1990s, in reaction to the political process of Taiwanese nationalism and influenced by the Hakka and aboriginal movements, mainlanders also developed a consciousness of being an ethnic group within Taiwan rather than “Chinese” (Wang, Fu-chang 2003).<sup>225</sup> These developments shaped the categorisation of “four major ethnic groups” today.<sup>226</sup> To conclude, boundaries between ethnic groups are fluid and changing, and boundaries between them are “imagined” (Wu, 1993; Wang, 2003). In the following section I will discuss how ethnic difference and inequality are mobilised into national identities and political support to parties.

### **3.1.4 Taiwanese nationalism**

Scholars hold different views on the origin and causes of Taiwanese nationalism. Some sociologists consider that the Taiwanese nationalism is a result of resistance against the asymmetrical power relations between mainlanders and “Taiwanese” as explained earlier as the root cause of Taiwanese nationalism. They argue that the clashes between mainland military and local populations in the first two years after Japanese colonial period (1945-1947) is significant in explaining the change of attitude of “Taiwanese” toward mainlanders from initial welcome to antagonism, which resulted in the 228 incident on February 28, 1947 (Chang, 1993; Wu, Nai-teh, 1991; Wang, 2003). Mainlanders were not able to understand the cultural affinity of “Taiwanese” toward Japanese and their experiences of modernity in the Japanese

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<sup>225</sup> It should be noted that this consciousness does not necessarily corresponds to their national identity.

<sup>226</sup> For detailed discussion of how each of these four groups become a distinctive group and the historical contexts, see Wang, Fu-chang (2003).

colonial period (Wang, 2003). Wu Rwei-ren argues that the origin of Taiwanese nationalism can be traced back to the resistance movement in the Japanese colonial period. When Taiwanese resistance leaders realised that China cannot render support to them to fight against Japanese, they developed a resentment sentiment against Chinese and accepted the reality that Taiwanese should fight their own battle.<sup>227</sup> The consciousness of Taiwanese as colonised and dominated people and that Taiwanese should take control over their own fate and strive for self-determination continued in the KMT period and shaped the ideology of Taiwanese independence movement (2001).<sup>228</sup> This echoes the analysis of psychological base of Taiwanese consciousness proposed by some psychologist (Huang, 2002). Hsiao claims that Taiwanese nationalism is a cultural movement against the “Chinese” hegemony by using and rewriting language, literature and history that is close to the living experiences and memories of Taiwanese (2000). Lin Chia-lung argues that the rise of Taiwanese nationalism is linked to the cross-strait tension, the presence of a military threat from China as well as negative experiences of interacting with mainland Chinese in China.<sup>229</sup> Lin argues that the interaction with mainland Chinese strengthens Taiwanese nationalism due to the different attitudes toward democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law in the two societies, which reflect the contrast between a civic culture and an authoritarian rule (Lin, 2002). Other scholars focus on the development and relationship between the democratic movement, political parties and the Taiwanese independence movement (Wang, 2003; Chu, 2005).

In the industrialisation process the significance of mainlanders’ advantages in the public sector had gradually diminished and “Taiwanese” political and business elites increasing demanded more power, which was an important factor contributing to the democratisation process. The political process, particularly the one engineered by the faction of pro-independent politicians in the KMT<sup>230</sup> and the DPP parties, plays an important role in Taiwanese nationalism.

Lee Teng-hui is a key figure in promoting Taiwanese nationalism. After Chiang Ching-kuo died he became the president of ROC and chairman of the KMT. As the first “Taiwanese” (local born) president, he sidelined some mainlanders within

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<sup>227</sup> When Taiwanese resistance leader Lin Xientang visited intellectual and nationalist leader Liang Qichao in Japan in 1907 to seek his advice, Liang told Lin that “within 30 years China has no ability to rescue you” (quoted by Wu, 2001:48).

<sup>228</sup> President Lee Teng-hui publicly acknowledged, “Taiwan should belong to Taiwanese. This is the baseline”. Lee’s talk with Japanese writer Shiba Ryotaro (literary name) in 1994, quoted by Wu (2001:101).

<sup>229</sup> This will be elaborated in the later section 3.3.1. of this chapter.

<sup>230</sup> This will be explained more clearly in the later section 3.3.2, see Table 13.

the KMT party and triggered what he claims an “indigenising” (*bentuhua*) process.<sup>231</sup> This resulted in two factions “mainstream” and “non-mainstream” within the KMT and later the sidelined politicians split from the KMT and form the New Party. The division of these factions is a power struggle within the party and at the same time an ideological battle between the Taiwanese and Chinese national identity (Wu, 1993; Tsai and Yu, 2001; Huang, 2002).

The term *bentuhua*, translated as indigenisation or Taiwanisation,<sup>232</sup> refers to not only the process of “Taiwanese” gaining political powers in the KMT and DPP, but also a Taiwanese consciousness or Taiwanese identity among the “Taiwanese” population that Taiwanese should take control of their own fate and turn to the “local” history and cultural heritage by disposing the Chinese nationalism imposed by the previous KMT regime (Chang and Holt, 2007:145). Not all supporters of Taiwanese identity advocate for Taiwan’s political independence as a nation-state. However, as the core of this movement is de-sinicisation, it inevitably downplays Chineseness, which is associated with both the mainlanders in Taiwan and mainland Chinese in China. As such, the Taiwanese identity is constructed versus Chinese identity.

Opinion polls and various studies show that between 1989 and 1996 different ethnic groups developed stronger Taiwanese identification and moved away from Chinese identification. As Table 10 shows, before 1992 the percentages of the population considering themselves Chinese (52%) or both Chinese and Taiwanese (26%) and those who were in favour of unification with China (55%) were rather high. By 1996, only 21% of the general public considered themselves Chinese while the percentage of those considering themselves Taiwanese and both Taiwanese and Chinese increases. Those who consider themselves both Taiwanese and Chinese at the same time among the general public compose a majority since 1993, while nearly 60% of the political elites opt for Taiwanese identity (Lin, 2002; Huang, 2002; Hsu and Fan, 2001).

Although the part of the population that holds dual identities (both Taiwanese and Chinese) constituted the largest percentage since the mid-1990s and the majority of the population were in favour of maintaining status quo, it is obvious that before 2000 there was a correlation between the national identities and party support, that is, those who had Taiwanese identities were more likely to vote for the DPP and those who had Chinese identities would support the KMT or the New Party, especially in the national elections (Wu, 1993; Wachman, 1994; Chang, 1993). The issues of national identity and choice of independence or unification thus become a ground of

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<sup>231</sup> Chiang Chingguo has already adopted a policy of admitting more “Taiwanese” into the KMT membership and leadership in the 1970s. Lee Teng-hui himself is in fact the most prominent product of this policy.

<sup>232</sup> For the meanings these two translated terms associated, see the discussion in Makeham, 2005:1-3.

mobilising votes by political parties. In turn, the national identities and “ethnic” division between the “Taiwanese” and mainlanders were further polarized. It is widely agreed that the rapid increase of Taiwanese identity and popular support of Taiwan’s independence is a result of political mobilization and competition of political elites (Wu, 1993; Wang, 2003; Lin, 2002; Chu, 2007; Wang, T.Y. 2007).

**Table 10 Change of national identity, preference of independence or unification. Comparison of elites and the general public**

	General Public					Political elites
year	1989	1992	1993	1996	1999	1995-6
<b>On national identity</b>						
Taiwanese	16%		27%	36%	33%	59%
Chinese	52%		33%	21%	12%	11%
Taiwanese and Chinese	26%		34%	41%	52%	30%
<b>Preference</b>						
Independence	6%	8%	13%	18%	23%	35%
Unification	55%	40%	39%	23%	17%	17%
Status quo		18%	11%	41%	44%	49%

Source: Lin (2002:293)<sup>233</sup>

This trend continued after the DPP won the presidential election in 2000. The national identities were further polarised by the formation of two political factions, the pro-Chinese identity “pan-blue coalition” and the pro-Taiwanese identity “pan-green coalition”.<sup>234</sup> The pan-green coalition includes the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) led by the incumbent President Chen Shuibian and the Taiwan Solidarity

<sup>233</sup> Compiled from various sources by Lin (2002:293): the data of 1992, 1993, 1996 and 1999 are results of opinion polls conducted by the Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University after the elections of national congress (1991) and election of legislators (1992, 1995, 1998); the data of 1989 are from telephone opinion polls conducted by the *United Daily*. The data of political elites in 1995-1996 are the result of interview with 66 legislators by Lin. The Mainland Affairs Council also conducted periodical opinion polls on the issues of national identities. The result confirms Lin’s finding that the percentage of being Chinese decreases and percentage of being Taiwanese or both increases over the years (quoted by Huang, 2002:169). Hsu and Fan’s research also confirms the result (2001).

<sup>234</sup> These two colours come from the party flag of the DPP (green) and the national flag of the Republic of China (blue as the primary colour). The national flag of the ROC is the flag of the KMT, whose use as the national flag has been much criticised. These two colours became the signifiers of the pro-independence and pro-unificationist identities, although other parties of these two alliances used other colours in their flags.

Union (TSU) led by the former President Lee Teng-hui.<sup>235</sup> The pan-blue coalition includes the Nationalist Party (KMT), the New Party and the People First Party.<sup>236</sup>

In view of the polarised identities and tension between ethnic groups, Lee Teng-hui proposes the idea of the “common-destiny community” (*shengming gongtong ti* 生命共同體). The idea is that people living in Taiwan, regardless of ethnicity and origin, are bound by shared civic awareness and identification with the community. This discourse departs from the discourse of Chinese nationalism based on antiquity and past cultural and historical heritage and moves to a new (Taiwan) nation based on civic values and a common future (Tsai and Yu, 2001; Huang 2002; Rigger, 2002). Chen Shui-bien follows the same discourse and proposes “harmony between ethnic groups” and “multiculturalism”, the latter includes the increasing number of foreign and mainland Chinese spouses, whom he terms as “new residents” (*xinzhumin* 新住民) (Tsai and Yu, 2001; Wang, T.Y. 2007).<sup>237</sup> Despite this discourse, the political parties continue to mobilise votes with polarised national identities and the ethnic relations grew even tenser. One example is that after Lee Teng-hui’s presidency in 2000, he and the TSU party publicly stated that Taiwan has been a de facto independent country and advocated for discarding the Constitution of Republic of China and drafting a new Constitution. This leads to the *Rectification of Names Movement* (*zhengming yundong* 正名運動) in 2002, a movement encouraged and supported by both the government and some civil organisations (Chang and Holt, 2007).<sup>238</sup>

### 3.2. Pre-1992 period: forbidden contact, illegal contacts and legalization

#### 3.2.1 Political context of cross-strait relations: stand-off and relaxation

After the Nationalist party’s (Kuomintang – KMT) retreated to Taiwan in 1949, the governments across the Taiwan strait were in a stand-off for nearly four decades. The

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<sup>235</sup> The founding chairman of the TSU is Legislator Huang Zhiwen, yet the TSU regarded Lee as the “spiritual leader”. The TSU was established in August 2001 prior to the parliamentary election at the end of the same year. The TSU follows Lee’s “Special State-to-State Relation” position toward the cross-strait relations and is very vocal on building a Taiwan Nation. It identifies the change of the name from ROC to Taiwan as one of its main objectives (Party Guidelines, the TSU, Article 11), and launches the “name-changing movement” which advocates for changing the names of all government agencies and civil society group from ROC to Taiwan. The members of the TSU in the parliament include some legislators formerly affiliated to the DPP and the mainstream faction of the KMT.

<sup>236</sup> The People First Party, led by former governor James Chu-yu Soong, was established in March 2000 after Soong split from the KMT and ran for presidential election and failed. The members of the People’s First Party are mainly from the KMT.

<sup>237</sup> The term *xinzhumin* is contrasted to *yuanzhumin* (原住民) that refers to the aborigines.

<sup>238</sup> It started with the civil organisations that have membership in international organisations and later various government offices also followed. In July 2002 the ROC charter of the International Lion’s Club changed its official name to “Multiple district 300 Taiwan Area Lion’s Club”. The name-changing actions reached its peak by organising a nationwide parade in which it mobilised during the presidential election campaign in 2004.

political antagonism between two governments remained rhetorical with occasional military attacks on the outlying island Quemoy. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regularly issued statements on “liberating Taiwan”,<sup>239</sup> and KMT on “reconquering the Mainland”. These verbal battles were reactions to both international and domestic politics.

The citizens of the ROC are not allowed to have any contact with mainland Chinese. This included the veterans and those who fled to Taiwan were not allowed to communicate with their family members staying on the Mainland. Though not officially acknowledged, the political elites and military leaders in Taiwan gradually accepted that returning to the Mainland might not be possible. As a result, many veterans married Taiwanese women, not knowing whether their former spouses on the Mainland were still alive.<sup>240</sup>

During the early 1980s the PRC began to consider dialogue with the KMT as a part of the reunification project. The concern of economic development and modernisation became dominant, and Taiwan’s economic success provided both an incentive and a model for economic restructuring and decentralisation.<sup>241</sup> In 1979, the PRC government first proposed the “three-links and four-exchanges” between the people across the strait.<sup>242</sup> This gesture was firmly rejected by the ROC President Chiang Ching-kuo in his “three-noes” principles, i.e. no contact, no compromise, no negotiation.<sup>243</sup> In 1983, Deng Xiaoping proposed the idea of “one country two systems” -- Taiwan could be a special administration region with a high degree of autonomy, including its own administrative personnel and military.<sup>244</sup>

By the late 1980s, as part of the economic restructuring programme, the PRC established Special Economic Zones that aimed at attracting foreign investment including Taiwanese capital. The rising land and labour costs and environmental

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<sup>239</sup> See, for example, Messages to Compatriots on Taiwan on October 25, 1958 following the PRC’s bombardment of Quemoy island, issued by Minister of Defence Peng Dehuai, drafted by Mao Zedong himself. See list of documents consulted in Appendix 2.

<sup>240</sup> For the discussion on the marriage ban on military personnel and its rationale, see Chapter 1, 1.3.2.

<sup>241</sup> For an analysis of the factors in the PRC’s domestic politics leading to the change of its Taiwan policy, see Dittmer (1996).

<sup>242</sup> In the “Message to Compatriots on Taiwan” issued by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC) in 1979. The three links were direct postal, trade and transportation; the four exchanges were of relatives and tourists, scientists, cultural groups and performances, and athletic teams. Here the term “people across the strait” is a literal translation from the Chinese document. “People” (renmin 人民) refers to citizens living in Taiwan and in China. It carries no connotation of the collective ethnic, cultural or national identity.

<sup>243</sup> Speech on April 4, 1979.

<sup>244</sup> The initial idea was first proposed by the Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee Ye Jianying in a speech entitled “Policy on Taiwan’s returning to the Motherland and fulfilling peaceful reunification” on September 30, 1981 (commonly known and referred as Ye’s nine points speech). Deng formalised the idea as the “one country two system” principle in his talk with Professor Yang Liyu from Westast University in the USA on June 26, 1983, (commonly known as Deng’s six points speech). The “one country two systems” idea not only applied to Taiwan, but also to Hong Kong. English titles of the speech are translated by Dittmer (1996: 34-5).

consciousness in Taiwan made the Mainland an attractive option for Taiwanese investors and manufacturers. Partly in reaction to this urgent call for economic interaction and partly due to the democratisation process in Taiwan, Chiang lifted the ban of no-contact and allowed Taiwanese to visit their relatives in Mainland China in 1987. The PRC promulgated the “Regulation Encouraging Taiwan Compatriots to Invest on the Mainland” (1988). By the end of 1988, there were 430 projects involving US\$600 million of Taiwanese investment in Mainland China (Wu, 1995:119), none of which were officially approved by the ROC authority.

The last two years of Chiang’s regime marked a watershed in Taiwan’s political transformation, with critical events such as the establishment of the oppositional Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986 and the lift of martial law in 1987 (Kau, 1996:52). Though allowing Taiwanese to visit their relatives on the Mainland, the KMT regime was far from ready to engage in political dialogue with the PRC. The cross-strait social and economic interaction remained unregulated in Taiwan for years.

Chiang’s death in 1988 marked the end of the era of the KMT’s political monopoly. The native-born Taiwanese Lee Teng-hui succeeded him as the president of the ROC and party leader. In 1990, he established the “National Unification Council” directly under the Presidential Office and soon released the “Guidelines for National Unification” in the following year. The Guidelines is a political document that mainly addressed the political interaction between the two “sides” of the Taiwan Strait, which it refers to as “Taiwan area” and “Mainland area”. It advocates the principle of One-China, yet stresses that two sides should be considered equal rather than treating Taiwan a local government, as the PRC leaders had proposed.<sup>245</sup> The Guidelines acted as the official guiding principle of Taiwan’s Mainland policy for a decade until Lee proposed “Special State-to-State Relations” in 1999, and was only officially abolished in 2006 by President Chen.

Although at this moment the governments of the PRC and the ROC were not willing to sit at the negotiation table, they encouraged people-to-people social interaction by setting up intermediary organisations dealing with civil matters. Taiwan established the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) under the Executive Yuan as the governmental policy-making body and Strait Exchange Foundation (SEF) as the unofficial (or semi-official), intermediary organisation to handle the negotiations with the PRC in the beginning of 1991. The PRC had already set up the Taiwan Affairs

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<sup>245</sup> The foreword of the guidelines states that “After an appropriate period of forthright exchange, cooperation, and consultation conducted under the principles of reason, peace, parity, and reciprocity, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should foster a consensus of democracy, freedom and equal prosperity, and together build a new a unified China.” The English version officially released by the Mainland Affairs Council, the ROC.



Office (TAO) under the State Council in 1988 and in reaction to Taiwan's SEF, a semi-official Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) was set up in June 1991. The SEF and ARATS were given the mandate by the respective governments to act as negotiation agencies, while the MAC and TAO had the executive power for cross-strait policy making.<sup>246</sup>

### **3.2.2 Media representations of mainland Chinese and mainland brides in Taiwan, 1987-1991**

Prior to 1987, the rhetoric of both regimes targeted the counterpart's political leaders and parties by portraying them as demonic. In Taiwan the PRC leaders were referred as "Communist Bandits" (gongfei 共匪) who not only occupied the Motherland by deceptive means but also destroyed the cultural heritage and traditions of China. Yet in the political propaganda the people of both sides were treated as the victims of their evil leaders, hence the sacred mission of rescuing the people of the other side from political suppression, poverty, and cultural deprivation was justified.

After the ban on visiting the Mainland was lifted, cross-strait economic and social interaction increased drastically.<sup>247</sup> The number of people from Taiwan visiting China tripled from 1988 to 1992 and almost reached a million per year,<sup>248</sup> while the authorities of the ROC did not allow any Mainland Chinese to enter Taiwan's territory. Nevertheless, cases of smuggling of people and goods from Fujian provinces via fishing boats were reported. Yet there was no relevant law from both sides to regulate these interactions despite the incompatibility of legal systems, thus leaving those engaged in the interactions unprotected and vulnerable.

From 1987 to 1991, mass media reports on Mainland Chinese largely centred on smuggling and the number of reports grew drastically over the years.<sup>249</sup> Among the 524 reports related to Mainland China and Chinese that I collected, five related themes can be found: 1) illegal labour from Mainland China, particularly those who worked on fishing boats owned by Taiwanese; 2) organised crime and human smugglers, commonly called "snake" (renshe 人蛇), which included both Taiwanese

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<sup>246</sup> The mission statement and function of the SEF, ARATS, MAC and TAO, see Cheng, Huang and Wu (1995).

<sup>247</sup> From 1987 to 1992, Taiwan's investment in the PRC grew from US\$ 100 million to US\$ 3.4 billion and comprised 16% of total Foreign Direct Investment of the PRC. The figures from different sources vary as it is difficult to estimate indirect investment mediated via Hong Kong and abroad. The figure quoted here is from the appendix of Cheng, Huang and Wu (1995:263, Table 4).

<sup>248</sup> According to Mainland Affairs Council, ROC, in 1988, 437,700 Taiwanese people visited Mainland China and by 1992, 1,317,770.

<sup>249</sup> According to the database of all mainstream newspapers in Taiwan, in 1987, there were 10 news reports with the titles containing the words "Mainland Chinese" and "smuggling"; in 1988, 32; 1989, 110; and in 1990 it reached 209 reports.

and Mainland Chinese; 3) the life of illegal workers who were arrested and put into the detention centres in Taiwan and their repatriation; 4) cross-strait marriages; 5) Mainland Chinese women who were smuggled into Taiwan to do sex work (maiying 賣淫 or maichun 賣春). The reports related to marriage and prostitution were small in number compared to those on illegal and criminal activities.<sup>250</sup> The media tended to have a sympathetic view of Chinese women in marriage and sex trade.

Before 1992, Mainland Chinese women were commonly called *dalumei*. This term, possibly borrowed from the Hongkongese media, carried a negative connotation.<sup>251</sup> However, when media and the society in Taiwan first adopted the term *dalumei*, it has not always been used in very negative ways. “Mei” literally means younger sister. In Fokkien and Hakka<sup>252</sup> languages “mei” refers to younger women within the kinship or the community, a term that often invokes feelings of affinity and respect. The terms *dalumei* has several meanings. First, there were some reports on Mainland Chinese female celebrities in sports, fashion, and film industry. In these cases their achievement and glamorous lifestyle were highlighted and *dalumei* merely indicated their place of origin (mainland). Secondly, there were many reports on human smuggling and sex trafficking. By 1989, the numbers of human smuggling and sex trafficking were substantial enough to alarm the police and health authorities. The health authorities announced that they would apply compulsory physical check-ups to all Mainland Chinese sex workers in order to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS.<sup>253</sup> In July 1989, a major smuggling group was cracked and it was reported that several *dalumei* had been raped and forced into prostitution. This event drew huge media attention. The dominant discourse was that these women were victims of inhuman criminals and Taiwanese society failed to protect them. For example, it was reported that the rescued *dalumei* appealed to Taiwanese legislators for granting them amnesty and residential status on the ground that their families in Mainland would not accept them knowing they were raped and prostituted.<sup>254</sup> Another report described in its title,

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<sup>250</sup> Out of 524 reports, there were only 37 reports related to women. This is according to my collection of news reports.

<sup>251</sup> For example, the Filipina domestic maids are called “Panmui” in Hong Kong in Cantonese (in Mandarin, Pinmei); and the prostitutes from Malaysia are called “Malaymui”; Mainland Chinese prostitutes are called “Butmui” (Beimei, northern mei).

<sup>252</sup> It is particular common for Hakka to name their daughters XXmei.

<sup>253</sup> *Minsheng Bao*, July 5, 1989, p.23. The report does not mention how it is possible to apply compulsory check-up if the sex work itself is illegal and not regulated at all. All Mainland Chinese once arrested are sent to the detention centre specialised for Mainland Chinese.

<sup>254</sup> The *United Daily*, July 27, 1989, p.3.

“Let us give them some compensation! The *dalumei* suffered physical and mental trauma. Kind hearted people urged the government not to repatriate them.”<sup>255</sup>

Despite the fact that reports on Mainland Chinese people were largely associated with criminal activities and illegal migration, the term *dalumei* invoked sympathetic feelings. Out of 171 reports that contained the word *dalumei*, only 15 reports implied that Mainland Chinese women entered prostitution voluntarily and/or were greedy.<sup>256</sup>

As the cross-strait marriages were not yet legalised, the terms “mainland brides” and “mainland spouses” were used commonly. “Mainland spouses” often referred to the original spouses of the men who fled to Taiwan before 1949 and left their wife on the Mainland. Mainland Chinese women who had married to Taiwanese men after 1987 were referred to as *dalumei*.<sup>257</sup> The media painted a rosy and romantic picture of the cross-strait marriages after 1987. The first high-profile case of cross-strait marriage reported was in 1988 when a Taiwanese fisherman was forced to seek refuge from a storm in a village in Hainan Island. There he fell in love with a local girl and they decided to marry. He then brought her back to Taiwan in his fishing boat. Eventually the couple could not bear the pressure of illegal status and the wife decided to report to the police. By then she was pregnant.<sup>258</sup> The newspapers spent pages describing the details how the fisherman threatened to jump into the sea if the captain did not allow him to take her to Taiwan, and that when the fisherman was sentenced by the court to five months in prison for human smuggling, the wife, by then in her six-month pregnancy, pleaded to the judge she would serve the sentence for her husband as she would not be able to survive without her husband’s income. The dominant view from the public was that they should not be punished for love and be separated simply because the law was incapable of dealing with cross-strait marriages, and that she should be allowed to stay in Taiwan and her husband go free as he had to fulfill his responsibility as breadwinner. Under heavy social pressure, the judge eventually decided to grant her legal residence as an exception. In the following three years, there were several cases of Mainland Chinese women who were smuggled into Taiwan to unite with their Taiwanese husbands; most of them were pregnant

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<sup>255</sup> The *United Daily*, July 25, 1989, p.7.

<sup>256</sup> See, for instance, see the *United Daily*, September 3, 1990.

<sup>257</sup> Here by “marriage” I mean the social sanction that the families of the couples recognised their union and accept them as part of family members. In Chapter 1 I have explained that in contemporary marriage regimes both in Taiwan, the marriage is legalised by registration but the social recognition comes from public ceremonies such as the wedding banquet. Because the cross-strait marriages were legalised in 1992 in Taiwan, these earlier marriages were not legalised but the ceremonial and social aspects are recognized.

<sup>258</sup> See reports in all major newspapers in Taiwan on April 29 and 30, 1988 and follow-up reports on Jan. 21, 1989.

when they were found. The media tended to sympathise with them and condemned the government when the women were put in detention. As a result, the authorities often had to surrender to social pressure as they could not afford to be accused of violating the rights to family union.

### **3.3 1992-1996: From resistance to acceptance**

#### **3.3.1 Cross-strait interaction: political divergence and economic integration**

In this period Taiwan not only developed the foundation of its mainland policy but also opened up its labour market through recruiting foreign guest workers. During the first part of this period, the governments on both sides of the Taiwan strait engaged in frequent political interaction with positive sentiments despite the unresolved issue of Taiwan's political status. Several rounds of direct negotiations between the SEF and the ARATS were organised, which reached its peak in the historical talk between two chairmen (known as the Koo-Wang or Wang-Koo talk) in April 1993 in Singapore, the highest level official talk up to date. In the second part of this period, however, the relation went downhill rapidly, ending with China's military and verbal attacks against Taiwan in 1995 and 1996 (known as the 1995-1996 crisis).

The first official negotiation between the SEF and the ARATS was held at the end of 1991, followed by five rounds of talks prior to the Koo-Wang talks in 1993. All through these six rounds of negotiations, the PRC government was more interested in finding a political solution towards unification, yet the ROC government consistently defined the negotiation as technical rather than political. The first three rounds were fruitless because both parties could not reach an agreement on the agenda. Eventually, both parties agreed not to insist on the definition of "one-China" in the written document.<sup>259</sup> The following two talks focused on finalising the details of these two issues and preparing for the meeting of the respective chairmen. During the Koo-Wang talks, a joint statement and three agreements on the formalisation of future exchanges and contacts, document verification, and registered mail were signed.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> The third round talk which took place in October 1991 in Hong Kong, was referred to as the "92 consensus". It was during this talk that both parties acknowledged that although both parties agreed on the "one-China" principle, it was impossible to concur on what "one-China" meant. Several versions of expression were proposed by both parties yet none was agreed upon. After this talk, through postal communications, the SEF and the ARATS agreed not to include the expression of "one-China" in the discussed agreements (regarding documents verification and registered mails) and allowed both parties to "verbally" interpret the meaning of "one-China" (gezi biao shu 各自表述). However, in 2004 the political leaders of both sides somehow had a very different interpretation on what actually had happened in 1992 and denied that a consensus was reached, which triggered another controversial debate (Zhao, 1999).

<sup>260</sup> The joint statement also mapped the future agenda of cross-strait negotiations that included 1) fight against crime and repatriation of criminals; 2) strengthening economic collaboration; 3) energy and

Despite the necessary strategies of taking tough positions and staging theatrical performances, the negotiations were carried out with optimism. Both parties were willing to compromise and to postpone the political agenda and focus on social and economic issues as a starting point for reunification. For the PRC leadership, the strategy of promoting cross-strait trade that would lead to eventual reunification was laid out and publicly announced as early as 1990.<sup>261</sup> Taiwanese leaders, on the other hand, had always defined these negotiations as “people-to-people talks”.<sup>262</sup> In the midst of the rounds of negotiations, in spite of a basic attitude of pragmatism and compromise, the respective governments continued to issue statements regarding their interpretations of the “one-China” principle that antagonised the counterpart and triggered counter-statements. Actions of Taiwanese leaders in seeking international recognition<sup>263</sup> and China’s warnings reached such a point that the on-going negotiations nearly collapsed. On Chinese New Year eve, 1995, Jiang Zemin, President of the PRC, officially condemned any attempt or rhetoric of “Taiwanese Independence” and defined the one-China principle, as well as stressed the necessity of employing military force to defend the integrity of China’s sovereignty against foreign power.<sup>264</sup> Lee Teng-hui, President of the ROC, made a counter-speech and proposed to resolve cross-strait problems within an international framework. By allowing both entities to join international organisations on equal footing, the cross-

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resource development; and 4) cultural and scientific exchanges. Memo of future collaboration, the SEF and ARATS, 1993.

<sup>261</sup> In a speech during the National Work Conference on Taiwan in 1990, the PRC President Yang Shangkun stated, “*We should promote political integration through the economy, compel the Taiwan authorities to talk with us by manipulating Taiwan people’s opinion and lead exchanges between the two sides in a direction favourable to the reunification of the mother land*”, quoted by Zhao (1999:27). The original source he drew was from the *China Times*, 14 April 1991, p.1.

<sup>262</sup> The Guidelines designs a process of three phases geared toward unification. The goal of the first and short term is to achieve exchanges and reciprocity, more particularly, to “gradually ease various restrictions and expand people-to-people contacts so as to promote the social prosperity of both sides (Guidelines for National Unification, IV. Process, 1. Short term, article 2; Mainland Affairs Council, ROC).

<sup>263</sup> Scholars attribute Taiwan’s campaign to reenter the United Nations as the first event and a major factor causing the political divergence. In early 1993, at the peak of the preparations for the Koo-Wang talks, the Foreign Ministry of the ROC issues a white paper on the foreign policy, which states that Taiwan identifies reentering the United Nations as the major objective of its foreign policy, which should be achieved based on the principle of “one-China, two entities” formula. The PRC responded by issuing a series of harsh criticisms and warnings, among which the white paper on the Taiwan Issue and China’s Unification in September 1993 (Chen, Qimao 1999:129). President Lee Teng-hui and Premier Lien Chan made intensive, unofficial visits to Southeast Asian countries in 1993 and 1994. These visits were called “vacation diplomacy” that the President and Premier visited these countries in the name of private vacations, but informal meetings with the political and opinion leaders of these countries were arranged (Chen, Qimao, 1999).

<sup>264</sup> President Jiang Zemin’s Chinese New Year Eve address, entitled “Continue struggle for the completion of unification of the fatherland (為促進祖國統一大業的完成而繼續奮鬥)” in January 30, 1995. Full text of the speech in Chinese see the *Renmin Daily*, January 31, 1995. This speech is commonly known as Jiang’s eight point speech. Summary of the eight points, both in Chinese and English, see Dalugongzhuo cankaoziliao (compilation of reference materials for Mainland Affairs), No. 7428-3, 1996, pp.151-154.

strait differences would automatically diminish.<sup>265</sup> Lee's proposal was not acceptable for the PRC leaders. The tension amounted to the highest point when Lee visited the USA in May 1995. In summer 1995, China launched a series of verbal threats and military exercises, which lasted until March 1996 before Taiwan's presidential election, in which to China's disappointment, Lee was re-elected. Cross-strait negotiations are on hold since then.

In the midst of political divergence and hostility, the cross-strait economic exchange continued to grow rapidly and as a result, Taiwan's economic dependence on Mainland China grew as well.<sup>266</sup> Taiwan's economic dependence on China had caused concerns for Taiwanese political leaders. Thus measures such as applying stricter financial regulations to the companies investing in mainland China and inserting a ceiling of mainland investment in proportion to domestic investment etc. were imposed on Taiwanese companies.<sup>267</sup> However, these regulatory measures and policy dis/incentives were either ineffective or irrelevant. The Taiwanese government was only relatively effective in restricting the inbound flows of the commodities, capital and people's movement from the PRC and exerted little control over the outbound flows from Taiwan to the mainland. In fact, with the growing influence of business elites in domestic politics in Taiwan, the government often was constantly pushed to relax or abandon these measures. This explains why even in the midst of most severe political tensions in the 1995-1996 crisis, the Taiwanese government lowered the political threshold for opening up the three-links (Chu, 1999:172-3).

In the meantime, the cross-strait interaction at the people-to-people, social level had grown vigorously. Next to continuous visits and exchange between people with kin ties, tourism, cultural and scientific exchange and sex tourism had also grown rapidly. With the lack of proper policies regulating the interaction, the Taiwanese authorities lost control and tended to adopt a defensive and problem-solving mentality towards cross-strait social interaction. This is reflected in the process of mainland policy and law-making, which will be analysed in the next section. Table 3 shows the estimated volume of Taiwanese visiting Mainland China, which serves as an indication of cross-strait social interaction.

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<sup>265</sup> President Lee's response to Jiang's eight points, speech on April 8, 1995; known as Lee's six point speech. Full text see [http://www.mac.gov.tw/big5/rpir/2nd1\\_3.htm](http://www.mac.gov.tw/big5/rpir/2nd1_3.htm) (text included in Appendix 2).

<sup>266</sup> A large amount of literature focuses on the scale and impact of cross-strait economic integration, the factors why the PRC is the preferred choice for Taiwanese businessmen, and the incentives that the PRC offered specifically toward Taiwanese business elites. See, for example, Chu (1999:172-3); Zhao (ed., 1999) One of the investment incentives specially attracting Taiwanese businessmen is the "Protection of Taiwanese compatriots' Investment Law" issued by the National People's Congress in March 1994. For in-depth analysis of Taiwan and China's mutual economic dependency, see Steinfield (2005).

<sup>267</sup> Chu (1999).

**Table 11 Taiwan's trade dependency on the mainland, 1986-2004**

Year	Taiwan's total trade with the mainland (a)	Taiwan's total trade worldwide (b)	Dependency Rate (a/b)
1986	0.95	64.04	1.49%
1988	2.72	110.34	2.47%
1990	5.17	121.93	4.23%
1992	11.67	153.48	7.60%
1994	16.51	176.99	9.38%
1995	20.99	215.20	9.75%
1999	25.76	232.27	11.1%
2000	32.39	228.32	11.2%
2001	29.96	234.28	13%
2002	41.01	248.55	16.9%
2003	46.32	278.60	17.1%
2004	61.64	351.11	18%

Unit: billion US Dollars; source: various sources<sup>268</sup>

In addition, the direct experience of people-to-people's social interaction has not always been positive. One example was the "thousand-island lake incidence", where hundreds of Taiwanese tourists were robbed and killed by Chinese criminal gangs on a tourist boat cruising in a tourist location in Southern China in March 1994.<sup>269</sup> This event substantively altered the Taiwanese people's perception of China. Opinion polls indicated that after this event, the percentage of Taiwanese people considering themselves Chinese had dropped considerably.<sup>270</sup>

<sup>268</sup> The figures 1985-1995 cited by Zhao (1999:28) from various source. The figures 1996-2004 are from Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economics, ROC, in Taiwan Statistical Year Book, the Council for Economic Planning and Development, 2005:203. These figures are based on estimation as there is no direct trade between Taiwan and mainland China. For more detailed and comparative figures compiled by custom authorities in the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan, see Qi (1998:11). Figures of Taiwan's "Foreign" Direct Investment in various industries and sections, see Steinfield (2005:233, 238).

<sup>269</sup> The *China Times*, March 10 and 11, 1994.

<sup>270</sup> According to an opinion polls conducted by National Taiwan University in 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996 and 1999, opinion in favour of Taiwan's independence (33%) and Taiwanese identity (41%) increases drastically after the thousand-lake incidence. 70% of the interviewees think that this event deeply hurt Taiwanese people's feeling to mainland China; 57% think China is hostile to Taiwan (Lin, 2002:283, 294, 308-9).

**Table 12 Number of Taiwanese people visiting the PRC, with two statistics of ROC and PRC authorities**

Year	Number permitted by Immigration Bureau, ROC. (*)	Number estimated by National Tourist Bureau, the PRC. (#)
1988	236,839	541,000
1990	60,001	948,000
1992	6,965	1,317,770
1994	433,660	1,390,215
1996	97,294	1,733,897
1998	134,805	2,174,602
2000	511,809	3,108,677
2002	712,703	3,660,600
2004	75,626	3,685,300

Source: The Straits Exchange Foundation, ROC<sup>271</sup>

### **3.3.2 Domestic politics of the making of the Act Governing Relations between Peoples of the Taiwan area and the Mainland Area (AGRPTM)**

The necessity of drafting a law regulating cross-strait interaction was driven by the fact that the people-to-people, socio-economic interaction, though illegal, developed so rapidly that the political actors were forced to deal with it. As the Minister of Justice, Lu Yowen acknowledged,

Since the government allowed [Taiwanese] people to visit relatives on the Mainland in November 1989, civil disputes between two areas, such as bigamy, inheritance, and other related legal problems, happened frequently. As there is no existing law regulating these disputes, ..... there is a great demand and pressure from our society to establish a legal order in the relations between the peoples from two areas.<sup>272</sup>

The process of drafting the AGRPTM was difficult and time-consuming. The first draft was proposed in early 1989, which was submitted to the Mainland Working

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<sup>271</sup> \*are from the Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Interior, ROC and # are from National Tourist Bureau, the PRC, provided by the Straits Exchange Foundation, ROC, Annual report of the SEF, 2005:4.

<sup>272</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao*, Vol. 80, No. 63, 1 May 1991.



Meeting.<sup>273</sup> This draft was eventually abandoned due to the rapid change of the domestic political situation, for instance, the termination of the Temporary Provisions Effective during the Period of Communist Rebellion. A new legislative procedure began in 1990; 53 preparatory consultative meetings and public hearings were called with law-makers, academics, lawyers, media and business representatives. During the drafting period, unsatisfied with the official draft, legislators from different political parties and factions proposed alternative drafts. As a result, five drafts were submitted to the legislative yuan for discussion. It took another two and half years of heated debates on these drafts in the parliament, during which the social pressure continued to mount. In July 1992 the AGRPTM was eventually promulgated, by then many provisional measures, such as allowing Taiwanese people to visit China for purposes other than visiting relatives, and granting mainland spouses of Taiwanese citizens short-stay permits,<sup>274</sup> had been effective for some time.

Because the law-making was a reaction to the de facto socio-economic interaction and the above-mentioned provisional measures were of an ad-hoc nature, the law tended to view this interaction as problems to be contained and regulated. As a legislator pointed out, “take a closer look at the content of the AGRPTM ..., basically it is a compilation of all legal problems derived from cross-strait interaction in the past few years and corresponding measures to regulate them. It lacks forward-looking objectives. Its conservative rationale and the discriminatory articles against Mainland compatriots reflect the authority’s approach of adopting easy solutions and the mentality of ‘control’.”<sup>275</sup>

The draft proposed by the MAC gave exceptionally large power to the executive authorities, namely, the MAC and the Ministry of Interior to decide upon criteria and quota of Mainland Chinese people’s entry and duration of residentship in Taiwan. This was in view, argued by the MAC, that the cross-strait socio-economic interaction was developing so rapidly that legislative procedures would not be capable of adapting to changing situations. Understandably, a parliament in a new-born democracy would not easily grant such power to the government. As a result, every single article of every draft was scrutinized, particularly by the opposition party. Thus, the law should be seen as the result of negotiations and compromises between different political actors in the long drafting and debating process, including political parties and factions, the technocrats of various governmental offices, the military and security people and business elites. Below I lay out different positions on the

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<sup>273</sup> The Mainland Working Meeting is the predecessor of the Mainland Affairs Council. The draft was submitted to the Mainland Working Meeting to be discussed for a year, during which 27 meetings were called.

<sup>274</sup> Starting from 1 Jan. 1992, mainland spouses of Taiwanese citizens can apply for short-term visas to Taiwan.

<sup>275</sup> Speech by legislator Chen Queimiao, KMT. *Lifayuan gongbao* (80):63, January 5, 1991.

definition of cross-strait relations and perceptions and attitudes towards the PRC regime and the Chinese people, which is summarized in Table 13.<sup>276</sup>

1) The mainstream faction of the ruling party, Kuomintang (KMT).

This group included the members of the National Unification Council, the officials in the MAC, and some KMT legislators and was led by President Lee Teng-hui, who played a dominant role in steering the Mainland policy. Initially, their position on cross-strait relations, according to the Guidelines for National Unification, stressed that the steps toward one-China as a long-term goal should precede gradually with caution. Later it shifted to the emphasis on two independent entities, as shown in Lee's six-point talk, though the one-China principle was not officially renounced. Among the mainstream newspapers, the China Times group was known for being sympathetic to their position (Hsieh, 1995:144). The position of the mainstream faction was put forward by the draft of the AGRPTM proposed by the MAC as well as by two minorly revised versions proposed by two KMT legislators.<sup>277</sup>

2) Non-mainstream faction of the KMT and the New Party

The Mainland policy was one of the major issues that drew the line of ideological difference between these factions (Chen, 1999:138; Goldstein, 1999:202). The non-mainstream faction was led by Premier Hau Peicun, who was appointed by Lee in 1990 as a gesture of pacifying the mainlanders' political elites' distrust against indigenisation of the KMT and political reforms. After Hau was forced out of office in 1993, the young non-mainstream KMT legislators split off to form the New Party. Both the remaining non-mainstream KMT members and the New Party shared a strong Chinese identity and advocated speedy unification then. (Hsieh, 1995:144) Among the mainstream newspapers, the United Daily group was close to their position. The position of the non-mainstream KMT faction was put forward by the draft of the "Act Governing Relations between Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese people" as proposed by legislator Zhao Shaokang of the New Party.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> The information in this table is compiled by myself taken the information of the debates in the law-making process. It can be supported by the similar schema laid out by other scholars (Tsai and Yu, 2001: 13, 15; Fell, 2005:87-88).

<sup>277</sup> Based on the draft "Act Governing Relations between Peoples of the Taiwan area and the Mainland Area" proposed by the Mainland Affairs Council and two revised drafts proposed by KMT legislators Ting Shozhon and Chen queimiao. *Lifayuan gongbao* (80):63

<sup>278</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* (80):72

### 3) The Formosa and other factions of the DPP

This faction viewed Taiwan and the PRC as two separate entities yet adopted a pragmatic approach towards the one-China principle. Seeing the PRC as a “quasi-foreign state” and as a potential ally in the world, they were in favour of cross-strait socio-economic exchange within the parameters of the two-entities approach. Their positions can be illustrated by the “Basic Treaty between the ROC and the PRC” proposed by the incumbent president Chen Shui-bian, then a DPP legislator, in 1990. However, the DPP decided to unite forces and propose only one draft to the parliament, consequently Chen decided to drop his proposal (Liu 2000).

### 4) The New Tide faction of the DPP

Composed of radical pro-independent legislators, this faction also viewed the PRC as a “quasi-foreign state” but emphasized that Taiwan is an independent entity. What made them different from the Formosa faction was that they tended to distrust the PRC regime and the mainland Chinese people.<sup>279</sup> The perspective of the mainland policy of the New Tide won the popular support within the DPP party. The version of the draft of the AGRPTM proposed by the New Tide legislator Chiu Lien-hui of the New Congress Office represented the DPP and was discussed in the legislative yuan.

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<sup>279</sup> As the current Premier Hsieh Changtin, then a DPP legislator stated, “the relations between the people [of two sites across strait] should be regulated based on the principle of the international private law and should be equivalent to the existing laws regulating foreign institutions and peoples..... However, in view of the communist China’s ideology and ambition toward Taiwan, the interaction with the Mainland should be based on principles of equality and mutual benefits, with the foremost priority of the well-being of the Taiwanese people.” (*Lifayuan gongbao* 80(63):38)

**Table 13 The positions of party factions on mainland policies, 1990-1996**

	Non-mainstream faction, KMT and the New Party	Mainstream faction, KMT (Lee Teng-hui)	Formosa and others factions, DPP (moderate, including Chen Shui-bian)	New Tide faction, DPP (radical)
Framework of cross-strait relations	One-China; unification	One-China, two-entities; eventual unification under the principle of democracy as a long-term goal	As two separate entities; maintaining status quo -- agreeing one-China principle as a pragmatic solution.	One Taiwan, one China; de jure independence
Attitude towards the PRC regime	Not clear	The relationship with the PRC should be gradual and tested, depending on the PRC's willingness to renounce the use of force against Taiwan and to respect Taiwan as a separate and equal entity in the international arena.	PRC as an ally; peaceful coexistence;	PRC as an enemy state;
Definition of Mainland Chinese people	By household registration in the PRC	By household registration or Taiwanese who have lived two years in PRC	---	By household registration or holder of PRC passport
Perception toward Mainland Chinese people	As compatriots bound by shared ethnicity and culture.	Distrust toward and superiority over Mainland Chinese people due to economic gap and political system (communism)	Mainland Chinese people as foreigners to be treated equally to other foreign nationals	Mainland Chinese people as foreigners, yet defensive mechanism should be set up against them as people from an enemy state
Objectives and rationale of the proposed draft of the AGRPTM	To facilitate socio-economic ties as a foundation of political unification.	To ensure national security (of the Taiwan region), social stability and welfare of (Taiwanese) people in the cross-strait interaction. * National security supersedes socio-economic integration	The issue of independence or unification does not need to be clearly laid out	To protect Taiwanese people in their interaction with the Mainland Chinese people in the context of the PRC's hostility towards Taiwan. * National and social security; clear definition of Taiwan's sovereignty;
Socio-economic policies	Broadening and speeding up "three links"; leading to direct links.	The socio-economic interaction should proceed with caution	Promoting economic integration for the benefit of Taiwanese people	Minimize socio-economic integration

### 3.3.3 The AGRPTM's discourse on issues related to cross-strait marriages

#### 3.3.3.1 Mainland Chinese people's resident status

All parties and factions agreed that the influx of the people from Mainland should be limited but they disagreed on how to regulate it. As mentioned in the previous section, the ruling party, both the non-mainstream and mainstream factions of the KMT were in favour of giving the mandate for setting criteria and quota to the executive authorities and only including general principles in the AGRPTM, while the DPP insisted on incorporating specific definitions. The DPP's draft differentiated three categories of resident status for Mainland Chinese in Taiwan. The first was temporary visit (temporary visit 停留) limited to the purpose of visiting relatives, tourism, sport, and academic and cultural activities. The second category was long-term residence (juliū 居留), which only applied to mainland spouses of Taiwanese citizens. The third category, permanent residentship or citizenship (dingju 定居), was granted to 1) Taiwanese citizens' parents aged above 70 and (biological) children under 12 or adopted children aged under two years; 2) Taiwanese soldiers who remained in the Mainland during civil war, their spouses, their direct kin as well as direct kins' spouses.<sup>280</sup> The DPP maintained that in order to defend national security and social stability, the Executive Yuan should decide a quota of these two categories and adjust it according to needs.<sup>281</sup> This categorisation was incorporated in the AGRPTM and remained the classifying system, albeit with changing criteria, until 2002. The quota system was also commonly agreed upon by all factions.

As explained in the previous section, the DPP took the position that the Mainland Chinese people should be treated equally to other foreign nationals. "In view of the population pressure in Taiwan, in order to defend national security and to protect the rights of Taiwanese labour, it is necessary to limit the influx of the Mainland Chinese people into Taiwan."<sup>282</sup> Thus the DPP insisted that temporary and long-term visitors from the mainland should not have the right to work, and that during their stay in Taiwan they should be subject to the same laws regulating other foreign nationals. However, those who were entitled to permanent residentship should share the same rights and responsibilities as Taiwanese citizens except minor limits on political rights.<sup>283</sup> Because of this, the criteria for permanent residentship had to be strict. As the draft explained, "however, in order to prevent Communist China's

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<sup>280</sup> For temporary visit and long-term residence, see Article 10 and for citizenship see Article 11 of the draft proposed by DPP legislators, *Lifayuan gongbao* 79(98):42-4, 1990.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid: Article 10, explanation.

<sup>283</sup> Mainland Chinese can register as electoral candidates and work as professional military personnel ten years after they secured the citizenship status. Article 12, *ibid*.

unification conspiracy (tongzhan 統戰)<sup>284</sup> and to defend national and social security, only those [mainland Chinese] who have immediate and close relations with Taiwanese citizens are allowed to permanently reside in Taiwan.”<sup>285</sup>

“The immediate and close relations” applied to direct patrilineal kin, namely the parents and children of Taiwanese citizens. The rationale for setting up age limits for parents aged 70 and biological children under 12 indicated that only the dependent kin without productive capacity were eligible, as “in consideration of humanity and ethics”<sup>286</sup> Taiwanese citizens had the responsibility to care for them. This reasoning was well received by other legislators and consensus was reached. As for the adopted children, the DPP set a lower age limit to prevent Mainland Chinese people from gaining citizenship via adoption. The KMT legislators advocated for not granting adopted children residents’hip at all based on the logic that “without blood ties, there is no humanitarian concern.”<sup>287</sup> As a result, the article on adopted children was completely dropped. The assumption that only biological kinship can be legally recognized was also reflected in the bylaws of the AGRPTM, for instance, to apply for citizenship in Taiwan, the children of cross-strait couples born on the Mainland should receive compulsory DNA tests to prove that they are a “real” biological child of a Taiwanese father.<sup>288</sup>

### 3.3.3.2 Criteria of mainland spouses’ resident status – bogus marriages

Under the assumption that citizenship can only be inherited through blood ties, mainland spouses of Taiwanese citizens were not considered to have “immediate and close relations” with their Taiwanese spouses. Nevertheless, all party factions agreed that based on “humanitarian” concerns, the mainland spouses should be allowed to live with their Taiwanese spouses. The debates thus were centred on how many spouses should be granted resident status every year and the waiting time before they can apply for citizenship. The MAC proposed to set strict criteria in order to prevent bogus marriages. It also suggested that the mainland spouses who were smuggled into Taiwan prior to the enactment of the law should be repatriated and punished. However,

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<sup>284</sup> *Tongzhan* is the short form for “united front”. According to the United Front Work Department of the Communist Party of the PRC, it refers to the formation of a strategic alliance with different class and political forces in order to achieve the liberation of the proletariat. However, in Taiwan this term was used in a negative way by the KMT’s propaganda to refer to the communists’ tactics of annexing Taiwan, an interpretation which continues to be used up to today.

<sup>285</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 79(98):42-4, 1990. Article 11.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(103):65, 1991.

<sup>288</sup> Regulation of Permission for Mainland Chinese to Enter Taiwan Region (大陸地區人民進入臺灣地區許可辦法), promulgated in February 8, 1993 by Ministry of Interior, ROC. This regulation is the by-law of the AGRPTM.

most of the KMT legislators, be it mainstream or non-mainstream, were sympathetic to de facto cross-strait marriages, particular to spouses who were already pregnant. In fact, legislator Chen Qui-miao who belongs to the mainstream KMT faction and who proposed a draft of the AGRPTM, had openly blessed an (illegal) cross-strait marriage, which drew huge media attention. The DPP followed the position of treating mainland spouses equal to other foreign spouses. However, in order to prevent bogus marriages, it proposed that mainland spouses should reside in Taiwan continuously for at least five years before they can apply for citizenship. Other legislators regardless of party affiliation also proposed setting criteria for mainland spouses “living in Taiwan for two or five years and already having children” in order to prevent bogus marriage.<sup>289</sup> They argued that bearing children is the only way to determine whether a marriage was “real” or “bogus”. However, some legislators considered it discriminative against barren couples.<sup>290</sup>

Though it was commonly agreed that it was necessary to prevent bogus marriages, the factors contributing to the fear of bogus marriages were different for party factions. The dominant concern for the mainstream KMT and the technocrats was national security, hence they tended to distrust mainland spouses and considered them a potential threat, as the Deputy Director of the MAC put it bluntly, “national security should be our foremost concern. The communist spies are completely capable of staying in [bogus] marriages for two years.”<sup>291</sup> On the other hand, the DPP tended to be more relaxed on bogus marriages. A radical independentist legislator argued, “we shouldn’t worry too much about bogus marriages. Five year is sufficient to test whether a marriage is real or fake. It is difficult to fake a marriage for five years. If they manage to fake five years it would become real anyway”<sup>292</sup>; and “the process of application is difficult enough. Those [mainland women] who are determined to come here must have identified with this land, ... to live and die here, there is no reason to reject them. ... We are not so strict to other foreign nationals, why do we have to be so harsh on our own (zijiren 自己人)?”<sup>293</sup> Consequently a DPP legislator ridiculed the KMT, “we discover a very interesting phenomenon, that is, the DPP’s articles [related to cross-strait marriages] are actually much more relaxed. We [DPP] are often criticized [by our KMT colleagues] that we do not consider Mainland Chinese people as our compatriots, but you who consider them as compatriots do not allow them to come. Our draft is based on two rationales: 1) Well-being and security of the Taiwanese people is the foremost priority. ... Hence the rights of the parents, spouses

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<sup>289</sup> Some proposes that children have to be born in Taiwan or receive DNA tests. *Lifayuan gongbao* 81(08):23.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.:25-26.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.: 27.

<sup>292</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(103):62.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.:69.

and relatives of Taiwanese citizens should be respected, ...”.<sup>294</sup> The KMT legislators counter-argued that the DPP was too naïve about the “communist evil” and its proposal too relaxed.

It should be noted that at this point population control had not yet become a major concern. Legislator Lin Chen-jie pointed out that Taiwan’s migration outflow was then larger than influx and that mainland spouses would only constitute a very small percentage of Taiwan’s population. Lin continued to criticize that the paranoia of bogus marriages was groundless because there was no supporting evidence that mainland spouses would pose a grave threat to Taiwanese society.<sup>295</sup> In a sense, Lin’s critique was correct yet completely ignored. At that time there were no statistical data based on which the impact of cross-strait marriages on Taiwanese society could be assessed, and since no case of bogus marriage had been discovered or reported in the media.<sup>296</sup>

As a result of the compromise, eventually the criteria for mainland spouses to apply for citizenship status in the 1992 draft were “spouses of Taiwanese citizens who have been married for two years or who have children [with Taiwanese citizens]” (article 17). This was coupled with a quota system in order to prevent bogus marriage and to discourage cross-strait marriages. Unable to decide upon the exact quota, legislators gave the mandate to the executive authorities subject to the approval of the Legislative Yuan. These criteria and quota system, which was implemented till 2002, set the legal framework for the resident status of mainland spouses and subsequently, their political and social rights in Taiwan.<sup>297</sup>

The other areas governing cross-strait marriages, such as marriage registration, inheritance, divorce and parental custody, etc. principally followed the existing family code under Taiwanese civil law. These articles were passed without any discussion and dispute with two exceptions. One is the recognition of bigamy in the cases of cross-strait marriages prior to 1949. This mainly applied to the veteran soldiers who left their spouses on the mainland and remarried again in Taiwan. First (mainland) spouses, by then only very few were still living and aged, were able to apply for citizenship status without any quota limit, provided that the second (Taiwanese)

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.: 66 by Hsieh Changting. The bracketed words are added by the author for the purpose of clarification.

<sup>295</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 81(08):28.

<sup>296</sup> The first survey on the mainland spouses in Taiwan was conducted in 1999 by Dr. Chen Shiahong, commissioned by the Mainland Affairs Council in 1994. This survey focuses on the policy implication of residential status (Chen, 1999). The first nationwide survey is only conducted in 2003. Explanation of compilation of statistical data on mainland spouses, see Chapter 2, 2.3.1 and footnote 168. According to my search in the newspaper database there is no reported case of bogus marriage in this period.

<sup>297</sup> In the following years legislative revisions mainly centred on the relaxation of the quota as well as the status before the spouses secured the citizenship.



spouse gave her consent. The articles regarding the inheritance of pensions and other welfare entitlements of the veterans and civil servants, however, caused controversy and lengthy debates, which went through subsequent revisions in 1994 and 1995 (article 66, AGRPTM).

### **3.3.3.3 Inheritance of pensions and welfare entitlements of veterans and civil servants**

There is no universal pension system in Taiwan. Only the military personnel, civil servants and teachers are entitled to the public pension, and employees in the private sectors may have pension if they participate in the labour pension scheme. Other than pensions, civil servants and military personnel are also entitled to a sum upon their death (fuxujin 撫恤金), given to their widows and children for their social security. Both pensions and the sum received after death are allocated from the government budget, which are either given in monthly installments or given once in a total sum. Among them the veteran soldiers were of particular concern to the AGRPTM because they were the ones who had relatives on the mainland and who largely relied on pensions by the 1990s.<sup>298</sup>

By the end of 1991, four years after the ban of visiting China was lifted, approximately 139,000 veterans had visited China, among them around 2,500 had not returned back to Taiwan.<sup>299</sup> Many of them continued to claim their pension in monthly instalments, yet as there was no mechanism of confirming their whereabouts and verifying the documents issued in China, legal confusion and disputes often occurred. This was one of the major reasons for Taiwan identifying verification of documents as a top priority during the cross-strait talks.

As explained earlier, the veterans and civil servants, the majority of whom were mainlanders (*waishengren*), were the loyal supporters of the KMT regime. In the new alignment of political factions they were generally inclined to support the non-mainstream faction (Tsao, 2001). In view of the political affiliation and loyalty, it could be assumed that the non-mainstream KMT would adopt more relaxed measures of granting veterans welfare entitlements while the DPP would be less sympathetic to mainlanders and adopt stricter measures. Similarly to the issue of residentship, this

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<sup>298</sup> In Chapter 1 I have explained the circumstances and policies that caused large numbers of veteran soldiers to remain unmarried and in need of old-age care, and in Chapter 2 I explain they preferred to marry mainland women and return to and settle on the mainland.

<sup>299</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(100):412-4. However, according to the Veteran Affairs Commission, the total number of living veteran soldiers by 1992 was approximately 135,000. These two figures have some discrepancy, which shows that either the legislator exaggerates the figure or that the Veteran Affairs Commission lost count of the veterans went to mainland China and never returned to Taiwan. Nevertheless, it is safe to argue that the majority of veterans have visited their relatives in the mainland.

was not the case. While the MAC proposed to limit the share of inheritance by mainland Chinese to not more than two million NT dollars, the legislators, regardless of political affiliation, had divided opinions about that. The rationale of setting up a ceiling of two million, according to the Ministry of Justice, was that 1) in case Taiwanese civil servants and veteran soldiers have offspring both in Taiwan and on the mainland, Taiwanese offspring deserve a bigger share of the inheritance because they contribute more to the common household property;<sup>300</sup> 2) to protect the national and economic security of Taiwan, a huge capital flow from Taiwan to China should be prevented; 3) to ensure “real equality”, in view that Taiwanese rarely inherit property from their relatives in China.<sup>301</sup> When being asked how the figure of two million was estimated, the deputy director of the Mainland Affairs Council Ma Ying-jiu explained,

... [it is] based on the relative contribution to the accumulation of property as well as the current gap of cross-strait living standard...[It is] also based on the result of an opinion poll conducted by the MAC. 57% of elites (jingyin 精英) think that Mainland Chinese should share equal inheritance rights as Taiwanese, however, 47% of the general public is of the opinion that Mainland Chinese should not inherit any property. To balance these two views the MAC decided to set a ceiling of two million.<sup>302</sup>

Some non-mainstream KMT and DPP legislators were also in favour of a two-million ceiling for very different reasons, the KMT for the protection of veterans from “greedy mainland relatives” and for the protection of the rights of Taiwanese offspring, and the DPP for preventing Taiwan’s welfare resources flowing to China. The former were in favour of a monthly instalment system in order to “protect the veterans from Mainland relatives appropriating their retirement fund and leaving them uncared for.”<sup>303</sup> As a DPP legislator pointed out:

In Taiwan, we can be assured that the widowed daughter-in-laws will continue to fulfil their duties and care for their parents-in-law. The daughter-in-laws and grandchildren on the mainland have not and will not fulfil their pious duties... therefore they should not inherit property.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> For the principles of the entitlement and division of collective family property, see discussion in Chapter 1, 1.2, fang and fenjia.

<sup>301</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(63): 40, statement by Minister of Justice Lu Yo-wen.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*: 42, Statement by the deputy director of the MAC.

<sup>303</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(100):513.

<sup>304</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 81(23):434.

Another KMT legislator argued,

two million may not account much in Taiwan, but for Mainland Chinese, it is a sum 'larger-than-heaven'. ... [The] Chinese family follows a patriarchal system. The fathers and sons worked hard in decades to build up a business but the property is often registered under the fathers' name. They are the pillars of Taiwan's economy. ... It is not fair for the mainland offspring to inherit the same share. ... We worked hard for decades. They sit there doing nothing and get all the benefits for free!<sup>305</sup>

I have argued that the share of inheritance and the position of a family member correspond to his and his wife's economic contribution to the collective family property in the past and the duty of caring for the old-age parents in the future.<sup>306</sup> In the discussion of regulating the provision of inheritance and pensions of mainland Chinese, it is no longer a private family matter. The state intervened in the name of protecting its citizens who, particularly the veterans, were perceived to be naïve and being an easy prey, while their mainland relatives and wives were perceived to be lazy, greedy and lacking of morality and family values. This view was shared by both KMT and DPP legislators, and some KMT legislators were more passionate advocates as they assumed the responsibility of representing and protecting mainlander veteran soldiers and civil servants. By doing so, the membership to the family was implicitly extended to the membership of the nation when they argued that the economic contribution to the family is also a contribution to the Taiwanese society.

Some DPP legislators went a step further to argue explicitly that the inheritance and pensions of civil servants and veteran soldiers were not private family property. The incumbent president Chen Shui-bian, then a DPP legislator, was among those who opposed the monthly instalment system fiercely, arguing that the inheritance and pensions of civil servants and veterans should be considered as a public resource rather than as a private property. As it was the state's responsibility to take care of the well-beings of its citizens, "those who choose to settle in China should be cared for by the PRC government; we should not continue to give them money to care for them. It is like financing our enemies and contributing to the evil-doing of the [communist] thieves!"; "We shouldn't help the Communist regime to care for their people... The more they have to pay [welfare cost], the earlier the regime will collapse. This would help us unifying the Mainland, isn't it? If their people are hungry they will revolt against the communist regime. If we help feeding

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<sup>305</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(100):403

<sup>306</sup> See discussion in Chapter 1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.3.

them they will not revolt. It is not right.” He added later, “The fact that they went to China and did not return showed that they long for communism. They don’t love Taiwan any more. If they love Taiwan they will choose to die here. We should not encourage them to go to the mainland to die”.<sup>307</sup>

Chen’s position was countered by some KMT legislators who claimed that it was precisely because of the fact that the Taiwanese government was unable to provide sufficient security and old-age care for the aged veterans, particularly those who were too poor to marry and left without family, that Taiwanese should be thankful to their mainland relatives to care for them. “By allowing veterans to settle in China, they would have a better quality of care. ... It is also positive propaganda to the Chinese people to show how generous and kind our government is.”<sup>308</sup> Others argued that based on Taiwanese civil law, the rights of inheritance should not be associated with the inheritor’s nationality, place of residence and the living standard, and the inheritor’s contribution to the accumulation of family wealth and Taiwanese economy is irrelevant. Hence mainland relatives and offspring should not be discriminated. Ironically, on the issue of mainland spouses’ resident status, Chen strongly advocated treating mainland spouses equally to other foreign nationals, thus he was criticised for being inconsistent.<sup>309</sup> Some other legislators appealed to the cultural notion of returning to their homeland and to unite with their ancestors (*luoye guigen* 落葉歸根).<sup>310</sup>

The debates over resident status and inheritance can best illustrate the underlying assumption about who can naturally inherit rights to citizenship, who has to earn it, how it can be earned, and who is excluded from it. This “community” often refers to or is extended from the actual family and kinship, therefore the membership is intrinsically linked with the reproductive function and the (un)productive, dependent status, hence it is always gendered and related to age. Before I proceed to elaborate on this, it is useful to examine briefly the policy on guest workers from mainland Chinese.

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<sup>307</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(100): 390, 407-408, 415. Chen’s usage of harsh and crude language was not unusual in the parliament sessions. It was common for legislators, particularly the opposition party, to use strong language to draw media attention and to win support of their constituency.

<sup>308</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(100): 413. The lower rank of veterans only received NT 6,429 monthly pension, which was barely enough to maintain basic needs.

<sup>309</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(100): 417.

<sup>310</sup> A Chinese saying. Literally translated as “the tree leaf falls to the ground and returns to its root”, which expresses the naturalised longings of returning to the homeland where the ancestors dwell.

### 3.3.4 Discussion: citizenship as membership of kinship and nation

Rigger argues that in the post-martial law era the definition of citizenship in Taiwan has gradually departed from a confusing mixture of ethno-nationalism (defined by blood ties and race) and cultural-nationalism (shared history and cultural heritage) and has moves towards one based on shared democratic values, which she terms “citizen republicanism”(2002:369).<sup>311</sup> Evidence for this argument is the discourse of the “common-fate or common-destiny community” which attempts to undermine the ethnic differences and conflicts built during the Japanese rule and under the former KMT regime and to include all ethnic groups in an “imagined” community that is geared towards a future yet to be built. In this discourse, the love and identification with the land and the community, both in terms of emotional attachment and civic duties, is a sufficient criterion of membership. Thus, all immigrants, old and new, should in principle be qualified as citizens.

Is the “common-fate community” merely a political rhetoric, or does it fundamentally change the concept of citizenship in Taiwan? This can be examined by the policies regulating (new) immigrants and naturalisation. It is well established that the Nationality Law in Taiwan follows *jus sanguinis* principle, that is, the nationality of Republic of China is inherited from the parents, particularly the father (Chen, Lucy, 2005; Chao; 2004; Tseng, 2006).<sup>312</sup> The criteria for naturalisation of foreigners, including foreign spouses and children, are very strict, which results in a small number of naturalisation as compared to the number of foreigners residing in Taiwan permanently.<sup>313</sup> The foreign guest worker policy is also geared towards maintaining ethnic purity (Chen, Lucy 2005; Wang and Bélanger, 2006; Lan, 2007).

From the discourse on the AGRPTM we can observe the co-existence of both models of “*jus sanguinis*” and “common-fate community”, the former being the dominant principle. First of all, following *jus sanguinis* principle, the biological children and parents of Taiwanese citizens automatically secure Taiwanese citizenship. The measure of compulsory DNA tests of children born in cross-strait marriages and

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<sup>311</sup> This concepts derives from the civil republican tradition emphasising the public community and political participation in which the rights and duties are equally important (Lister, 2000:38-9), which is different from the Marshallian model that emphasises individuals as bearers of rights.

<sup>312</sup> *Jus sanguinis*, “right of blood” in Latin, is a right by which nationality or citizenship can be recognized to any individual born to a parent who is a national or citizen of that state. The previous version of the Nationality Law in Taiwan indicates that if the father is a foreign national and the mother a ROC national, the child should inherit the father’s nationality. As a result of a campaign initiated by the women’s movement and couples of international marriages it was revised as “either father or mother is ROC national” in 2001 (Nationality Law, Article 2) (Chao, 2004:14).

<sup>313</sup> On average only 121 cases of naturalisation per year from 1982 to 1995, among which 65 cases are naturalisation through marriage (Chao, 2004:15). Chao also points out that the strict criteria are based on class differences, so that highly professional foreigners with substantial income and property are eligible to apply for naturalisation. Tseng’s research (2006) confirms her view.

legally adopted children being denied rights to apply for citizenship are extreme examples of how biological relations can be essentialised – to the extent that the state has legitimacy to intervene in private matters in the name of protecting its citizens.

Secondly, foreigners and Mainland Chinese who do not have direct blood relations with Taiwanese citizens can still potentially become a member of Taiwanese society, yet their membership have to be earned over time and they may not enjoy the full citizenship rights as Taiwanese citizens. The argument that “if they [mainland women] love and identify with this land, and are willing to live and die here, they should be one of us”<sup>314</sup> is a clear example of a common-fate community discourse. Similarly, “shall Taiwanese nationals decide to live in China and not return to Taiwan for a period of two years, they have shown that they do not identify with this land and therefore should be treated as Mainland Chinese”,<sup>315</sup> and therefore are not entitled to Taiwan’s welfare resources, as the discussion on the inheritance of veteran’s pensions shows.

The criteria of judging whether mainland brides can be worthy members of Taiwanese society are based on their gender roles. I mentioned earlier that other than the resident status, most areas of the AGRPTM related to cross-strait marriages follow the existing family and marriage laws in Taiwan. Taiwanese family law stated that the legal residence of a wife is her husband’s residence, and a marriage registration is only completed by the household registration where the wife is normally registered under the husband’s household.<sup>316</sup> This explains why it is very difficult for legislators to argue against the humanitarian claim of family union and depriving the rights of mainland brides living with their husbands in Taiwan.<sup>317</sup> Similarly, the naturalisation process of all foreign nationals, including mainland Chinese, is also completed with the household registration (Chao, 2004:15). Thus, it can be argued that the criteria for the citizenship of the mainland spouses are intrinsically linked to their being a member of a Taiwanese household, which follows the patrilocal principle. I explained that in Chinese society traditionally a woman’s status as wife and daughter-in-law’s in her new kinship is often determined by her reproductive capacity, and it is often after her bearing a child and carrying a male heir that her membership in the kinship is fully acknowledged.<sup>318</sup> Taiwanese policy-makers easily adopted this cultural notion and used it to determine whether a marriage is “real” or “bogus”.

From the discourse on residential status and the rights of inheritance, it can be observed that government officers and legislators constantly assume the role of

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<sup>314</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 81(08):23.

<sup>315</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(100):513.

<sup>316</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.1.3 and 1.3.2.

<sup>317</sup> The legislators simply assumed then that all mainland spouses would be women. There was no discussion on mainland “bridegrooms”.

<sup>318</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.3.

“patriarch”<sup>319</sup> by safeguarding the interests of both the patrilineal kinship and the national (and socio-economic) security. This “primordial model of nation” (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Heng and Devan; 1995) that sees nation as an extension of family does not depart from the ideal in the late Qing and early Republican period as explained earlier.<sup>320</sup> In this model women are seen primarily as, or reduced to, biological and social reproducers of the nation, and the power of controlling reproductivity is given to the ultimate head of this extended family, the state (Yuval-Davis, 1997:15; Enloe, 1990).

This shows that although the common-fate community discourse to a certain extent started to take shape in post-martial law Taiwan, when it comes to the issues traditionally categorized in the private domain, that is, marriage and family matters, the concept of nation falls back on the primordial model with a naturalized image of the nation as an extension of family and kinship relations. Rigger’s argument that citizenship in Taiwan is based on civil republican model citizenship is therefore inadequate.

### **3.4 1996-1999: From acceptance to assimilation. Main concern: population quality**

With the growing number of Southeast Asian brides and mainland brides, a discourse of Taiwan being a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society is gradually being shaped in this period. The key policy concern shifts from national security to population quality (renkou pinzhe 人口品質). Although the term “population quality” constantly surfaced in the debates, it was never clearly defined. From the opinions and concerns of various social actors, population quality refers to the education level, hygienic and health awareness. It was assumed that foreign and mainland brides had low education and little hygienic knowledge and that their inability to produce, educate and raise children would lower the quality of life in their family, community and the whole society. In the process of assimilating these brides, various social actors shape the discourse, and mechanisms of social exclusion and control are developed.

#### **3.4.1 Policy discourse**

The policy orientation regulating mainland spouses in this period can be summarized by the slogan of the Mainland Affairs Council “*Harsh on long-term residents; Relax [the measures for] short-term stay*” (juliu congyan, tingliu congkuan 居留從嚴)

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<sup>319</sup> Who is often the eldest male in the patrilineal kin group. See also discussion of *fan* and *jia* in Chapter 1, 1.1.2.

<sup>320</sup> Chapter 1, 1.1.5.

停留從寬).<sup>321</sup> This principle carried on the policy regulating resident status set in the previous period, that long-term resident permit would be issued according to quota set every year, however, the short-term visiting visas would be issued with a more relaxed measure so that the cross-strait spouses could be united and the spouses with “special” needs could extend their stay in Taiwan. Later this slogan was modified and extended to “*Relax [the measures for] livelihood; Harsh on status*” (shenghuo congkuan, shenfen congyan 生活從寬 身份從嚴),<sup>322</sup> which meant that the long-term residents or permanent citizenship would be granted with caution, however, before they were granted, the mainland spouses’ livelihood and rights should be taken care of while staying in Taiwan. The major policy revision and debate in this period centered on the increase of quota and the social rights of the mainland spouses during their temporary stay in Taiwan.

#### **3.4.1.1 Quota system and pressure from the grassroots**

As explained earlier, in the 1992 draft version of the AGRPTM the mandate of the quota was given to the Executive Yuan subject to the approval of the Legislative Yuan. From then on the quota were adjusted every year, which had become one of the major issues of conflicts among party factions in the Legislative Yuan. Table 14 shows the intensive revision of quota in the parliamentary seasons almost in every year.

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<sup>321</sup> The slogan was first announced by the Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council, Suchi, in February 1997, which had never been written as an official guideline but used frequently in official statements, public discussion and press reports. (The *China Times*, 19 February, 1997.)

<sup>322</sup> First used by the legislators during the discussion of the revision of the AGRPTM. *Lifayuan gongbao* 88(14)339-362.



**Table 14 Numbers of Cross-strait marriages and the quota system of resident permits**

Year/Month	Quota allowed per year	Estimated number of pending applications	Expected waiting time	Statements and issues of debates
1992.1	240			
1993.2	300			
1993.12	600	1,740	4 years	MAC states that this quota will not be increased in coming years
1995.4	600	5,898	10 years	among which more than 3000 applicants have children
1995.10	600	8,549	12 years	4,544 applications in 1995 alone; total no. 11,987
1996.4	1,080	10,016	9 years	Before the quota 1,080 was decided, the Immigration Bureau has already announced the increase
1997.2	1,800	12,838	8 years	Extension of temporary stay for spouses of aged and disabled citizens
1998.10	Proposed 2,400 but not passed (remain 1,800)	20,800	12 years	Estimated 6,200 applicants of temporary visa every month
1999.11	3,600	Lost count <sup>323</sup>		Estimated total more than 50,000 cross-strait marriages, only 6,870 were granted resident permits
2000.6	3,600	Estimated 84,000	30 years	
2002.1	Double-track system		8 years automatic	Prior to the new system, average waiting time 15 years
2003.9	Proposed extension			

Source: Various press releases and statements from the Mainland Affairs Council and the Immigration Office, National Policy Agency, Ministry of Interior, ROC<sup>324</sup>

Between the year 1993 and 1995 the quota was fixed at 600 because the political factions were not able to reach consensus. By the mid 1990s, the cultural perception of family union gained supremacy over national security. Starting from 1996, the legislators of all parties came to accept that the cross-strait marriages could not be

<sup>323</sup> The chairman of Mainland Affairs Council Suchi stated that the estimated number of pending application had reached more than 30,000 in October 1999, however, the government authority did not have an accurate figure (the *China Times*, October 9, 1999). The figures of pending applications in Table 14 are not the actual figure of cross-strait marriages because the mainland spouses were only eligible to apply for long-term resident permit status after two years of marriage, and those who chose to stay in the PRC did not apply at all, therefore the actual figure of cross-strait marriages are way higher. This shows again the difficulty of acquiring statistical data, which I discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>324</sup> The figures and issues of debates in this table are compiled by myself. The source of information is from news reports of mainstream newspapers.

stopped but could be contained, therefore the focus of debates centred on the speed of relaxation and whether and how much Taiwanese society could absorb the increasing population. The key policy concern thus shifted from national security to population quality. This turn partially resulted from the overall concern over the rapid increase of other cross-border marriages of spouses from Southeast Asia, which was portrayed by the media and policy-makers as a threat to the population quality in Taiwan. A more significant factor of the relaxation was that local politicians of all parties started to advocate for accepting mainland brides as full members of Taiwanese society upon requests of their local constituencies as a result of the rapid increase of the number of cross-strait marriages. Their campaigns were taken up by their central party authorities and their claims became a focal point of subsequent legal revision.

On the Chinese Valentine Day in 1996, the Chairman of Kaoshiung County council Huang and fellow council member Ye initiated a national organisation *Promotion of the Rights of Cross-strait Marriages*.<sup>325</sup> They compared the cross-strait couples with a Chinese folklore, *niulang* and *jinu* (牛郎織女), two lovers who were forced to be separated and allowed to reunite only one day a year.<sup>326</sup> On August 30, 1996 they organised a public hearing where many local politicians of all parties, including the Head of Kaoshiung County, as well as many cross-strait couples. The public hearing stressed that the quota system violated the rights of family union of cross-strait couples. The policy-makers should be held responsible for breaking these families. The hearing also advocated for the rights of mainland spouses, specifically the rights to work and entitlement of public health care.<sup>327</sup> At the end of the same year, during the National Development Meeting launched by President Lee, the representatives of this organisation held a demonstration outside the conference venue. They protested that the mainland spouses were treated worse than migrant workers and other foreign brides, and the government had no rights to obstruct family union. Few days later, the Mainland Affairs Council announced the increase of quota from 1,080 to 1,800 every year, which was approved by the Legislative Yuan in September 1997. This collective action, the first ever organised by members of cross-strait

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<sup>325</sup> On August 19, 1996 Ye announced that this organisation was launched as a preparatory body, which was never officially registered though. Ye and Huang both married mainland women a week prior to this announcement. Ye was physically handicapped, representing the handicapped people in the council. He claimed that he met a Hangzhou woman, Wang, a little more than a month ago, and in view that they shared the same conviction of the improvement of the welfare for the handicapped, they soon decided to marry. Huang was also married on the same day, but it was not clear from the news where his wife came from and how they met (the *China Times* and the *United Daily*, August 20, 1996).

<sup>326</sup> Chinese Valentine Day (Qisi) falls on July 7 of the Chinese lunar calendar, which is based upon a folklore that Jinu, the daughter of the Heavenly Emperor falls in love with a cowboy Niulang. Their love was not accepted by the Emperor and they were separated and could only meet one day a year on the July 7. Qisi is celebrated both for romantic love and reunion of lovers.

<sup>327</sup> See news reports in all major newspapers on August 31, 1996.

families (including local politicians), speeded up the legislative process, although the proposed quota 1,800 was already announced much earlier by the Immigration Office.

When the Legislative Yuan passed the 1,800 quota, the legislators held the opinion that 1,800 is too small a quota and suggested to increase to 3,600 next year. They also agreed that the legislative process is too slow to react to the rapidly increasing number of cross-strait marriages, for despite the quota increase the estimated time for mainland spouses to acquire long-term resident permit remained more than ten years.<sup>328</sup> The executive authority was unwilling to relax the quota in the fear that it would encourage further growth. In contrast, legislators of all party factions, regardless of their political positions toward the PRC, constantly pushed the executive authority to increase the quota.<sup>329</sup> In 1998, the proposed quota 2,400 was rejected by the legislators with the reason that the quota was too small and not sufficient to absorb the cross-strait couples who had already married. The legislators also demanded the Mainland Affairs Council to develop policies regulating and protecting the rights to work and health care of the mainland spouses.<sup>330</sup>

Other relaxation measures regarding residential status included, 1) the mainland spouses who bore children from Taiwanese citizens, when widowed, can be granted long-term resident permits without waiting in the queue;<sup>331</sup> 2) the mainland spouses of Taiwanese citizens who were handicapped and aged above 60 were granted temporary visas of three years;<sup>332</sup> 3) the mainland spouses who have children aged under six-year-old can apply for extension of stay for six months unlimitedly.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> The Mainland Affairs Council, in consultation with Immigration Office, Ministry of Interior, decided upon the quota. The quota was submitted to the Executive Yuan, which then proposed to the Legislative Yuan for approval (*Lifayuan gongbao* 88(14): 339-362). Such a legislative process took at least one year, provided that the Legislative Yuan discussed and agreed upon right away. The Legislative Yuan could only approve the number proposed by the Executive Yuan and could not decide a new quota, that is why by the time the quota was voted, the new quota had been discussed and proposed already.

<sup>329</sup> Legislators from the New Party and the newly established People First Party held the position that the quota system should be abolished and that once the cross-strait marriages were verified as real (not bogus) all mainland spouses should be given long-term resident permit. See *Lifayuan gongbao* 86(36):86-102; and 88(14)339-362.

<sup>330</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 88(14)339-362.

<sup>331</sup> Revision of the AGRPTM, Article 16, revised on April 18 1997. The legislators stated that this revision was to bring the law to the humanitarian ethics. *Lifayuan gongbao* 86(18).

<sup>332</sup> Guideline of Permission of Entrance of Mainland Chinese People to Taiwan, second revision, enacted on October 15, 1997. Before this revision all mainland spouses were granted six-month visas during *tingliu* stage. The exception was made only for the spouses of handicapped and aged Taiwanese citizen.

<sup>333</sup> Mainland Affairs Council's statement, March 30, 1998.

### 3.4.1.2 Framing the issues: rights to work and health care

The first demonstration of the Promotion of the Rights of Cross-strait Marriages in 1996 was well taken by the public and their demands of the rights to work and public health care were soon incorporated in the law. In April 1997 the revision of the AGRPTM granted rights to work to the mainland spouses who had already acquired the long-term residential permit (Article 17). However, the spouses holding short-term visiting visas, who had to wait an estimated eight to ten years before they obtained a residential permit, were not legalised to work. Although the initiative of the collective action of the cross-strait families did not lead to a permanent organisation, several protests mobilized large numbers of cross-strait family members and mass support followed. In May 1998 several tens of thousands of mainland brides and their family members from all islands gathered outside the Legislative Yuan to protest, further demanding spouses' rights to work during the waiting period. Several legislators from various party factions joined this protest.<sup>334</sup>

At the end of 1998, a mainland bride Liu Yunxiang was caught working illegally and was about to be repatriated together with her five-year-old son. Liu's husband was handicapped and Liu, as an artist, sold paintings on the street to make a living and supported her husband and son. When her case was widely reported by the media, public opinion overwhelmingly sympathized with her and many scholars and politicians openly criticized the existing policies prohibiting mainland brides to work. The dominant opinion was that the majority of the mainland brides married economically and socially disadvantaged Taiwanese men, and they should be allowed to work in order to support the family and particularly their children. Another informal group called *Alliance of Victims of Cross-strait Marriages* was organised, who claimed that 90% of cross-strait families were in poor economic situations, and if the government did not care for their well-being, the least the government could do was to allow them taking care of themselves.<sup>335</sup> The government responded by

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<sup>334</sup> Other demands included: 1) increase quota to 7,300 per year; 2) the mainland spouses who had children to be granted citizenship automatically; 3) long-term residential permit granted after two years of marriage; 4) extension of short-term visiting visas from three to six months; 5) full coverage of public health insurance during the stay in Taiwan. See the *China Times* and the *United Daily*, May 20, 1998. The news reports did not identify a particular organisation or individual that launched this protest.

<sup>335</sup> Liu Yunxiang's case was first reported on November 9, 1998, and the news reports as well as the following column articles by scholars carried on until mid-November and follow-up reports continued till early 1999 in all major newspapers. The *Alliance of Victims of Cross-strait Marriages* was initiated by an individual *Jiang Reijing*, who was the husband of a mainland woman. This organisation was never formalized and the figure quoted was not substantiated by any statistics. Nevertheless, the statement that the majority of cross-strait couples were economically and socially disadvantaged had become dominant discourse. The *China Times*, November 9, 1998

promising to study the possibility of allowing the mainland brides of low-income families to work.<sup>336</sup>

This period also saw the rapid increase of foreign brides from Southeast Asia, particularly from Vietnam and Indonesia. These cross-border marriages were perceived to be a grave social problem of compromising the quality of the Taiwanese population. Although mainland brides and foreign brides were under a different category in the public administration,<sup>337</sup> they were often grouped together in the discussion of social policies as both were considered posing potential threats to the population quality. In 1997, the Research Institute of Family Planning conducted a survey on the fertility behaviour of foreign and mainland brides.<sup>338</sup> As the first survey on foreign and mainland brides conducted by the government, the report indicated that the foreign and mainland brides had high fertility rate because they had little knowledge of conceptive means. Implying that children born of mainland and foreign brides had higher risks of developmental diseases such as Down syndrome, the report also suggested establishing a database of all foreign and mainland brides in order to provide conceptive education and to subsidize their sterilisation.<sup>339</sup> The concern over foreign and mainland brides' high birth rate was not based on the sheer size of the population growth, as by then Taiwan's fertility rate had declined to an alarming degree and the overall population growth was low.<sup>340</sup> Besides, no prior statistical data indicated that the mainland brides gave birth to a higher number of children, instead, a later survey shows that the number of children in the cross-border and cross-strait families were actually lower than in average Taiwanese families.<sup>341</sup> The argument that an increasing number of cross-border marriages would impose population pressure

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<sup>336</sup> The Immigration Office promised to consult the Council of Labour Affairs and the Mainland Affairs Council on this matter. The China Times, February 3, 1999.

<sup>337</sup> For the establishment of the demographic category of mainland and foreign brides and its rationale, see Chapter 2, 2.3.1.

<sup>338</sup> The report was issued in November 1997, the United Daily, November 21, 1997. The Research Institute of Family Planning was a governmental organisation under the Taiwan provincial government, which was later elevated to the national level under the Department of Health, Executive Yuan, now merged as part of the Bureau of Health Promotion, Department of Health.

<sup>339</sup> The first survey on the cross-strait marriages was conducted in 1994 by Dr. Chen Shiao-hong, commissioned by the Mainland Affairs Council. This survey focused on the policy implication of residential status. Another survey commissioned by the Mainland Affairs Council, also conducted by Dr. Chen, on the living condition of mainland spouses in Taiwan was conducted in 1999 (Chen, 1999).

<sup>340</sup> Selya analyses the factors of fertility decline and the policy responses for remedy. He draws the conclusion that the fertility rate in Taiwan was not too low by international standard and the panic reflected in the population policy was not scientifically grounded (2004:185).

<sup>341</sup> The first survey containing information on the actual numbers of children that mainland spouses have was carried out in 2003 in the *Report on the measure of assistance for foreign and mainland spouses*, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Taiwan, which shows that the number of children of the cross-strait marriages is not higher than the average. (*Survey report of the living conditions of foreign and mainland spouses*, Ministry of Interior, ROC, June 2004) Other scholarly research also confirms that the fertility rate of mainland and foreign brides are not higher than Taiwanese women (Yang and Schoonheim, 2008).

was ungrounded. The concern of this survey and the family planning authority was the “quality”, not the size, of the population. The underlying assumption was that the children born by foreign and mainland brides were either biologically inferior or that their mothers lacked knowledge and skills to provide proper education to their children. This assumption was best illustrated by the policy proposal that “all imported brides have to pass the Mandarin literacy test [Chinese] before the resident permits are issued..... This includes the Mainland brides who are categorised as illiterate population.”<sup>342</sup> The media and academic discourse therefore devoted attention to eugenics and how to enhance the foreign and mainland brides’ capability of child-raising.

As a result of the concern over population quality, the mainland spouses who had children aged under six years were exempted from the six-months-per-year waiting period and were allowed to stay in Taiwan with unlimited times of extension of short-term visa, in view that “parents’ living-apart would have negative impacts on familial relations, and without proper care and education their young children would cause or become social problems”.<sup>343</sup>

The health authority and medical professionals played a significant role in targeting mainland brides as a high-risk group of the public health hazard, and as a result, the entitlement of public health care was granted to them without much dispute. In 1997, the Bureau of Public Health issued a statement that the first case of a HIV- positive Mainland bride was discovered. Based on this one case, it identified foreign and Mainland brides as a high-risk HIV group and drew a conclusion that they posed a threat to Taiwanese society.<sup>344</sup> In mid-1999 in the process of revising the Public Health Insurance Law, the Bureau of Public Health Insurance and Department of Health urged legislators to include foreign and mainland brides in the coverage, something which previously only Taiwanese citizens were entitled to.<sup>345</sup> Later that year the revised law extended the coverage to foreign and mainland brides but only those from low-income families. In early 2000, a municipal hospital in Taipei published a report on mainland brides’ prenatal care. It stated that mainland brides

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<sup>342</sup> Consultation meeting between Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROC, April 15, 2003 in Taipei. I attended the meeting as a representative of a NGO working with cross-strait couples. The quotation is from the speech of the Deputy Minister of Interior Affairs.

<sup>343</sup> Press release of Mainland Affairs Council, March 1998, in the *United Daily*, March 23, 1998, p. 2, 1998. According to the statement, the children should be biologically born from the Taiwanese and the mainland spouses. This regulation still required the mainland spouses to exit Taiwan but the re-entry visa can be issued in the third country/region. In view that the travel and documentation cost and time required was much higher and longer if the mainland spouses returned to the PRC, many spouses stopped over in Hong Kong and applied return visa to Taiwan. As a result, the Immigration Office of ROC set up a counter at the Hong Kong International Airport to cater to the needs of mainland spouses.

<sup>344</sup> The *United Daily*, July 31, 1997, p. 4.

<sup>345</sup> Preliminary committee meeting on the revision of Public Health Insurance Law, May 19, 1999. The *United Daily*, May 20, 1999, p. 4.

had high risks of bearing children of Down syndrome because they had lower education and had no awareness of prenatal check-up in China. The report also attributed the high risk to the fact that mainland brides were not covered by the public health insurance and might not be able to afford prenatal care and the hospital bill of childbirth. It concluded that mainland brides should be included in the public health system so that they would not “affect the population and create social burdens”.<sup>346</sup> Before the Public Health Insurance Law was revised, the Taipei Municipal government had already provided free screening tests targeting mainland spouses.<sup>347</sup>

### 3.4.1.3 Recruitment of mainland guest workers

In the early 90s, under the pressure of business elites, the Taiwanese government opened the door to foreign migrant workers. The making of the policy regulating foreign workers and the making of the AGTPTM was concurrent, thus whether to recruit mainland labour was also heavily debated.<sup>348</sup>

Much scholarly work has been devoted to the gendered, class and ethnic dimensions of foreign worker policy in Taiwan. Cheng (2002) argues that Taiwan’s foreign worker policy is designed to prevent low-skilled workers (from Southeast Asia) from obtaining citizenship for the reason of maintaining a mono-ethnic society, hence strict measures of limiting their duration of stay in Taiwan and of prohibiting them marrying and bearing the children of Taiwanese citizens were imposed. Cheng thus terms it “guest worker” policy. Tseng (2004:4) echoes Cheng’s point by adding an observation that the government authority dealing with foreign workers is the Council of Labour Affairs and the law regulating foreign workers is under the labour law, which is different from the majority of other countries defining foreign workers as an issue of immigration control and regulated under the immigration law.<sup>349</sup> Lan (forthcoming) notes that mechanisms of controlling reproductivity and social interaction of foreign migrant workers, particularly female domestic workers, are deployed to ensure that they will always be temporary guests of Taiwan in order to prevent the opportunity of their developing blood ties and permanent social bonds with Taiwanese.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> *Minsheng bao*, February 12, 2000.

<sup>347</sup> The reports and academic research targeting Southeast Asian brides’ health problems and prenatal care were more visible than the one targeting mainland brides. As most of the reports were published after 2000, I will analyse the discourse in the academic scholarship in the next period 2000-2004.

<sup>348</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 81(5).

<sup>349</sup> See also Lu (2008). For an analysis of the composition of class, gender, ethnicity and country of origins of guest workers in Taiwan, see Chang C.R. (2002) and Wang (2001).

<sup>350</sup> It has to be noted that the rationale of preventing female domestic workers from pregnancy is two-fold: one is to prevent them become mothers of Taiwanese and thus earning citizenship, the other is a consideration of their productivity.

Following the logic of maintaining ethnic purity, mainland workers would become a preferred choice compared with workers from Southeast Asia. In fact, business elites also strongly advocated for recruiting mainland workers based on the argument that shared language and culture makes mainland Chinese workers an efficient and higher-quality labour force. However, the political leaders did not agree with the business leaders. All party factions anonymously agreed to prohibit mainland workers to enter Taiwan, except that the MAC and some non-mainstream KMT politicians were in favour of a small quota.<sup>351</sup> Eventually, mainland workers could only be allowed on Taiwanese fishing boats and not allowed to step on the soil of the island for the purpose of labour employment (Tseng, 2004:27). The only way for mainland Chinese to enter and reside in Taiwan legally is via marriage or academic exchange.

In contrast with the earlier debates over national security,<sup>352</sup> consensus about the prohibition of mainland workers was easily reached in view of protecting the rights of Taiwanese workers. The measure of not recruiting mainland workers all together rather than adopting the regulatory approach of a quota system mainly derived from the anxiety that mainland workers were not easily distinguishable from Taiwanese, as a DPP legislator pointed out,

We think that recruiting guest workers from Mainland China will cause a major social problem because it is more difficult to control them. Because the foreign workers cannot survive easily in Taiwan they cannot become illegal easily. On the other hand, Mainland Chinese workers share the same ethnicity with us. They can run away and survive in Taiwan easily. This will cause disorder in Taiwanese society and we will have to pay a very high price.<sup>353</sup>

### **3.4.2. Opinions of other social actors**

So far I have shown how cross-strait families, local politicians, various government offices, legislators and public health professionals together shaped the issues and the legal revision concerning cross-strait marriage migration. Other social actors who vocalised on cross-strait marriages in the public sphere were women's organisations. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, the women's movement in Taiwan in this period had gained momentum in pushing through several legal reforms on gender equality in

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<sup>351</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 81(5):235.

<sup>352</sup> The director of Council of Labour Affairs Chao said, "...as long as Communist China does not stop attempting 'unifying' Taiwan in their way, we cannot guarantee that they would not use mainland labour to do political sabotage." *Lifayuan gongbao* 80(55):343.

<sup>353</sup> *Lifayuan gongbao* 81(25): 356.



the areas of sexual and domestic violence, equal working opportunities and the family law etc.<sup>354</sup> Their opinion on cross-border marriages was often consulted. In a public hearing organised by the Immigration Office in 1997, some feminist scholars and women's rights activists held the view that cross-strait marriages were a form of commodification and exploitation of women, therefore restrictive measures such as the quota system should be maintained.<sup>355</sup> In 1999 11 women legislators from different parties organised a public hearing on cross-strait marriages. These legislators supported the proposal of the Immigration Office to crack down on bogus marriages by screening mainland brides upon arrival, based on the reason that for the emancipation of women, this kind of "marriage without love" should not be encouraged so the Immigration Office should not allow them [mainland brides] to enter.<sup>356</sup> Although most of the women's rights activists and organisations condemned marriage brokerage and considered foreign and mainland brides as victims of globalization and poverty of their home country, most held the opinions that instead of trying to stop cross-border marriages, one should concentrate on offering these brides protection and help them integrate into Taiwanese society.

When the Measure of Prevention of Domestic Violence was enacted on June 24, 1998, many women's organisations and activists were particularly vocal about the domestic violence that foreign and mainland brides suffered. The dominant opinion was that the percentage of foreign and mainland brides suffering from domestic violence was higher than Taiwanese women, because they tended to marry low-income and lowly educated Taiwanese men who were more likely to beat their wives. Furthermore, their violence often was tolerated and justified by their families and community who offered no support to the brides. Several organisations created special projects helping the brides suffering from domestic violence and providing them with shelter and legal assistance.<sup>357</sup> These organisations did not only provide services but

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<sup>354</sup> All these laws were pushed through between 1992 and 1996. I define a women's movement in a very broad sense as individuals or groups who discuss and initiate campaigns related to women's rights and gender equality in the public domain. For the development of the women's movement and issues in Taiwan, see Hsieh and Chang (2005).

<sup>355</sup> Prof. L. J. Jiang in the Geography Department, National Taiwan University and lawyer F.W. Yang. Minutes of the public hearing on the Current Situation of Residential Status and Analysis of Problems of Mainland Chinese Spouses in Taiwan, organised by Immigration Office, National Police Agency, Ministry of Interior, ROC, on November 7, 1997. This public hearing was organised in the midst of public debate and legislative process of increasing the quota and granting rights to work and public health. (The *China Times*, November 8, 1997, p. 5.)

<sup>356</sup> Quoted by Shih (2000:56).

<sup>357</sup> The Pearl S. Buck Foundation was the first organisation that started dealing with cases of domestic violence of foreign brides, and later organised language and vocational trainings for them. The Good Shepherd Foundation offered half-way shelter for brides escaping from domestic violence. The YWCA had special project for Vietnamese brides. The Taipei Association for the Promotion of Women's Rights organised seminars on de-stigmatisation of foreign brides (from brides to Taiwanese daughters-in-law) and advocate for their social integration. I met the staff of these organisations in a consultation

also formalised the protection mechanism by persuading local governments to take up cases of domestic violence via existing channels and resources.<sup>358</sup> These efforts, on the one hand, provided legal protection and social welfare entitlement to these women; however, on the other hand, they reinforced the image of foreign and mainland brides as victims and portrayed the husbands and families as backward and holding on to patriarchal values, which became the dominant image in media representations of cross-border marriages.<sup>359</sup> In 1999 an evaluation report on the newly enacted Measure of Prevention of Domestic Violence pointed out that foreign and mainland brides were more vulnerable to domestic violence than Taiwanese women, yet it also stated that it was particularly difficult to deal with mainland brides as victims because they had questionable marital motivations and did not devote themselves to maintaining their marriages, thus they were partially responsible for failed marriages, broken families and domestic violence. It also implied that many mainland brides abused the law by purposely getting beaten so that they can extend their stay and obtain long-term resident permits earlier. Such accusations targeted only mainland bride victims and not other Southeast Asian brides.

### 3.4.3 Media representations

The period 1996-1999 saw a drastic increase in the number of news report on cross-strait marriages. The increase was partly due to the intensive reports of several high-profile protests and Liu Yunshiang's case, and partly because various government authorities, such as the Ministry of Education, Immigration Bureau, Department of Health etc. (all under the Ministry of Interior), frequently issues statistics and statements attributing foreign and mainland brides for impairing population quality. Many of these statements and statistics targeted Southeast Asian brides; however, mainland brides were often mentioned although they were considered less problematic in these aspects. Therefore the mainland brides also inherited the stigma of foreign brides.

In terms of quantity, there were 289 pieces of news with the terms *dalumei* (大陸妹), 153 pieces on *daluxinniang* (大陸新娘) and 131 on *dalupeiou* (大陸配偶) in

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meeting in April 15, 2003, in which they presented their work. (see footnote 108) At this period there was no particular organisation targeting their service and advocacy on mainland spouses.

<sup>358</sup> By 2000, most of local governments set up special desks dealing with complaints of domestic violence as part of Measure of Prevention of Domestic Violence. They gave special attention to foreign and mainland brides (and their children) and assigned social workers to deal with their cases. Interview with Ms. Lin, social worker of Bureau of Social Welfare, Hsinchu municipal government, May 2002. Staff of Tainan county government also confirmed this information, July 2003.

<sup>359</sup> Wang and Bélanger (2006) analysed how women's and welfare organisation's work and publicity reinforced the image of victims of foreign brides in the context of government's releasing large amount of welfare resources to the issue.

news titles in the period between 1996 and 1999.<sup>360</sup> These terms, used interchangeably in the earlier periods, were gradually differentiated and carrying different connotations. The term *dalumei* had been highly associated with prostitution and sex trafficking, and carried only negative connotations.<sup>361</sup> Unlike the earlier period (1992-1996), the media no longer sympathized with the mainland sex workers, but perceived them as social problems. A news report stated that 70% of the workforce in Taiwanese sex industry were mainland Chinese women, and they had taken away the jobs from Taiwanese women. It also claimed that although some Chinese prostitutes entered Taiwan via smuggling, some came to Taiwan via bogus marriages with the intention of working as prostitutes.<sup>362</sup>

The term *dalupeiou* (mainland spouses) was used mainly when referring to the revision of the AGRPTM and the relaxation of the quota as well as the protests organised by cross-strait families. While the Mainland Affairs Council and some legislators clearly adopted this more neutral term, which referred to both genders, in the official statement and policy debates, other government officials continued to use *daluxinni* (mainland brides), or at times, *imported brides*, in their statements. For instance, the public health authority identified the mainland brides as a high-risk group of AIDS and STDs, and the Ministry of Education targeted mainland brides as part of the illiterate population. As mentioned earlier, since there was no evidence that a large number of mainland women should be considered to be HIV or STD carriers, one can assume that this image, which had been developed since the pre-1992 period, was associated with *dalumei* as prostitutes.

The term “bogus marriage” was widely used in media reports. Several catchy idioms, “bogus marriage, real labour” (jiajiehun zhendagong 假結婚真打工), “bogus marriage, real prostitution” (jiajiehun zhenmai 假結婚真賣淫), and “bogus marriage, real immigration” (jiajiehun zhenyimin 假結婚真移民) were invented by legislators and government officers without clear definition and soon were adopted by the media. Among the 216 pieces of news containing the word “bogus marriage”, 126 (58%) referred to mainland brides. Because there were no clear definition and criteria of “bogus marriages”, it was subjected to subjective interpretations of the policy

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<sup>360</sup> There is a drastic increase of the number of the news in 1999. The news containing the word *dalumei* in the title increase from 65 pieces in 1996, 34 in 1997, 31 in 1998 and 159 pieces in 1999; those containing the word *daluxinni*, 7 in 1996, 26 in 1997, 21 in 1998 and 99 pieces in 1999.

<sup>361</sup> Among 289 pieces of news on *dalumei*, 155 pieces (more than 50%) were related to prostitution and sex trafficking.

<sup>362</sup> See The China Times, July 28 1998, p.4. The news did not specify the source of the information. Since prostitution is not regulated in Taiwan, there is no way of getting an accurate figure on number of sex workers, let alone those from Mainland China. I suspect that it was the opinion and estimation of the people in the sex industry, which of course was not verified. The only scientific research on the mainland Chinese sex workers was one in 2003, by a Master student of Criminology. This research shows that 70% of Chinese sex workers in the sample were smuggled into Taiwan by boat (Yang, 2003).

makers, law enforcement officers and journalists. As long as the mainland brides worked, were suspected to be prostitutes<sup>363</sup> or had “questionable” intentions of settling in Taiwan permanently, their marriage could be considered “bogus”. As a result, almost every mainland bride was under scrutiny and it was difficult to prove that they married out of pure love and had no other intentions.

Media reports on a few high-profile cases played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing the direction of legal revision. On the Yie and Huang’s cases and the first collective action, the focus of the news reports was on Valentine’s Day and their demand for family reunion. Although Yie and Huang belonged to local political and social elites, the emphasis on Yie’s handicap further reinforced the image that only the marginal and socially disadvantaged men would opt for marrying mainland Chinese women. On Liu Yunxiang’s case, the media tended to sympathize with the brides and support their rights to work. However, due to the exposure of these high-profile cases and campaign strategies for the rights to work as well as the framework of the policy (humanitarian concern for allowing spouses of people aged 60 and disabled), mainland spouses were often associated with low-class, low educated, unemployed or aged and sick husbands. In these reports the cross-strait marriages were portrayed as undesirable, yet acceptable as a survival strategy of both men and women in poor economic and social conditions.

The image of the mainland brides in the news reports follows a dichotomy of good versus bad women images. On the one hand, when describing Liu’s and the following cases, Liu is portrayed as hard working, undemanding, willing to sacrifice, caring for sick and aged husband – the images of a good wife and a submissive labour. An example is that when four mainland brides were caught working illegally and facing repatriation, they told the journalists that they felt guilty of sitting at home and not contributing to the household economy.<sup>364</sup> The media felt sympathetic. On the other hand, when the media described the domestic financial disputes and the economic independency,<sup>365</sup> the mainland brides were often described as greedy women and proven to be not identifying with (loving) Taiwan.

#### **3.4.4 Differentiated citizenship: gendered social rights**

The social rights of mainland spouses in the area of rights to work and the rights to public health care are granted with little resistance from the legislators and Taiwanese

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<sup>363</sup> Prostitution in Taiwan is also not defined legally. When associated with the mainland brides it is often used vaguely, which can include entertainment industries such as work in the karaoke bars, beer houses and massage parlours, etc.

<sup>364</sup> The *China Times*, August 25, 2000.

<sup>365</sup> Such as the mainland bride who kept her income from work to herself or sent the money back to her natal families in China and did not contribute the money to the husband’s family.

society at large, as compared with the strong resistance and heated debates on increase of quota. One may argue that once their residential rights are established and they are accepted as a member of Taiwanese society, they will be able to enjoy social entitlements automatically. This is not the case. Mainland spouses were able to enjoy partial social rights before they obtained residential rights. However, these social rights are granted to them not as individual right bearers; they are granted because it is deemed necessary to allow mainland spouses to take care of their family properly. As mentioned earlier, responsibility of care is a private matter and primarily rests on the family and not on the state in Taiwan.<sup>366</sup>

The criterion of residential status for the mainland spouses, as argued in the previous section, is women's gender role as mothers and wives. Social citizenship is also built upon the same criterion, women as the primary care-givers of the family. Not all mainland spouses are allowed to work; only those who married to old, sick and poor men are granted right to work on the condition that their husbands are not able to function as the breadwinner and the wives have to support the family. Not all mainland spouses can enjoy health care; only the mother (or mother-to-be) of future Taiwanese citizens are entitled to public health service in order to ensure "population quality". The mainland brides of these two categories are also allowed to stay in Taiwan on a long-term basis because they need to care for their husbands and children. The assumption is that the other mainland spouses, the ones married to "normal" and economically well-off men as well as the mainland "bridegrooms", are excluded from these social benefits and relaxed measures because they are not deemed to be the primary care-givers. They are also expected to be taken care of by their husband or by themselves.

These criteria are not based on a model of universal, individual equal rights. They are based on the need for the welfare of the family and the greater good of the nation, not for the individual's benefits. This logic of the distribution of welfare resources follows the Universal Breadwinner model of the US and UK welfare systems (Sevenhuijsen, 1998). The underlying assumption of gender role is that women should be dependent on the husband's income and only when the husband is not capable of fulfilling the role of the breadwinner, the wife is allowed to work (Chao, 2004). This model contradicts Marshall's concept of citizens as equal members and right bearers of a political community, and that the political rights come before social rights (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992 and Lister, 1997).<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.1.3, 1.2.3 and 1.3.3.

<sup>367</sup> Feminist scholarship places the concept of citizenship in the centre of gender equality and emancipation. One of the feminist critiques to Marshall's idea is that it limits rights in the public sphere and turns a blind eye on reproductive and care labour, paid or unpaid, in the domestic domain (Young, 1990; Knijn and Kremer, 1997; Lister, 2003). When social and economic rights in the welfare state are linked to the paid labour market, women's obligation to give care does not correspond to their

The consequences of this policy are that it gives incentives to those who are old, sick and socially excluded Taiwanese men to marry mainland women, and that the gender role of women as care-givers is reinforced. In other words, the image that Taiwanese men marrying mainland and foreign women are socially and economically disadvantaged is partly a result of the policy. When the images of submissive, caring and hard-working mothers and wives are accepted, and their love and care to family members are linked to their loyalty to the nation, the mainland women who do not fit into this image are condemned and excluded.

I have demonstrated that there are two ways of gaining Taiwanese citizenship: the inherited citizenship via blood ties and earned citizenship by being a worthy member of the community. The parents and children of Taiwanese citizens born and living in China belong to the former; mainland spouses, particularly women, belong to the latter. One group that is excluded from both inherited and earned citizenship rights is migrant workers. The “common-fate community” and “multiculturalism” discourses proposed by Taiwanese political leaders only apply to the people who have lived in Taiwan for decades. It is still based on shared past and common living experiences which have not been clearly articulated and without a clear time frame and historical references. If we go beyond context of the ethnic divisions between “Taiwanese” and mainlanders and situate the “common-fate community” discourse in the light of the immigration policy and guest worker policy, we discover that the discourse is not entirely based on the civic republican model of citizenship that geared toward the future. This is one of the reasons why it remains a political rhetoric and fails to serve as the foundation of nation based on inclusive and democratic principles as the political leaders envisage.

I have demonstrated in the previous section (1992-1996 period) that the Taiwanese government initially hesitated to grant residential permits to mainland brides but eventually yielded to the powerful discourse of family reunion and to the pressure from the civil society. The public debates on the recruitment of mainland Chinese workers in this period show that the anxiety toward mainland Chinese and the need to differentiate “them” from “us” (Taiwanese) still exist. If “they” cannot be distinguished from “us”, they are likely to become a member of the community, and then they should not be allowed to cross the border at all. This fear is reinforced by the memory of distrust constructed by the KMT’s Chinese nationalism against communists and by growing Taiwanese nationalism which defines Taiwanese identity

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entitlements. Iris Young and others therefore advocate for a gendered differentiated citizenship that cater for the rights and the needs to care (1990; Knijn and Kremer, 1997). Others challenge the individualistic contract-based notion of obligation and advocate a position that prioritises relationship-based responsibilities including those related to care (Sevenhuijsen, 2000).

as versus Chinese. “Regardless of whether they [mainland Chinese] are compatriots, foreigners or enemies, they are not us” (Tseng, 2004:29).

The need to differentiate the immigrant group who has shared ethnicity and cultural heritage from the existing population is not specific to Taiwan. Sassen’s study of immigration history in Europe indicates that the immigrants from similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds are often more excluded than other immigrant groups (1999:134-137). Similarly, the Japanese government developed a category for second- or third-generation Japanese who had migrated to Latin America and who returned to Japan to work. They are ethnically pure Japanese, yet they do not enjoy full rights as Japanese citizens although their rights entitlements and social status are higher than those of other foreign nationals. Sociologists term this type of citizen as “denizen” (Mori, 1997 quoted by Cheng, 2002:24; Yamanaka, 2004).<sup>368</sup> Denizens can be permanently denied a full citizenship, especially the political rights, or they can stay in a state of “becoming citizens” for a very long period (Castles and Davidson, 2000: 94). Mainland spouses in Taiwan can be described as a kind of denizen. However, in contrast with Japanese denizens whose legal and social status is higher than that of other foreign nationals, mainland spouses’ legal status is lower than that of other foreign nationals. This can only be explained by the political process of Taiwanese nationalism against Chinese.

### **3.5. 2000-2004: A new form of exclusion under growing Taiwanese nationalism**

#### **3.5.1 Domestic politics, cross-strait interaction and Taiwan’s mainland policy**

As explained earlier, after the opposition party DPP took power in 2000, the national identities of Taiwanese and Chinese were further polarised with the formation of two political faction “pan-blue” and “pan-green”. Portraying Chinese people as enemies became an effective means of mobilising political support during elections by pan-green coalition.

The cross-strait interaction continued to be marked by growing political disparity and hostility, and increasing economic integration. Before the 2000 presidential election, the PRC had issued a White Paper on One China Principle and Taiwan’s Issue, which proposed three “if” conditions with respect to the PRC deploying military force to attack Taiwan.<sup>369</sup> In reaction, President Chen made the “four noes and one not” pledge in his inaugural speech to affirm that he would not

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<sup>368</sup> Similar to Taiwan, Japan also employs a dominantly “*jus sanguinis*” principle. However, in contrast with Taiwan, the denizen status is higher than that of other foreign nationals.

<sup>369</sup> Issued by Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, PRC on February 21, 2000. Three “ifs” are, 1) Taiwan being separated from China; 2) foreign occupation in Taiwan; and 3) the political authority in Taiwan refuses to solve the dispute on China’s unification by delaying peaceful negotiations. The English title is based on the document issued by the State Council, PRC.

take concrete steps of pushing Taiwan's independence, although in reality he almost violated every principle during his two presidential terms.<sup>370</sup> In 2002 President Chen made a statement known as the "One Country Each Side" talk, in which he officially proposed that Taiwan have independent and equal sovereignty and that the Taiwanese people should have the right to self-determination by referendum.<sup>371</sup> At the same time, the TSU and pro-independence organisations launched a series of *Rectification of Names for Taiwan* actions (*zhengmin yundong*).<sup>372</sup> Another wave of anti-China sentiments developed during the SARS epidemics in 2003 when Taiwan's application to the full membership of the World Health Organisation was blocked by the PRC. It further escalated before and during the 2004 presidential election campaign when President Chen organised a referendum, commonly called Peace Referendum or National Defense Referendum, asking the Taiwanese people to vote on two questions on the cross-strait relations, emphasizing the PRC's military threat.<sup>373</sup> Although this referendum did not deal directly with the issue of Taiwan's independence, the PRC authority interpreted it as Chen's strategic step towards independence and accused him of causing cross-strait tensions.<sup>374</sup> The PRC eventually responded by enacting the Anti-Succession Law in March 2005, which clearly stated an option of employing military force to Taiwan in case Taiwan opts for independence.

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<sup>370</sup> President's inaugural speech, May 20, 2000, which is commonly referred as the "Four noes and one not" speech (四不一沒有). Four noes and one not are, "as long as the PRC does not apply military attacks to Taiwan, I promise that during my term as President I will not, 1) declare independence; 2) change the name of the nation; 3) write the "two-states principle" into the Constitution; 4) organise referendum on the topic relating to Taiwan's unification or independence. [I will also] not abolish the National Guidelines for National Unification and the National Unification Council." Despite his constant affirmation of following these principles, President Chen had violated almost all of them during his first and second presidential terms. For instance, The National Guidelines for National Unification and the National Unification Council were officially abolished on February 27, 2006.

<sup>371</sup> Chen's speech in the annual meeting of the World Federation of Taiwanese Associations, August 3, 2002, Tokyo.

<sup>372</sup> It started with the civil organisations which have membership in international organisations and later various government offices also followed. In July 2002 the ROC charter of the International Lion's Club changed its official name to "Multiple district 300 Taiwan Area Lion Club". The name-changing actions reached its peak by organizing a nationwide parade in which it mobilized during the presidential election campaign in 2004.

<sup>373</sup> The two questions of the Peace referendum are, 1) The people of Taiwan demand that the Taiwan Strait issue be resolved through peaceful means. Should Communist China refuse to withdraw the missiles it has targeted at Taiwan and to openly renounce the use of force against us, would you agree that the Government should acquire more advanced anti-missile weapons to strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities? 2) Would you agree that our Government should engage in negotiation with Communist China on the establishment of a "peace and stability" framework for cross-strait interactions in order to build consensus and for the welfare of the peoples on both sides? The result of the referendum was overwhelmingly in favour of both measures, however, the voter's turnout was less than 50% therefore it was invalidated.

<sup>374</sup> Press Conference of the State Council, PRC, delivered by spokesman Lee Weiye, Beijing, April 14, 2004. The *United Daily*, April 15, 2004, p. 1.



In spite of this political hostility, cross-strait trade and Taiwanese investment in China continued to grow. The economic interaction led to social interaction in various areas which was dealt with by both the national and local authorities with pragmatic and flexible attitudes. The first breakthrough was to agree on direct transport and trade between Taiwan's outlying islands and Xiamen in Fujian province.<sup>375</sup> January 26, 2003 witnessed the historical moment of the first direct flight between Mainland China and Taiwan.<sup>376</sup> Cultural and scholarly exchange and cooperation continued to develop.

The new government adopted a pragmatic yet regulatory approach towards cross-strait social interaction. On the one hand it encouraged exchanges of cultural and professional activities, for instance, by allowing mainland Chinese professionals in the academic and high-technology sectors to work in Taiwan.<sup>377</sup> On the other hand, it strengthened control over smuggling, illegal migrant workers, illegal fishing and bogus marriages from China. Shih, a political scientist at the National Taiwan University, argues that underlying these policies is a deep-rooted distrust towards Mainland Chinese, that "*Taiwanese people worry that mainland Chinese people do not have feelings towards Taiwanese. We do not believe we can be loved by mainland Chinese people*" (2000:56). This distrust was further strengthened by several incidents, such as the SARS epidemics, a tragic case of smuggled mainland Chinese women drowned in the sea at the coast, and frequent crackdown on criminal rings specialized in smuggling mainland Chinese sex workers. Below I will elaborate how these events and the representation of them helped to shape the image of mainland spouses.

### **3.5.2 Media representations: from mainland brides to Chinese whores**

With the growth of cross-strait marriages, media reports increased drastically both in quantity and in diversity of issues. The number of reports on *dalu xinniang* has grown from 153 pieces in the 1996-1999 period to 697 pieces between 2000 and 2003, and the news on *dalumei* reached 754 pieces (from 289 pieces in the previous period). The large amount of media reports created a "mainland bride phenomenon", by which I mean that media selected and actively sought the stories related to cross-border marriages and mainland brides, and treated them as a grave social problem and

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<sup>375</sup> The regulations on the so-called "mini three-links" were passed on March 21, 2000, the day after the presidential election. It is widely regarded as a pioneer project for complete and direct links between Taiwan and China.

<sup>376</sup> This direct flight was a special chartered flight catered for Taiwanese businessmen in China to spend Chinese lunar New Year with their family in Taiwan. It is also widely considered as a trial of the regular direction transportation via sea and air. The direct flight during Chinese New Year was implemented every year since. The negotiations of the regular direct flights are on-going.

<sup>377</sup> Revision of "Bill of Permission of Professionals in the Mainland Area coming to Taiwan to Conduct Professional Activities", August 14, 2001, Ministry of Interior, ROC.

emphasized their abnormality. One example is that the tabloid style magazines regularly featured stories on cross-strait marriages.<sup>378</sup> These features, aimed at entertaining commercial readership, often adopted juicy and at times sexist language, coupled with pictures of young attractive mainland women.

The year 2003 witnessed a series of political and social events that created anti-China sentiments in Taiwan as mentioned earlier. During these events an intensive process of shaping the image of mainland brides as morally decayed women was observed. The mass media, particularly the ones sympathizing with the pan-green coalition, built and reinforced this dominant image by employing several techniques, such as associating the reports on bogus marriage, prostitution and domestic violence of cross-strait marriages with political activities and social events and by placing these stories at the front page, accompanied by photos and bold titles in order to enlarge its significance.

The first visible change of the media's attitude toward mainland brides is "name changing". Starting from mid 2002, the pro-pan- green newspapers started to refer to the mainland brides as Chinese brides (*zhongguo xinni* 中國新娘),<sup>379</sup> which can be interpreted as a strategy of the "name-changing movement" initiated by the TSU to build a distinctive Taiwanese identity by differentiating Taiwan from China. The shift of their usage of the terms "Chinese brides", seen in the context of their antagonism against China, implies that these women are not only neutral outsiders coming from another geographical location, but they are also from a political enemy. Accompanying this name-changing movement are the pan-green legislators' initiatives of uncovering stories of "bogus" marriages and prostitution. For instance, legislators discovered that there were two mainland brides who had married and divorced Taiwanese men 9 times in the past 7 years and almost all of their husbands were veteran soldiers. Without actually interviewing these two women, the media called them "black widows" and portrayed all mainland spouses as ruthless women who appropriated the husbands' wealth and ate them alive afterwards.<sup>380</sup>

In July 2003 the process of another round of revising the AGRPTM commenced in the Legislative Yuan. At the same time, the proposal of the "peace

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<sup>378</sup> For instance, the *China Times* weekly has several feature articles entitled *mainland mistresses of Taiwanese businessmen* (no. 1260); *Dalumei in the detention centre* (no. 1264); *mainland brides from Shanghai* (no. 1293); *Mainland brides who married veteran soldiers in order to "empty" their inheritance* (no. 1340); and *Second spring in mainland brides village (juancun)* (no.1342), etc.

<sup>379</sup> The term *zhongguo xinni* is first mentioned in the media on June 29, 2002, in a press conference organised by the legislator of the TSU Chen Jien-ming, the *Liberty Times*, June 29, 2002. Since then two pro-pan-green newspapers, the *Liberty Times* and the *Taiwan daily*, have adopted this name and use it consistently to replace the formerly used terms *dal* *xinni* and *dal* *peiou*. The other mass media continues to use the terms *dal* *peiou* and *dal* *xinni* but occasionally also use the term *zhongguo xinni*.

<sup>380</sup> The *Liberty Times*, the *China Times*, March 7 2003.

referendum” was also discussed. During this period stories of bogus marriages appeared frequently.<sup>381</sup> In the midst of heated parliamentary debates, a tragic incidence happened that a smuggling boat carrying 26 mainland women crashed in the western coast and 6 women were drowned and died on August 26, 2003. The reports of this event occupied the front and major pages in the following days until the end of August in all mainstream newspapers. Most of the major newspapers sympathized with the smuggled women and condemned the smugglers, who in this case were two Taiwanese men. The pro-pan-green newspapers, however, portrayed them as willing accomplices of the smugglers deserving to die. For instance, a news report entitled “*They come to dig gold, we are emptied*” was placed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> page and with bold title.<sup>382</sup>

The Ministry of Interior associated this smuggling event with bogus marriage and claimed that the majority of the sex workers from Mainland China entered Taiwan via bogus marriages rather than smuggling via the sea.<sup>383</sup> Within two days the Ministry of Interior immediately proposed a screening mechanism of compulsory interviews of all mainland spouses to be implemented in September 2006.<sup>384</sup> In the second half of the year 2003, the news of individual stories of bogus marriage and cracked smuggling operations frequently occupied the front pages of the newspaper.<sup>385</sup> These reports of individual stories, in general journalistic practice, would be placed in the pages of local and social news, and there is no indication of its significance other than the editors’ decision to create a dominant discourse on cross-strait marriages. In addition, these reports are also placed right next to reports on the legal revision of and policy debates on cross-strait relations, some of which were not directly related to cross-strait marriages. For instance, the reports on the parliamentary discussion on the referendum to be held in 2004 were often accompanied by reports on China’s military threat, and individual stories of “bogus” marriage and domestic violence of cross-strait marriages.<sup>386</sup> When reporting the parliamentary discussion on

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<sup>381</sup> For instance, the *Liberty Times* reports a story of bogus marriages in which the homeless Taiwanese men sold their ID and act as bogus husbands. This story, by journalist practice, should be placed in the pages of local and social news, yet the editor of the *Liberty Times* placed it in the page of political news, beside the reports on the commencement of the revision of the AGRPTM. The *Liberty Times*, July 9, 2003, p.5.

<sup>382</sup> “*They came to dig gold, we are being emptied*”, the *Liberty Times*, August 31, 2004, p.2

<sup>383</sup> The report of the Coastal Policy unit to the Executive Yuan, September 3, 2004. Quoted by the *Liberty Times*, September 4, 2004, p.2.

<sup>384</sup> Announced on August 28, 2003 by the Immigration Office, Ministry of Interior. (The front page of the *China Times*, the *Liberty Times* and the *United Daily* on August 29, 2003) Eventually the screening mechanism is only implemented in March 2004. I will explain it in the next section.

<sup>385</sup> For instance, “*Six men registered in the same household, all married Chinese brides*”, the *Liberty Times*, September 25, front-page; “*Bogus marriage, real prostitution*”, the *Liberty Times*, October 3, 2004, front page; “*Chinese brides failed the interview*”, the *Liberty Times*, October 3 October 10, 2004, front page; “*Chinese brides act as spy*”, the *Liberty Times*, October 30, 2004, front page.

<sup>386</sup> The *Liberty Times*, January 7 2004, p2; January 17, p4; February 28, p.3; March 4, p 2.

the screening mechanism, which I will explain later, a news report adopted the title “*We should adopt a high standard in dealing with the influx of the people from the enemy state.....*”<sup>387</sup> By using the technique of juxtaposition, the media not only create an impression that cross-strait marriages are highly problematic, not only for individual families but also for the society at large; it also associates problematics of cross-strait marriages with China’s hostility. In the context of Peace Referendum campaign, such juxtaposition implicitly points to the direction that the mainland spouses are to be treated either as enemies or criminals.

Other than the news related to policy debate, health and rights to work, large numbers of media reports were in local editions. Individual stories about domestic disputes and violence of cross-border families (both victims and perpetrators) and runaway brides are reported frequently in domestic editions of mainstream newspapers. All major newspapers assigned local correspondents to “dig up” news related to mainland and foreign brides,<sup>388</sup> in which domestic disputes were often attributed to structural problems and the inferiority of cross-strait marriages.<sup>389</sup> Nevertheless, some of the reports described positive sides of cross-strait families, emphasizing hard-working and virtuous characters of Chinese women.<sup>390</sup>

### **3.5.3 Policy discourse: regulatory integration and cultural exclusion**

The policy regulating cross-strait marriages took a major turn with the abolishment of the quota system and the implementation of the “double-track system” in 2002, which granted mainland spouses citizenship eight years after marriage. The social policies continued to follow the principle of “*Relax [the measures for] livelihood; Harsh on status*” (生活從寬 身份從嚴)<sup>391</sup> in the previous period and the criteria of rights to work and health care was further relaxed. These relaxation measures triggered a new wave of fear for the uncontrollability of cross-border marriages. A screening mechanism was designed to prevent bogus marriages, implemented in March 2004.

#### **3.5.3.1 Double-track system and new category of resident status**

The abolition of the quota system was mainly due to the realisation that the quota was no longer capable of absorbing the increasing number of cross-strait marriages. By

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<sup>387</sup> “*We should put a high threshold to avoid the immigration of people from the enemy state*”, the *Liberty Times*, September 3, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>388</sup> Interview with journalist Mr. Shiao in the *China Times*, May, 2004.

<sup>389</sup> See, for instance, the *China Times*, February 12, 2004, Hsinchu edition, p.7.

<sup>390</sup> See, for instance, the *China Times*, November 28, 2003, Tainan edition, p.6; the *United Daily*, March 3, 2004, Miaoli edition, p.6;

<sup>391</sup> See footnote 323.

mid-2000 the waiting time was estimated to be 30 years, with 84,000 applications pending (Table 14) and more than 25,000 new applications every year (Table 2, Chapter 2, p.83). The double track system redefined the resident status of the mainland spouses into the following categories, schematized in Table 15.<sup>392</sup>

1. Temporary visa (tuanju 團聚 and tanbing 探病):

The temporary visa is given to the mainland spouses within the first two years after marriage. It is renewable every six months. After six months the spouses can apply for other types of visas, such as taking care of aged parents-in-law (*tanbing*) for three months. By switching between different types of temporary visas, most of the mainland spouses are able to stay in Taiwan continuously, although they are required to exit Taiwan in order to renew the visa. Once exiting Taiwan, the husband will have to apply for a re-entry visa for his mainland wife. Once pregnant, the spouses are automatically granted resident permit for family union and move on to the next stage. Mainland spouses holding a temporary visa are not allowed to work, but they are entitled to the public health insurance if their husbands apply and pay for it, regardless the income level of their husbands.<sup>393</sup>

2. Family union permit (yiqin juliu 依親居留):

After two years of marriage, or when pregnant (with the biological child of the Taiwanese husband), a mainland spouse is granted two years permit, renewable every year, without exiting Taiwan. The permit is issued to a mainland spouse individually, which means that the mainland spouse can apply for renewal and does not depend on her husband. The mainland spouses with family union permits are allowed to work but they will need to apply for a work permit, which is only eligible to low-income households.<sup>394</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> It is called the double-track system (xuanguizhi 雙軌制) because the former quota system is still applicable. Mainland spouses will still get a quota number, however, if they wait for more than 8 years during marriage they could apply for citizenship, provided that they follow the steps and the requirement.

<sup>393</sup> In the previous system only the brides from low-income families can apply for public health insurance.

<sup>394</sup> In the earlier quota system the renewal of mainland spouses' temporary visas and long-term resident permits are applied by their husbands. Mainland spouses are therefore completely dependent on their husbands. The double-track system acknowledges mainland spouses' rights to family union by issuing the permit directly to them. "Low-income households" refer to the family whose collective income does not exceed NTD 30,000 per month (equivalent to USD 860). The family members counted for the collective income includes all members registered under the same household. In the case of cross-strait marriages, the income of the parents of the husband is also taken into account whether they are registered in the same household or not. To apply for the work permit, the spouses first need to go to the local Inland Revenue Office to secure certified documents proving that the family is in the low-

**Table 15: Categories of residential status in the double track system**

Type of permit	Duration	Social rights	Conditions
Temporary Visas (tuanju 團聚 & tanbing 探病)	First two years after marriage; visa for 3~6 months of a year	Right to work: no Public Health: yes, if husbands apply and pay	Once pregnant, automatic move to the next stage ↓
Family union Permit (FR Permit) (yiqin juliu 依親居留)	Two years after marriage (i.e. 3 <sup>rd</sup> ~6 <sup>th</sup> year of marriage) or after pregnancy; Granted for two years, renewable every year	Right to work: yes, only when the family is low-income; Public Health: same as above	↓
Long-term resident permit (changqi juliu 長期居留)	After four years of FR Permit (i.e. 6 <sup>th</sup> ~8 <sup>th</sup> year of marriage)	Right to work: full rights, no need low-income permission	↓
Citizenship (dingju 定居)	After two years of long-term resident permit (i.e. after 8 <sup>th</sup> year of marriage), one is eligible to apply		* Cannot be a member of Communist Party; * Renounce the nationality of the PRC; * Proof of financial support

Source: Association for the Promotion of Cross-strait Marriages (FATS)<sup>395</sup>

### 3. Long-term resident permit (changqi juliu 長期居留):

After four years of previous stage of family union, the mainland spouses can apply a long-term resident permit for three years. The spouses holding a long-term resident permit are allowed to work without a work permit. In short, mainland spouses holding a long-term resident permit are entitled to equal social rights as Taiwanese.

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income category. They then need to send an application form to the Council of Labour Affairs, Executive Yuan. The application and certification need to be signed by the husband and parents-in-law. Without the permission of her husband and in-laws a mainland spouse will not be able to apply for a work permit. Information provided by the FATS and confirmed by my fieldwork observation. During my fieldwork I help several cross-strait couples to fill the application form and acquire the low-income certificate from the Inland Revenue Office in Baihe, Tainan.

<sup>395</sup> The information in the table is based on two revised regulations: “Regulation of Permission for Mainland Chinese to Enter Taiwan Region” (大陸地區人民進入臺灣地區許可辦法) and “Regulation of long-term residence or citizenship of Mainland Chinese in Taiwan Region” (大陸地區人民在臺灣地區定居或居留許可辦法), both are enacted on September 11, 2002, by the Immigration Bureau, National Policy Agency, Ministry of Interior, ROC. The Association for the Promotion of Cross-strait Marriages (FATS) is the first registered organisation with members of cross-strait couples and family members. FATS summarised this information and distributed to its members. Translated by the author.

#### 4. Citizenship (dingju 定居):

After two years of long-term resident status, mainland spouses can apply for a permanent resident permit and Taiwanese citizenship, the latter on the condition that they have to give up the nationality and citizenship of the PRC. They cannot have any prior or current affiliation with the Communist party or Liberation Army of the PRC; and their husbands have to prove that they have sufficient financial means to support the wives, with a monthly household income higher than NTD 31,680 or a saving higher than NTD 380,000 in the bank account. A mainland spouse who obtains citizenship status gets a Taiwanese ID and passport, and enjoys nearly full political and social rights as a Taiwanese citizen.<sup>396</sup>

The double-track system introduces a gradual process of naturalisation that mainland spouses' political rights and social entitlements "grow" at different stages. At the first stage (temporary visa) the mainland spouses have no rights of their own and are dependent on their Taiwanese spouses both economically and legally. This period is meant to screen out bogus marriages, because once the spouses are pregnant, in other words, have proven that their marriages are genuine, they can proceed to the next stage. At the second stage (family union permit), the mainland spouses have rights to a number of social entitlements, however, they are granted only when their families need these women's care or economic contribution. This follows the "need approach" of the breadwinner model which I have explained in the previous section (see 3.4.4). The mainland spouses also started to enjoy limited legal rights, for instance, they are able to apply for renewal of their visas by themselves as long as they can prove that their marriages are valid. However, they can only work if their husbands and parents-in-law approve and apply for a work permit on their behalf. The other area of social protection is that if the mainland spouses suffer from domestic violence and are able to prove it, they can apply for the renewal of the resident permit even after separation or divorce.<sup>397</sup>

At the third stage (long-term resident permit), the mainland spouses enjoy full social rights as Taiwanese but exercise no civil rights. Eventually, after 8 years of marriage, mainland spouses can apply for full citizenship. By then, it is assumed that

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<sup>396</sup> Nearly full political rights" refers to the regulation that a mainland spouse after acquiring citizenship has no right to run for public offices or stand for election. Regulation of long-term residence or citizenship of Mainland Chinese in Taiwan Region, the fifth revision enacted on September 11, 2002, article 31.1.

<sup>397</sup> The rights to continue to reside in Taiwan after divorce in the case of domestic violence are rather controversial and causing heated debates. Some women's rights activists welcome such a decision and consider it an achievement of the protection of women from violence. Others worry that this might become an easy way for mainland spouses to acquire permanent resident status and will give them incentives to pretend to be victims of domestic violence, and encourage "bogus" marriages. (The *China Times*, October 7, 2002; the *Liberty Times*, June 6, 2003.)

the mainland spouses' loyalty to the family and to Taiwan is established and that they can be accepted as a full member of Taiwanese society. The last hurdle for mainland spouses to become Taiwanese is to renounce the nationality of the PRC. Taiwan implements a duo-nationality system; spouses from other countries are allowed to maintain their nationality when acquiring Taiwanese citizenship. Therefore renouncing the PRC nationality can be interpreted as a symbol of proving loyalty to Taiwan. Those who are or have been members of the Communist Party in the PRC or have worked for the PRC military are barred from Taiwanese citizenship permanently because they can be potential "spies" working for PRC intelligence and will threaten Taiwan's national security.<sup>398</sup>

After acquiring Taiwanese citizenship, mainland spouses nominally enjoy full political and social rights. However, in practice, they are still being differentiated from Taiwanese and discriminated. For instance, according to members of the FATS, Taiwanese IDs for mainland spouses contain different numbers than that of ordinary Taiwanese citizens. Mainland spouses worry that the difference in numbers may constitute a ground for discrimination in seeking labour employment.<sup>399</sup> During my fieldwork in Hukou, some brides complained that they experienced difficulties in opening a bank account due to differences in the numbers on their Taiwanese IDs.

### 3.5.3.2 Screening mechanism and problems of bogus marriages

Earlier I have illustrated that a series of political and social events, especially smuggling and drowning of six Chinese women at the end of August 2003, created an impression that bogus marriage is a grave social problem. The Ministry of Interior associated this smuggling event with the bogus marriage and claimed that the majority of sex workers from China entered Taiwan via bogus marriages rather than via smuggling.<sup>400</sup> Within two days the Ministry of Interior immediately proposed a screening mechanism of compulsory interviews of all newly married mainland spouses to be implemented in September 2003.<sup>401</sup> This screening mechanism is part of the new bill of setting up an independent Immigration Department to coordinate the

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<sup>398</sup> Quotation from legislator Yie and Chairperson of the MAC Su, *Lifayuangongbao*, 91(23).

<sup>399</sup> Conversation with members of the FATS, in a gathering in Taipei office, November 2003. The gathering was to celebrate Liu obtaining a Taiwanese ID after 11 years in Taiwan. She cried in tears holding her ID saying, "*thinking of all the sufferings and discrimination I endured in the past 11 years – it is unspeakable! I only hope that I will be treated equally [as Taiwanese] from now on, but I know it is not possible.....*" She then encouraged her fellow mainland brides, "*Be patient. It is a very long way but your day (of getting an ID) will come!*"

<sup>400</sup> The report of the Coastal Policy Unit to the Executive Yuan, September 3, 2004. Quoted by the *Liberty Times*, September 4, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>401</sup> Announced on August 28, 2003 by the Immigration Office, Ministry of Interior. (The front page of the *China Times*, the *Liberty Times* and the *United Daily* on August 29, 2003) Eventually the screening mechanism is only implemented in March 2004. I will explain it in the next section.



overall matters related to immigration previously dealt with by various units under the National Policy Agency and Council of Labour Affairs. Due to the smuggling and drowning event, the legislative procedure of this bill was speeded up to such an extent that within in a week the Executive Yuan had passed the bill. Without the smuggling event that caused a social panic, the new immigration policy would not be accepted and enacted so quickly. The equation of the bogus marriage with smuggling was also groundless and not supported by evidence.<sup>402</sup>

The screening mechanism announced on August 29, 2003 introduced three “gates” of interviews – exterritorial (prior to marriage), upon arrival at the border (the first entrance) and after entrance (at the place of residence). Due to the difficulties of implementation, the exterritorial gate was cancelled in the final version in March 2004.<sup>403</sup> In September 2003, that is a week after the drowning event, the Immigration Bureau started to interview 10% of all mainland spouses arriving at the airport. The mainland spouses of old veterans, handicapped and aboriginal Taiwanese were particularly targeted. The couples with a wide age gap (laofu shaoqi 老夫少妻 or laoqi shaofu 老妻少夫) and “young and pretty” mainland spouses whose physical beauty does not “match” their husbands’ are especially singled out for screening.<sup>404</sup> Once rejected, they would be refused entry and repatriated immediately.<sup>405</sup> In March 2004, the screening mechanism was extended to all mainland spouses, who would be interviewed upon arrival in the airport. It is reported that the immigration officers estimated to screen out one third of interviewees everyday as it was estimated that one third of cross-strait marriages were bogus.<sup>406</sup>

This screening measure drew criticism from various social groups. The human rights organizations criticized that this measure discriminated aborigines, veteran soldiers and handicapped by assuming that their marriages were all bogus. Women’s rights groups welcomed the government’s resolution of preventing bogus marriages,

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<sup>402</sup> According to an informant working in the sex industry, Chinese sex workers entered Taiwan via smuggling and via bogus marriages belong to very different groups. The escort girls from China working in Southern Taiwan mainly entered via boat smuggling, because the cost was cheaper and the risk lower for the business operators. My interview with Mr. Kuang, who is an “agent” of six young Chinese women working as escort girl in Kaoshiung city, November 1, 2003, Kaoshiung.

<sup>403</sup> This is mainly because Taiwan has no “official” offices in the PRC who can conduct such screening. The Southeast Asian brides are interviewed by the diplomatic offices in their country of origin before the first entry issue was issued. The husbands of the Southeast Asian brides also have to be interviewed. This, however, was not possible for the mainland brides.

<sup>404</sup> Central News Agency, August 29, 2003; Similar reports in the *Liberty Times*, August 29, 2003, front page; the *China Times*, August 29, 2003, p.2.

<sup>405</sup> Lin is my key informant in Hukou and went to Fuqing to marry a woman at her early 30s after I completed my fieldwork. As Lin is a blind man aged late 50s, they were suspected of bogus marriage and his wife Ai was blocked at the airport and sent back to China. Despite several appeals that Lin made to various government departments and legislators, Ai was not able to enter Taiwan and unite with Lin up to today. Follow-up telephone conversation, September, 2005.

<sup>406</sup> The *China Times*, March 1, 2004.

however, they argued that the criteria of selecting “suspicious” mainland spouses should not be based on physical appearances.<sup>407</sup>

As argued earlier, the percentage of bogus marriages (10 %) is not supported by any research, nor are the criteria of screening. In the lack of transparent criteria and directives, the immigration officers are free to pick up interviewees and to determine whether to grant them entry based on subjective views. Chao (2006) notes that many immigration officers have prior negative images toward cross-strait marriages and consider all mainland brides greedy and morally questionable, and their husbands stupid and backward. She attributes the “*extremely sexist and racist*” attitudes of immigration officers to the bureaucrats’ superiority inherited from the earlier KMT propaganda against communism as well as the dominant images presented in the media.<sup>408</sup> From my own fieldwork it becomes clear that many matchmakers and mainland brides share the same observation and complain that the officers adopt extremely threatening tones and ask details about the intimate sexual life of the couples. If a mainland spouse and her husband, who are questioned separately and simultaneously, hesitate to answer, they are being suspected of bogus marriage. If they answer without any hesitation, they are accused of synchronizing their answers to trick the officers, and they are also suspected of having bogus marriage. Many mainland brides complain that they are treated as prostitutes during the interview.

By March 2004, not only all mainland spouses are interviewed upon arrival, they also have to report to the district police station regularly when they reside in Taiwan. The local police are given mandate to visit the houses of cross-strait couples to monitor their marriages.<sup>409</sup> This means that all mainland spouses are treated with suspicion or as potential illegal migrants or prostitutes. Mainland spouses living in the urban areas complain that they are stopped on the street sometimes and treated as prostitute.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Statement of chairman of Awakening, August 29, 2003, News of the Public Television, 21:00.

<sup>408</sup> Chao’s research is based on discourse analysis of immigration policy toward mainland spouses and her interviews with a mid-level officer in the Immigration Bureau.

<sup>409</sup> Regulations on Finger prints and database of Mainland Chinese in Taiwan region (大陸地區人民按捺指紋及建檔管理辦法), enacted in April 8, 2004, article 3 and 8.

<sup>410</sup> Interview with Jie, February 2004. Jie told me that she once went to the convenience store downstairs of her apartment in late evening and was stopped for questioning by the police. As there was an erotic Karaoke pub in the neighbourhood, the police immediately assumed that she was an illegal sex worker working in the pub, once discovering that she spoke Sichuan accent. She had to phone her husband to explain to the police that she was a “good woman” (*liangjia funu* 良家婦女). Such erotic pubs are quite widespread in Taiwan, particularly in Taichung where Jie lives. Since this incident the local police visited Jie’s house regularly in spite of their knowledge of her occupation and family situation. Jie and her husband consider the police’s visit as harassment yet they have no channel to make an official complaint.

### 3.5.4 Social exclusion and nationalism

The period 1992-1996 defined the resident status and corresponding political citizenship of mainland spouses. In the period 1996-2000 partial social citizenship was granted to help mainland spouses integrate into Taiwanese society. In the period 2000-2004 the popular discourse takes a drastic turn and became hostile toward mainland brides. On the one hand, the established strict measures on political and social rights are further relaxed, the resident status is adjusted and waiting time shortened, and the rights to work and to public health are granted to all mainland spouses. On the other hand, mechanisms of marginalizing mainland women by building a dominant image of sexually loose and morally questionable women take shape. The latter is the result of some mass media and politicians' strategies of forming a distinctive national identity by separating Taiwanese from Chinese and by emphasizing China's threat to Taiwan.

Why is the nationalist sentiment against China and Chinese being translated into a de-moralized and sexualized image of mainland Chinese women? Why do overriding concerns of family union and family welfare in the previous two stages cease to take effect in this period? Because the political and social citizenship of the mainland spouses has been established in the previous two periods, other mechanisms of "otherising" them have to be found. The mainland spouses have no clear link with China's military and verbal threat to Taiwan, and there is little evidence that most of them threaten the national security by spying and obtaining confidential information concerning national defense. There is also no direct evidence that large numbers of the mainland brides enter Taiwan with the intention to prostitute via the bogus marriages. The criterion of political and social citizenship is based on women's gender role as the reproducers of the nation and care-givers of Taiwanese families. An effective way of discrediting mainland spouses is to scrutinise their gender roles.

If a woman is suspected of, not necessarily proven, not being able to fulfil her gender roles as a good wife, mother and daughter-in-law, there is no need of allowing her to enter Taiwan for family union and care-giving. Scrutinising a woman's morality and sexual chastity therefore become a powerful discourse of their social exclusion. By doing so, the state does not and need not counter the ideology of family union and family welfare. Instead, it continues to play the role of "patriarch" and protectors of its citizens from the threat of evil-intentioned outsiders, in this case, morally and sexually corrupted women.

The screening mechanism not only affects those who are not able to enter Taiwan and the families who are separated, it also casts overall suspicion to all mainland spouses. It creates a form of social and cultural exclusion based on morality

and women's sexuality. Mainland spouses have to constantly prove that they are good and chaste women to the police and to the community they live in.

### 3.6 Concluding remarks

In a period of less than two decades, Taiwan's immigration policy and particularly the ones governing cross-strait marriages have gone through a process of legalisation, assimilation and new mechanisms of exclusion in the rise of nationalism. Such process, that often takes decades to develop gradually elsewhere, for instance, in Europe (Lucassen et. al. 2006), has been compactised in Taiwan within a very short period of time. The period 1992-1996 defines the resident status and corresponding political citizenship of mainland spouses. The media's portrayal of mainland brides in this period is mixed, containing images of victims of poverty and smuggling, hard-working and submissive wives and daughters-in-law. In the period 1996-2000 the partial social citizenship is granted to help the mainland spouses integrated into Taiwanese society. In the media representation the image of good wives and daughters-in-law continue to exist, which is combined with negative images of mainland brides as cheap and exploited labours (victims) and beneficiary of welfare resource. In the period after 2000, the policy is built upon the principles of protecting the rights of those who had entered and those who contribute to Taiwanese society by fulfilling the gender role, while screening out those who have not yet entered and who is a potential threat to Taiwanese nation and family. On the one hand, the established restricted measures on political and social rights are further relaxed. On the other hand, mechanisms of marginalising mainland women by building a dominant image of sexually loose and morally questionable women take shape and border-control mechanism is developed to prevent bogus marriages and prostitution.

The shift of policy orientations and media representations in these three periods corresponds to the periods of political process of Taiwan's nation-building and the rise of Taiwanese nationalism. Isn't it more logical that the pro-Chinese-identity political factions and supporters would welcome mainland brides while the pro-Taiwanese-identity factions and its supporters would be hostile against them? The analysis of the policy and political debates in this chapter show that this is not the case. The demographic analysis of ethnic background of Taiwanese husbands in Chapter 2<sup>411</sup> also shows that ethnicity and national identity does not constitute the primary criteria of mate choice. It turns out that the Taiwanese men and families from all ethnic groups (except for the aborigines) and regardless their national identities, continue to consider mainland women as a desirable mate choice. This implies that in

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<sup>411</sup> Chapter 2, 2.3.7.

the perceptions and daily experiences of the cross-strait couples and families, the public discourse may not be as important or influential as other marital motivations and considerations that will be discussed in the next two chapters.

The process of legalisation, assimilation and exclusion is gender and “ethnically” specific geared toward female mainland spouses. I have argued extensively the rationale of granting and denying various aspects of rights and entitlements to mainland spouses is primarily based on women’s gender role as mothers and reproducers of the Taiwanese family and nation as well as the care-givers. Foreign spouses from economic developed regions are not subjected to restrictive measures to be entitled to political and social rights, and their citizenship are not tied to the reproductive capacity. Although Southeast Asian brides are also constructed as the inferior others by Taiwanese, the legal barriers for them to enter and live in Taiwan is less harsh and they do not experiences the same moral suspicion towards their sexuality. The mechanism of their social exclusion is different from that of mainland brides.

Both Mainland brides and Southeast Asian brides are deemed as a potential threat to the population quality by producing and rearing Taiwanese children of inferior physical traits and learning ability. The measures of educating them and assimilating them are similar. Yet mainland brides are singled out as posing a threat to national security. Their perceived threat to national security does not demonstrate in the areas of the military attacks or acquiring of vital information of the national defence. It demonstrates mostly in bogus marriages, prostitution and human smuggling and in a less degree in appropriating economic resources of Taiwanese families and therefore the wealth of the nation. The border and mechanism of social and cultural exclusion based on women’s sexuality to disqualify them as reproducers of the nation prove to be very effective. The association between bogus marriages, prostitution and national security renders an interesting case for the study of nationalism manifested in a gendered and ethnically specific form.

## Chapter 4 Matchmaking practices and mate choice in cross-border marriages

*Waiting for the one who has a red thread in his finger,  
who will chase away my lonely fate.*

*I deepen the marital-yuan line in my palm and erase the crying mole in my face.*

*Waiting for you ~~~ to take my hand and treasure me.*

*Red thread (ang sua), Jianghue, 2002<sup>412</sup>*

In Chapter 2 I explain the gendered (global and local) political economy that pushes women into cross-border marriages as well as the demographic factors that drive Taiwanese men to marry foreign women. When examining these structural factors I observe that they cannot fully explain the mate choice regarding ethnicity and origins of both brides and bridegrooms. At that point I develop an assumption that mediators - the marriage brokers and/or matchmakers -- play an important role in influencing mate choice. In Chapter 3 I argue that one of the reasons that cross-strait marriages are seen as inferior is attributed to the commercialisation of these marriages (*maimai hunyin*). This chapter looks at the matchmaking practices, mate choices and money transactions of cross-strait marriages in order to investigate the role of brokers/matchmakers in cross-border marriages and by doing so, questions what commercialisation of marriage means and why is it a less sanctioned form of marriage.

Two flows of reasoning are laid out: the first is to examine the similarity and deviation of matchmaking practices and money transactions in cross-border marriages as compared to that of the “normal” marriages among locals in the light of traditional ideals and contemporary practices in Taiwan and China, which I sketch in Chapter 1. The second is to challenge current feminist scholarship, both western and indigenous, the claims of women’s movements and established international conventions on trafficking and trade in women, which set the universal moral standard of modern marriage regimes and have profound impacts on how the commercially arranged marriages are understood. These two reasonings attempt to answer one question: does commercially arranged marriage necessarily make women and brides traded commodities?

I will start by explaining several concepts used by feminist scholars, the women’s movement as well as local terms used by the media reports in Taiwan and China to refer to “mediated” cross-border marriages. I use the term “mediated

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<sup>412</sup> Red thread (ang sua) is a popular Fokkienese song in Jianghue’ s album “Ang Sua” released in 2002 by Dongneng Record company in Taiwan. Red thread is a metaphor for marital *yuan*. For discussion of yuan see Chapter 1, 1.4.4.

marriage” to describe a marriage in which the potential brides and bridegrooms are introduced with a prior motivation of marriage. Mediated marriage is a neutral term that acknowledges the mediators, mediation process and prior motivation of marriage without a loaded moral connotation on the economic transactions involved in the process. Then the majority of this chapter will be devoted to describing the practices of intermediation and matchmaking, in which I develop a typology of marriage brokers/matchmakers based on their relationship with the cross-border couples and their families prior and after marriage. In the conclusion I will compare the perspectives of the actors and the meanings they attach to matchmaking practices and economic transactions with the existing concepts and discourses I mention in the beginning of this chapter. By doing so, I will discuss the problematics of the definition of commercially arranged marriage and of the dichotomous distinction between a love marriage and a commercially arranged marriage.

In this chapter I draw on empirical data of cross-border marriages of Taiwanese men and women from both mainland China and Southeast Asia, in view that they share striking similarities in matchmaking patterns as well as that they are both regarded as commercialised forms of marriages, as mentioned in chapter 3.

#### **4.1. Existing concepts associated with commercially arranged marriages**

##### **4.1.1 Human trafficking and trafficking in women**

The trafficking in women and girls has been a highlighted agenda item in the United Nations, EU, international organisations (IOM, ILO) and international human rights and women’s movements. According to the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Organised Crime” (2003), human trafficking is defined as “the transport of human beings or human parts, by means of threat or coercion, for the purpose of exploitation”. Three aspects are emphasised in the trafficking discourse: 1) the use of force, including deception and manipulation of consent; 2) its exploitative nature and the vulnerability of its suffering victims, at times described as “slavery”; 3) illegality, especially by organised crime networks. Although not limited to it, the trafficking of women and young girls into prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation is the most highlighted part of the agenda against trafficking.

The concept of trafficking has been much criticised for its problematic definitions of force and deception and for its ignoring migrants’ power and agency. Central to the feminist debates around the issue of trafficking, sexual slavery and objectification of women’s body arise from long-standing feminist dispute over the meaning of prostitution. The “abolitionist” and the sex workers activists’ positions on

trafficking are part of a larger contention between radical feminists and prostitution rights advocates. Radical feminists regard the selling of the body as the selling of the self. They therefore characterise prostitution as a self-estranging activity that carries grave psychological and physical consequences for women (Barry, 1995). Because prostitution corresponds to the sexual (ab)use of a woman's body, and sexuality is understood as inherently private/intimate and not separable from the self, a woman's selling of her sexuality, i.e. the self, to a man is an act of the objectification of her body (Pateman, 1988). The sex worker activists' position associates prostitutes with other oppressed sexual minorities and emphasises the challenge prostitution represents for normative monogamous heterosexual sexuality (Andrijasevic, 2004:65).

#### **4.1.2 Mail Order Brides (MOB) and commodified marriage (*shangpinhua hunyin* 商品化婚姻)**

MOB is generally defined as a system of introduction provided by commercial institutions for the prime purpose of marriage with a foreign national, or more specifically for the women entering into international marriages by the use of such a system (del Rosario, 1994:2). Three elements are emphasized: 1) profit making; 2) institutional matchmaking operations; 3) cross-border situations. What is not reflected in the definition is that the term "mail-order" carries the connotation of women for sale as commodities as advertised in catalogues. However, it is not clear whether the commercial element involves the actual price of buying the commodity or the fee charged for providing services to meet such women.<sup>413</sup> The latter can be so broad as to include a dating service and online love club. Another problem is that it does not point out that MOB often refers to women from economically less developed countries that are to marry men from richer countries. Few people would consider a British woman who is dating a German man via a commercial friendship club a mail order bride.

The term "mail-order bride" is not commonly used in academic scholarship and popular representation. Instead, the term "commodified marriage" (*shangpinhua hunyin* 商品化婚姻) is used, firstly by Hsia, who is the first Taiwanese scholar to have written about mediated marriage between Taiwanese men and Indonesian women in the mid-1990s (2002). As briefly explained in Chapter 2, Hsia adopts the framework of world system theory and considers mediated marriages, together with capital and labour, a commodity in the capitalist system. She does not clarify what is

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<sup>413</sup> The proposed International Marriage Broker Act in the USA defines it as broadly as "providing dating, matrimonial and social referrals, or matching services between United States citizens or legal permanent residents and non-resident aliens by providing information that would permit individuals to contact each other".



commodified (women's body, labour, relationship, sexuality or the marriage itself?) and how it is so. Nevertheless, the term *shangpinhua hunyin* has found its place at the centre of virtually all of the literature on the subject in Taiwanese scholarship, and as a result, has a profound impact on popular discourse and imagination. The only scholars who care to develop a definition are Wang and Chang, in their study of the marriage brokerage industry in Vietnam, in which they argue that "the process of international marriage is gradually being transformed to enhance profits to various intermediaries, which we call commodification" (2002:95). This definition is not far from the definition of the MOB mentioned above. However, they also acknowledge that not all international marriages are mediated, and definitely not all by institutions. Other scholars argue that cross-border marriages are increasingly mediated by social networks rather than by institutional marriage brokers (e.g. Tseng, forthcoming). Wang himself does not attach a negative label on "commodification" and is not in favour of a prohibition of marriage brokering.

#### **4.1.3 Trade marriages (*maimai hunyina* 買賣婚姻)**

Commonly used by the Taiwanese and Chinese, the term *maimai hunyin* has negative connotations of buying and/or selling wives. It is not necessarily used in a cross-border context, but the current phenomenon of cross-border marriage in Taiwan is predominantly considered as a trade marriage. The Marriage Law in the PRC (1950) defined *maimai hunyin* as a feudal practice and clearly outlawed any economic transaction, i.e. brideprice and dowry. The ban on marriage transactions was later lifted in the 1980's revised draft, and but gives no clear definition of *maimai hunyin*. In Taiwan the term has never entered any legal documents and stays in the popular discourse without clear definition.

When I investigated people's perceptions of this term I came across several diverse yet confusing meanings. No one seems to be able to give a clear definition of *maimai hunyin*, but it is clear what is "not" *maimai hunyin*. Below I will discuss briefly the terms used to compare or contrast to *maimai hunyin*.

Blind marriage and arranged marriage: Both terms refer to marriage decisions and mate choices made by parents without consulting the potential couples, especially the brides. In the PRC it is called *baoban hunyin* (包辦婚姻). While blind marriage is considered a feudal, out-dated practice and outlawed in the PRC, "arranged marriage" is a more neutral term that in modern times refers to parental choice with the consent of the couple. Arranged marriages require matchmakers, whose role has been described earlier in Chapter 1. Arranged marriage is considered "traditional", neither

modern nor necessarily negative since it is not uncommon to “first wed, then love” (Jordan, 1999). It is a common practice and the parents who take initiatives of arranging a mate or simply facilitating the introduction often feel that it is part of their responsibility to do so.<sup>414</sup>

Love marriage (Lien ai hunyin 戀愛婚姻): In contrast to the arranged marriage, love marriage couples enter into marriage of their free will after a period of courtship. It emphasises the individuals’ independent choice and conjugal relations. The social status of their natal families is not an important factor. The love marriage has been constructed as the ideal form of modern marriage. In Chapter 1 I have explained that the “love” in love marriage does not necessarily refer to romance and passion, it can also mean compatibility and companionship of two individuals, in contrast to the matching-door principle of the social status of two families or kin groups. The love marriage in China has been promoted as a socialist ideal and as a means to achieve heterogamy and social equality.<sup>415</sup> Despite the ideal, the pattern of politically and socially selective mate choice is still observed and homogamy and women’s hypergamy are still persistent.

In his ethnographic research on matchmaking in both Taiwan and the PRC, Jordan argues that in reality the line between the arranged marriage and the love marriage is very vague.<sup>416</sup> An example is that potential mates can easily fall in love in one or two brief encounters arranged by semi-professional matchmakers and will then enter into a love marriage (1999). Potential couples who meet on their own have to win the approval of their parents and might still need a matchmaker to negotiate the brideprice and wedding arrangements. There is no commercial mechanism in the introduction and negotiation but a gift exchange and financial transactions are always present at the wedding.

Marriage of convenience<sup>417</sup>: This is a marriage for purposes other than “love”, whatever the definition. Marriage as a means, a contract, an exchange of terms that both parties benefit from, although not necessarily financially. It is also the individuals’ independent choice. In contrast to love marriages, marriages of convenience are not morally sanctioned and are considered problematic. However, it carries much less moral condemnation than the term trafficking or commodification. Some Vietnamese scholars in fact use this term instead of trafficking to describe the

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<sup>414</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.1.4.

<sup>415</sup> In which the romantic expression has been downplayed. See Chapter 1, 1.2.1 and 1.2.2.

<sup>416</sup> He also argues that the word “love” in Chinese is very different from the troubadour-drenched traditions associated with the word as it is normally used in English (1999:330). I have not come across any literature on the Chinese concept of love.

<sup>417</sup> This is an English term. There is no existing Chinese idiom.

Taiwan-Vietnam marriages (Do et. al, 2003). The underlying assumption is that the emotional and the instrumental aspects of marriage such as material considerations are not compatible.

#### **4.2. Earlier matchmaking practices**

As explained in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, when cross-border marriages in Taiwan gained demographic significance in the mid-1980s, the earlier bridegrooms were from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, with a high percentage of aged veterans and physically and mentally unfit men from Minnan, Hakka and mainlander (sub-ethnic) groups. They looked for brides abroad mainly because they had difficulties of marrying local women. The majority of earlier brides were ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, with fewer numbers of Filipino and Thai women. Since the late 1980s the number of mainland brides has gradually been increasing. As the demand of foreign brides was not high at the early stage, Taiwanese men and their families looked for wives abroad via their contacts in Southeast Asia and China, these contacts being mainly their own relatives and Taiwanese businessmen. In the case of physically and mentally unfit men, it was and is often their parents who take initiatives in bride searching. Below I describe one case in detail to illustrate the matchmaking process, negotiations concerning money transactions between two families of earlier cross-border marriages.

##### *The story of Family Pang*

In 1990, upon the request of the son and the advice from the father-in-law of her daughter, Mother Pang decided to go to Kalimantan, Indonesia to look for a wife for her son.<sup>418</sup> The matchmaker is a friend of the father-in-law of her daughter. The matchmaker himself married an Indonesian wife and had been matching Kalimantan women of Chinese ethnic origin with Taiwanese men via his wife's natal network. Mother and son Pang then embarked on a matchmaking journey to Kalimantan. After seeing a couple of girls at the Indonesian matchmaker's house where they were hosted, one girl was particularly eager to please son Pang and convinced him to marry her. Mother Pang did not like her but the son insisted on marrying her. Mother Pang heard some rumours about this girl and questioned her motivation, yet she thought,

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<sup>418</sup> The son Pang suffered from a minor mental disability and Mother Pang was keen in looking for a foreign bride for her son, after eight years of unsuccessful searching for him a Taiwanese wife and after several fortune-tellers predicting that his future wife is abroad. Interviews with father and mother Pang and daughter-in-law Aji in April and May, 2003, Taichung, Taiwan.

*“What the heck! My son picks her. It is after all his marriage and his choice. I just take it as buying a bride. Worst comes to worst, if their marriage does not work I can always send her back. It is just a matter of wasting some money”.* She paid NT 350,000<sup>419</sup> (USD 8,700) to the matchmaker that includes travel cost, bride price, matchmaking fee and charges of processing legal documents. This marriage lasted only for two months after the bride’s arrival in Taiwan. According to Mother Pang, the bride refused to sleep with her son, so Mother Pang and the Indonesian bride reached an agreement of divorce.

Right after divorce, a colleague of Mother Pang persuaded her to look for a bride in mainland China, as the colleague’s brother had a wide business network in Xiamen in Southern China. The colleagues said, *“There are plenty of mainland Chinese women queuing up to marry Taiwanese. You just go to any factory run by Taiwanese men and pick up whoever you like”.* In two months’ time Mother Pang embarked on a journey to Xiamen together with the brother of her colleague. This time she decided not to bring her son along to avoid the same mistake as with the first attempt. The brother referred her to several Taiwanese businessmen. None of them had met Mother Pang before yet all were rather enthusiastic in finding a bride for her son. Initially she went to Huian county in Northern Fujian province as she heard that the girls from Huian were known for their submissiveness. It was also partly because the family Pang can trace their ancestry to Huian, even though there was no kinship tie anymore. She did not find any suitable bride and returned to Xiamen. She visited a couple of factories run by Taiwanese businessmen, requesting them to introduce her to good and submissive girls working in the factories. She then approached these girls and inquired their intention to marry to a Taiwanese. The search took two months but no suitable match was found. Eventually she was referred to Mr. Wang, a Taiwanese man married to a mainland Chinese wife and settled in Xiamen. Mrs. Wang’s natal family lived in Tongshan Island and she introduced Mother Pang to her neighbour family Lin. Family Lin’s youngest and the only unmarried daughter Aji was 20 at that time and worked in a factory in Xiamen. Mother Pang visited Tongshan Island and discovered that girls from this fishing village were hard-working and decent. She then returned to Xiamen, went straight to the factory where Aji worked to persuade her to marry her son. Initially Aji hesitated to marry abroad. Later Mrs. Wang (by then Mother Pang had appointed her as matchmaker (*meiren*) managed to persuade Aji and her family to consider Mother Pang’s marriage proposal.

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<sup>419</sup> All the financial data are provided with equivalence to USD dollar according to the exchange rate at that time.

One month later Mother Pang brought her son to visit Tongshan Island, hosted by Mrs. Wang. By then Aji had quit the job in Xiamen and prepared for marriage. Family Lin and Aji were a bit worried when they met Son Pang. Mother Pang persuaded them by saying: “*My son is not clever and expressive, sometimes short-tempered, but he will be a very decent and loyal husband and he will bring every penny he earns home*”. Via the matchmaker, Family Lin asked for a brideprice of RMB 8,000 (USD 800) and in addition, expenses for the wedding banquet. Mother Pang generously gave them RMB 20,000<sup>420</sup> (USD 2,000) that should cover both the brideprice and the wedding expenses, and in addition she also gave a few pieces of valuable jewellery. The brideprice went to Aji’s parents, which was used later to pay for the wedding of Aji’s brother, while Aji kept the jewellery. Mother Pang also gave the matchmaker USD 600 as thank-giving money, which had been agreed upon before Mrs. Wang started the bride search. In addition, she also gave some red-envelops (*hongbao* 紅包)<sup>421</sup> to Aji’s relatives, each containing a few US dollars. Aji’s parents also gave Mrs. Wang a *hongbao* although they could not afford high amounts of thanks-giving money.

Unlike the mail-order brides phenomenon in the West where men usually select women from photo/video portfolios provided by broker agencies and the couple engage in letter writing for some time before they actually meet each other, Taiwanese men and their families prefer to meet the potential brides in person and make the decision of mate choice in a very short time. Given the cross-border nature and the restrictive immigration measures in Taiwan<sup>422</sup>, Taiwanese men need to travel to meet the women. The travelling, the introduction, the ensuing arrangements of marriage registration and the wedding, as well as the negotiations of brideprice and dowry and so on need to be facilitated. The mediators are therefore indispensable.

Family Pang’s story may not be typical in terms of having two cross-border marriages within a short period of time with two brides from different countries,<sup>423</sup>

<sup>420</sup> In 1990 when Aji was approached by Mother Pang, her monthly salary in the factory in Xiamen amounted to RMB 500, which was considered rather high in Tongshan Island. In Tongshan a construction worker earns only RMB 5 per day. Aji’s bride price was equivalent to a three years’ salary of Aji and an 11 years’ wage of a construction worker in Tongshan, provided he worked everyday.

<sup>421</sup> Hongbao is a red-envelops containing cash, which is given as a gift during weddings, birthdays, New Year and other occasions to show gratitude. The custom of *hongbao* has been explained in Chapter 1, 1.4.2.

<sup>422</sup> On the whole it is very difficult for Southeast Asian nationals to obtain a tourist visa for Taiwan, and almost impossible for Mainland Chinese. However, there are also a small number of Southeast Asian women whose relatives (often their own sisters) married Taiwanese earlier on. They are able to obtain visiting visas but come to Taiwan with the purpose of having a match made (see section 3.2, recent trends).

<sup>423</sup> Nevertheless, in my fieldwork I observe that Taiwanese husbands tend to look for another foreign or mainland bride after the first cross-border marriage failed. For example, a man divorced from an

but the bride-searching and matchmaking processes are representative of the practices at that time. The difference of matchmaking practices between Pang's marriages with the Indonesian bride and with the Chinese bride sheds light on the development of marriage brokering industry. Since the cross-border marriages with Indonesian women started much earlier in early 1980s, by the time Family Pang went to Kalimantan, a "marriage market" between Taiwanese men and local Kalimantan women had been formed and matchmaking mechanisms had been established. By mechanism I mean a standardised matchmaking operation and a fixed fee that covers all related expenses. In the next section I shall elaborate on this mechanism that later spread to cross-border marriages with women from all over Southeast Asia and the PRC. When Family Pang went to China to look for a bride, the cross-strait marriages had not yet been sanctioned by the Taiwanese government and no matchmaking mechanism had been developed. The matchmaking practices between families Pang and Lin resemble the common practices of the marriages between locals both in Taiwan and China in the following aspects:

- 1) The matchmakers are not professional, often offering their assistance out of good will;
- 2) There is no time limit in bride-searching and processes of matchmaking and negotiations of brideprice and dowry;
- 3) The brideprice and dowry are negotiated by two families, with parents taking the leading role with the couple's consent, and mediated by the matchmaker;
- 4) The matchmaking fee is given to the matchmaker by both families as a thanksgiving gesture.

There are other aspects of this matchmaking process that might not be commonly practiced in today's China and Taiwan, nevertheless they are considered acceptable:

- 1) Parents take initiatives and play dominant roles in mate selection. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is more common that potential bridegrooms and brides exercise mate choice both in Taiwan and China, yet it is not uncommon for the parents to approve a preferred mate choice and persuade their children into it. Certainly in the case when the parents think that their children are unable to exercise mate choice properly, they would dominate the process.

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Indonesian woman would probably look for a new bride from Vietnam or mainland China, if he ever wishes to marry again. I have never come across the case that the husband of a failed cross-border marriage married a Taiwanese woman in his second marriage. However, there are no statistical data to substantiate this observation.

2) In most cases of cross-border marriages, the economic transactions at the wedding are unilateral, i.e. there is only brideprice and no dowry, and the bridegroom's family shoulders all wedding expenses. This is not very common in contemporary local marriages. Yet, as I explain in Chapter 1, the negotiations of brideprice and dowry and sharing of wedding expenses are based on the wealth and social status of the two families, taking into consideration the personal traits of the bride and bridegroom, and it can be argued that judging from the wealth of the Lin and Pang families and Son Pang's disability, this practice (no dowry and family Pang paying all wedding expenses) does follow the principle of negotiation.

3) The brideprice goes to the bride's parents and the bride only keeps the jewellery. Again as mentioned in Chapter 1, the ownership and usage of the brideprice are rather diverse; they either go to the bride's parents or the bride herself as a fund to establish her new family. Family Lin's usage of brideprice – daughter's brideprice pays for the son's dowry – is not uncommon in rural China as a family's survival strategy, though it is generally considered traditional and discriminating against women.

4) The wedding ceremony follows local customs but with less elaboration as it is not possible for families of both sides to attend. As a result two wedding banquets are given respectively in China and Taiwan. This is not uncommon for inter-provincial marriages when women marry afar in another province within China.

5) In this case, the matchmaking fee is lower than the brideprice yet it is proportionally quite high compared to traditional matchmaking fees, which are estimated to be 4-5% of the brideprice or dowry.<sup>424</sup>

Overall it can be argued that the earlier matchmaking practice of cross-strait marriages does not deviate from that of mediated marriages both in Taiwan and China. It follows all the major matchmaking principles. It can be argued that it sticks more to traditional practices as compared to modern marriages. As there is no precedence to follow, the proportionally much higher matchmaking fee leaves rooms for ambiguous interpretations: can it be interpreted as commercialisation of marriage? Or can it be justified as the disparity of economic status between two families, that Taiwanese were considered much richer and therefore expected to pay more? Mother Pang herself thinks that the matchmaking fee is justified, as it only constitutes a very small percentage of all the expenses and efforts she spent in looking for a bride for her son.

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<sup>424</sup> Jordan quotes research done in Taiwan (1999:339).

In addition, in view of the disparity of standard of living, the matchmaking fee and the brideprice is of small value in Taiwan while it is relatively very high in China.

### **4.3 Institutionalisation of the brokering industry of cross-border marriages**

By the early 1990s the marriage brokering industry of Indonesian-Taiwanese marriages had been institutionalised. It is at the same time that the demand for Indonesian brides started to decline and Vietnamese, mainland Chinese and later Cambodian brides became more popular. In mid-1990s the industry started to boom and the number of institutionalised operations began to grow rapidly. It is impossible to estimate the number of brokering companies and individual matchmakers since it is not regulated. The following trends and developments of the brokering industry are summarized from my interviews with brokers as well as from the research done by several scholars.<sup>425</sup>

#### **4.3.1 Typology of organisations in the marriage brokering industry**

In order to illustrate the changes and developments in the marriage brokering industry it is necessary to categorise brokers and matchmakers and their practices. Research on cross-border marriages by Taiwanese scholars has paid substantial attention to different types of marriage brokers/matchmakers. Hsia (2002) categorizes brokers primarily based on their prior professions and initial associations with the countries of the brides' origin. She points out that the earlier brokers were Taiwanese male employees or owners of Taiwanese companies in the Philippines, Indonesia and later Vietnam and the PRC, as the story of Family Pang illustrates. Some had been brokering migrant workers, particularly female domestic workers from Southeast Asia, predominantly from Indonesia and the Philippines.<sup>426</sup> Her emphasis on brokers' prior associations through trade and migrant workers brokerage leads to a conclusion that cross-border marriages are a product of globalisation in which wives, together with the capital, commodities and labour are transferred from the periphery to developed countries/regions. Thus she considers the phenomenon of cross-border marriages as "commodification of international marriages". The contribution of this framework is to link economic development, labour migration, and trade relations with cross-border marriages.<sup>427</sup> However, as Hsia's data on the brokering industry was collected in the mid-1990s, she was not able to sketch the more recent trend. To use the brokers' prior

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<sup>425</sup> Chang (2002), Hsia (2002), Tsai (2001), Wang (2001) and Do et al. (2003).

<sup>426</sup> See Table 6, Chapter 2.

<sup>427</sup> The general framework of her as well as Wang's (2001) work has been discussed in Chapter 2. Here I only refer to their discussions on the brokering industry.



business connections in the countries of women's origins and macro-economic bilateral trading figures to argue that cross-marriages are part of commodity trade, in my opinion, is not sufficient evidence, though to some extent there indeed exists correlation between the growth of cross-border marriages and trade.

Chang (2002) has added details to the description of the brokering industry and mechanisms of marriages between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women. He points out that the earlier brokers are indeed Taiwanese people with business associations with Vietnam. However, as later the demand increases the brokers no longer rely on business connections and are able to locate Vietnamese counterpart brokers without referral of the Taiwanese business community. My interviews with several brokers also points to this finding that will be elaborated in the case study [Afong & Lai] later. This finding implies that the brokering industry has grown independently from the trading relations of any two countries. Whether the marriage brokerage itself can be considered a kind of trade should be carefully examined by the practices of brokerage and/or matchmaking, not by its loose correlation with trade.

While Hsia's and Chang's research focuses more on the Taiwanese brokers, Do et. al (2003), research mainly done by Vietnamese scholars, emphasizes more the Vietnamese brokers/matchmakers and the internal division of labour among different brokers. Another contribution of Do is to link the broker's relationship with other actors, including parents, brides, Taiwanese brokers, and the government agencies both representing Taiwan and Vietnam.

As my main concern here is how the brokering industry influences the matchmaking practices, mate choice and meaning of economic transactions, I categorise brokers/matchmakers based on the brokers' prior relations with their clients, i.e. potential brides, bridegrooms and their families.<sup>428</sup> I also sketch the growth and decline of different types of brokers and their operation, an aspect that to my knowledge no other scholars have addressed. Below is my categorisation:

- A. Institutionalised brokering companies and agencies.
- B. Individual entrepreneur brokers and/or matchmakers.
- C. Southeast Asian or Mainland Chinese brides married to Taiwanese men acting as matchmakers.

Type A are brokering agencies with standardised matchmaking operations,<sup>429</sup> charging fixed fees with business contracts and guarantees<sup>430</sup> for their services, and

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<sup>428</sup> The data I present here are from my own interviews with brokers, cross-border couples' accounts as well as empirical data provided by Chang's (2002:55-75) and Do et al.'s (2003:44-61) research.

<sup>429</sup> For detail description of standardised operation see par. 4.3.1 of this chapter.

<sup>430</sup> Some of the guarantees include the women's virginity and the one-year marriage (so that the wife will not run away). This is particularly the case with Vietnamese brides.

utilising advertisements in newspapers, on television and the Internet to attract potential clients. Since there is no relevant law regulating marriage brokerage in Taiwan, these companies often register as tourist agencies, consultancy companies for immigration, or are not registered at all. Type A agencies have a large database of women with their bio-data and visual images from which the male clients can choose and they usually focus on one particular country or location. My limited data show that many of type A agencies are closer to Hsia's description, i.e. they have prior business associations in the countries of women's origin or have been brokering migrant workers from those countries. The scale of the agencies varies, ranging from a small office with 3-4 staff to companies with 30-40 staff. The large agencies are rare and mainly based in the capital Taipei or Kaoshiung. Brokering cross-border marriages is often one of the many items of their services. Other services include consultation of emigration (to USA, Canada, Australia, etc.) and brokering migrant workers from Southeast Asia. Type A agencies are often run by men.

Type B are individual entrepreneur brokers and/or matchmakers. I use the term "entrepreneur" to indicate that these brokers make profits from matching cross-border marriages, and the profits generated from marriage brokerage constitute one of their major sources of income. Type B brokers usually operate at a particular locality using their social and kinship networks to attract male customers and to recruit women. Advertisements are less used, though advertising on local radio and cable channels and sign boards standing by the road are not uncommon.<sup>431</sup> Some of Type B brokers charge fixed fees similar to Type A agencies, while others charge brokerage fees but allow the brides and bridegrooms to negotiate the brideprice and wedding expenses. Type B must have a good social network in the local community, but do not necessarily have prior business or social connections in the countries of the women's origin. They go straight to one particularly locality in Southeast Asia and China and identify counterpart brokers as business partners. They shift the countries/regions of women's origin quickly and change counterpart brokers frequently. Their counterpart brokers in Vietnam and China are also Type B brokers. They also recruit women through local social networks as it is illegal to broker international marriages and therefore they cannot advertise in Vietnam and China. Type B brokers can be both men and women. Do reports that Vietnamese counter brokers are predominantly women (2003:49).

Type C refers to Southeast Asian or Mainland Chinese brides who match their relatives and acquaintances in both countries. Obviously they also operate within their social and kinship network both in the sending and receiving communities. To

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<sup>431</sup> The advertisements used by Type B brokers are low-cost and only meant to reach the audiences within the range of a sub-district of a county or several villages.

differentiate them from Type B, I classify Type C as persons who do not do matchmaking on a regular basis and do not earn a living from the profits of matchmaking, or at least do not appear to do so. In other words, profit making may not be the sole purpose of their matchmaking. Type C are predominantly women, though their Taiwanese husbands at times also get involved.

Type A agencies are often referred to as “brokers” (*zhongjie* 仲介) by the couples of cross-border marriages. Type B is referred to both as “brokers” or “matchmakers” (*meiren* 媒人 in Taiwan or *hongniang* 紅娘 in the PRC) and the terms *zhongjie* and *meiren* are used interchangeably without any difference in meaning. In Vietnam the brokers/matchmakers are often called “cousins” simply to indicate an acquaintance but the brides and matchmakers do not necessarily have direct kin relations. Type C are called matchmakers.

It should be noted that the lines between these types are rather thin and vague. For example, a Southeast Asian bride or Mainland Chinese bride may become a Type B entrepreneur or even operate an institutionalised marriage brokerage agency. For example, a web-based agency specialising in brokering mainland Chinese women is operated by a mainland Chinese bride. She claims that she provides better services because she herself has experienced cross-strait marriage.<sup>432</sup> Another example is that a restaurant called “Vietnam Village of Culture” located in Baihe, Tainan County, which claims to be run by Vietnamese brides themselves, also offers matchmaking services. In addition, as it often requires cooperation of counterpart brokers in both the sending and receiving countries, a Type A agency may work with Type B or C local partners or vice versa.

The counterpart brokers/matchmakers in Southeast Asia and China have complicated organisation patterns and internal division of labour. In Indonesia and China the predominant brokers are Type B and C operated too in the specific locality within existing social network. In Vietnam and Cambodia the brokering industry is more institutionalised. It is observed that major brokers (type A) targeted young women by distributing leaflets in the secondary schools in Ho Chi Min City, painting a rosy picture of marrying abroad. Smaller brokers (that can be classified as type B) working under type A agencies go to villages to approach poor families who have young daughters. Girls who are persuaded to enter a matchmaking operation are sent to Ho Chi Min Cty and Phnom Penh to receive orientation on Taiwanese society, learn languages and necessary information that would help them in adopting life in Taiwan, an operation that was described as “bride training camp” by the media both in Taiwan and Vietnam.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> See <http://home.pchome.com.tw/education/haixia2000>.

<sup>433</sup> Interview with broker Mr. Pang. See also Do et. al. (2003:47).

#### **4.4. Growth and decline of different types of brokerage and its changing operations**

##### **4.4.1 The standardised operation**

The standardised operation adopted by Type A agencies since the mid-1990s is that men go to an agency to look at photos or video portfolios of women and then target some of them. The agency then organises a matchmaking tour, with minimally two men in a group. When they arrive at the locality they check into a hotel and the women are called to the hotel to meet the men. If the men have already shortlisted women from the database of the agencies before the trip, normally not more than three of them, meetings between the bridegrooms and the individual potential brides would be arranged and they could talk briefly either with or without the presence of the brokers. If the men did not look through the database and shortlist any woman, a group of women are called to the hotel room to meet the men, normally three to five women in a batch. Women are asked to briefly introduce themselves and men or the brokers can ask questions to individual women. Normally after meeting a few batches men would pick up the targeted women very quickly and by the first few hours a few potential brides are shortlisted. Sometimes the potential bridegrooms and brides are given an opportunity to be alone for a few minutes in adjacent hotel rooms (with the door open) while the brokers of both sides and at times accompanying relatives of the men would discuss whether the horoscope of the potential brides and bridegrooms match. After a few minutes the broker would call the potential in couples to ask their decision and also to inform them whether the combination of their birth signs is a favourable one. At this point a potential bride, at times accompanied by her parents especially in the case of urban Vietnam,<sup>434</sup> can ask questions with regard to bridegroom, such as his and his family's social and economic status, family composition, profession, ownership of land and houses, his hobbies, his expectation towards the bride, etc. The bride has to give consent. In less than half an hour, sometimes only five minutes, the preliminary marital decision is made and agreed upon. In the case when the parents of the bride are not present, the consent of her parents has to be secured. Some of the parents have already given their consent to the brokers before the brides were recruited in matchmaking arrangements. In the case that the bride takes initiatives to take part in matchmaking arrangements, which happened more often in China, she and/or the broker then have to persuade the parents.

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<sup>434</sup> In Vietnam, the brides who live in Ho Chi Min City are often accompanied by their parents and their parents take part in the matching process and are heavily consulted. The brides from rural Vietnam are rarely accompanied by parents but at times may be accompanied by female friends. In the PRC it is more often that women attend the matchmaking session without the accompaniment of relatives or friends although the matchmaker is likely to be their acquaintance. After the marital decision is made, parental consent is sought.

In the latter case the parents may require more information on the potential bridegroom and his family and the consultation will take more time. In most of the cases the above mentioned process is completed on the first or the second day upon arrival of the matchmaking tour, though in rare cases the men do not encounter a woman they like and the matching continues on the third day.

After the preliminary decision is made, some operators allow potential couples to spend the next few days touring the city and tourist spots together before they reach a final decision, while the legal procedure of marriage registration and arrangement of wedding banquets are prepared. The preliminary decision has a binding effect -- although any party can still change the mind before the legal registration is complete, in reality this rarely happens since it is quite possible that the couples have a sexual relationship during the trip after the preliminary decision is made and the preparation of the banquet symbolises social acceptance that constitutes the most important aspect of marriage. In a sense the effect of the preliminary decision, though hastily made and without any ritual celebration, can be equated to the effect of betrothal. The man needs to visit the bride's birth family, at times in remote rural villages, and perform the proposal ritual before completing the marriage registration and wedding ceremony and banquet. The proposal ritual, wedding ceremony and banquet often take place on the same day and it is more a matter of formality as the arrangements have been prefabricated by the brokers without the need of discussing and negotiating the details. The couple also needs to be present in the marriage registration although all documents are prepared, translated and authenticated beforehand by the broker.

This matchmaking mechanism is very fragile and can easily fall apart. It hangs on verbal agreements and social expectations without an effective sanctioning measure. If one party regrets, the marriage broker(s) will be held responsible, and to increase business competitiveness, some brokers offer a guarantee to organise a new matchmaking free of charge as part of the contract. To make this system work, both wedding parties need to invest to the trust in marriage brokers, which is often difficult to develop with impersonal institutions. The time pressure of making a quick decision is yet another factor contributing to the vulnerability of such operations, because the matchmakers and both families cannot negotiate back and forth.

The above mentioned standardised matchmaking operation takes five days in Southeast Asia and seven days in the PRC.<sup>435</sup> In two months the brides can join the husbands in Taiwan.

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<sup>435</sup> In the cases of Vietnam and Indonesia, the husbands need to visit the women again as it is compulsory for the couples to be interviewed by Taiwanese representatives in Jakarta and Ho Chi Min City. The actual wedding ceremony and banquet may take place during the second visit. In the case of Mainland China everything is completed in a seven-day tour.

A fixed fee is charged covering the travel expenses of both the matching trip and the bride's arrival in Taiwan, the bride price, the paper work and the wedding ceremony as well as the banquet in the bride's natal home and includes the services charged by the brokers. In the early 1990s the standardised price was NTD 350,000~450,000 (equivalent to USD 10,500~13,500). By the late 1990s, due to the fierce competition of marriage brokers and matchmakers, the price had been lowered to NTD 200,000 (USD 6,000). At least 50% goes to the brokers, shared by all the brokers involved. The actual brideprice a bride's family receives varies, with the average ranging from USD 1,200 in Fujian in the PRC to USD 2,000 in Vietnam. There are exceptional cases of bride prices as high as USD 20,000, but prices depend on the negotiations between two families rather than charges fixed by the brokers (Wang, 2001). On the whole, the profit generated from brokering cross-cultural marriages is higher than the brideprice and proportionally much higher than traditional matchmaking fees.<sup>436</sup>

There is a general pattern that the brideprice of a young, single bride goes to her parents while she can keep the jewellery, and the widowed or re-marrying women either do not get a brideprice or keep the brideprice for themselves. The virgin brides do not necessarily receive a higher bride price. The advertisements of the marriage brokers of Vietnamese and Cambodian brides often emphasize the virginity of their brides,<sup>437</sup> which is not observed in the advertisements of the mainland brides. An individual broker (type C) told me that her clients do expect the prospective brides to be virgin, however, she would not stress the virginity of her brides as a business strategy because her clients would not believe it. This may be the result of the negative image of mainland brides in the media representations which are largely associated with prostitution and human smuggling, which I have elaborated in Chapter 3.

Usually all the expenses involved in the matchmaking process are shouldered by the prospective bridegrooms. However, in the past two years a trend has been observed that both the brides and bridegrooms pay brokering fees to their respective

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<sup>436</sup> The national average monthly expenditure per capital in Taiwan in 1990 is NTD 7,401, so the standardised fee is equivalent to 4-5 years' total expenses of a Taiwanese. By the year 2000, the national average monthly expenditure per capital in Taiwan is 15,256, so the fee of 200,000 is equivalent to 13 months' expenditure. (Source: The Survey of Family Income and Expenditure, 1990; 2000, Department of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, Taiwan ROC). The GDP per capita of Fujian province in 2004 is 15,006 RMB, equivalent to USD 1,812 (Fujian Province Statistic Year Book, 2004; calculated according to the exchange rate January 1, 2004); So the brideprice is roughly about 1.5 year's GDP per capita in Fujian. The GDP per capita in Vietnam in 2004 is USD564; so the brideprice is about 3.5 years' GDP per capita in Vietnam. These figures aim to provide a reference to show the relative value of the brideprice and matchmaking fees to families in Taiwan, China and Vietnam. In reality, the income of both the brides and bridegrooms are way below the national average.

<sup>437</sup> Some offer guarantees in the form of refund or organising another matchmaking if the bride is not a virgin.

matchmakers and share travel and wedding expenses. This kind of practice is only limited to the PRC, starting from coastal province Fujian and is fast spreading to inland provinces such as Hunan and Sichuan. This kind of operation will be elaborated in the next section.

Type A agencies are short-lived. Since the mid-1990s the number of agencies specialising in brokering Indonesian and Chinese women have decreased dramatically, or have shifted to brokering Vietnamese and Cambodian women. This corresponds to the growing number of brides from these two countries.<sup>438</sup> Especially the number of agencies brokering for mainland brides has dropped drastically.

Below are some of the main reasons for the shift, as identified by brokers:<sup>439</sup>

1. Vietnamese and Cambodian women are cheaper: The brideprice paid to the bride's family and the logistic expenses of the matchmaking tour are lower and the brokerage profits are higher.
2. Brides often resort to matchmaking for their relatives and friends, making brides themselves the Type A agencies' biggest business competitors, particularly the mainland brides.
3. It is difficult to provide the "after-sale service" to mainland brides. The mainland brides often hold brokers responsible when their expectations towards husbands fail. This seldom happens with women from Southeast Asia.

Type A's practice of fixing fees, standardising matchmaking processes, contracting and guaranteeing and so forth, as well as using language in advertisements such as "after-sale services" and "buying a wife", clearly points towards a commercial operation and a business deal. The price and the shifting origins of women are determined by market mechanisms and the guiding principle is profit making. The business deal ends the moment the bride arrives in Taiwan for the first time. The decline of Type A agencies shows that such commercial operations could not satisfy prospective brides and bridegrooms because marriage is not a one-off deal and no warrantee could effectively be provided. Some "after-sale services", to put it in brokers' words, such as facilitating the bride's adjustment in Taiwan and mediating in conflicts between newly wed couples are expected.<sup>440</sup> That is why more and more

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<sup>438</sup> See Table 1, Chapter 2.

<sup>439</sup> Summarised from my interviews with six brokers of various types. Interviews conducted in June and July, 2002 and October 2003.

<sup>440</sup> Interview with Mr. Chen who worked in a brokering agency before, June 2003, Taichung. Mr. Chen describes that in some cases when some bridegrooms and mainland brides are not happy with the marriage and feel cheated, they come to the brokering agency to demand mediation. When the brokers refuse to take action, they are threatened at times with violent actions. Mr. Chen said that most of the

people turn to Type B and C matchmakers, because the existing social and kin ties hold them responsible for further involvement in the couple's marriage and family life.

Type B brokers adopt similar practices as type A, such as matchmaking tours and charging the same fees. Type C's matchmaking a practice is more complex and flexible, but generally follows the format of mediated marriages of earlier practices as illustrated by the story of Family Pang. Some type C matchmakers do not charge any fee, but receive thank-you money (*hongbao*) from the parents of both parties and enjoy a free air ticket home. In such cases two families often negotiate the brideprice and wedding arrangements, but there are variations if it involves the co-operation of B and C matchmakers. The following two cases illustrate the complexity.<sup>441</sup>

### *Lily's story*

Lily is a Hakka ethnic Chinese from Kalimantan in Indonesia. Li is a Hakka man in his late 30s from a small town in Northern Taiwan, who is currently unemployed. Lily's aunt, who is only four years older than Lily, married one of Li's former business contacts from Taiwan some years ago. Li witnessed their happy marriage and was motivated to marry an Indonesian woman. He requested Lily's aunt to do the matchmaking for him. Lily's aunt thought of Lily, who was then 18 years old, and invited Lily to visit Taiwan with the purpose of matching Li and Lily. During her six months stay in Taiwan, Lily decided to marry Li. Lily returned to Kalimantan and started processing documents. It took another eight months to get everything ready, and during this period Li visited Lily and they held the engagement ceremony and wedding banquet. The ceremony and customs were similar to the ones in Taiwan, but only the bridal kin were present. Although Lily's aunt introduced them, they went to a local (Kalimantan) matchmaker/broker to arrange legal matters and to negotiate the brideprice and wedding arrangements. Their local matchmaker Mr. H.<sup>442</sup> is a professional broker in Indonesian-Taiwanese marriages and was recommended by Lily's friends but she and her family did not know Mr. H. personally. Mr. H. asked for an amount according to the "market price", and Li paid him this amount. Li did not know how much brideprice Lily's parents actually received.

Now Li and Lily have been married for three years and have a two-year-old boy and a baby girl of seven months. In three years Lily herself has

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brokers feel morally responsible to check whether everything goes well after the brides' arrival. Mr. Pang, another marriage broker, also shares the same view.

<sup>441</sup> I interviewed Lily and Li in May 2003 in Taiwan. Pseudonyms are used to protect their privacy.

<sup>442</sup> Close to Type B broker of my categorisation.



matched three Taiwanese-Indonesian marriages. The bridegrooms are Li's friends, but Lily did not know the brides prior to matchmaking. She accompanied the potential bridegrooms to Kalimantan and referred them to Mr. H., and Mr. H. took over from there. She did not charge the bridegrooms, but her travel expenses were paid, and she was given a red-pocket with cash as thanks after each successful match. In addition, she requested Mr. H. to share some of the profit with her as she thought it was justified in not allowing these "money suckers" to take all the profits.

Lily plans to match Li's elder brother with her own younger sister. In a few months, when her baby daughter is old enough to travel, she will accompany her brother-in-law to Kalimantan. She is rather excited about the trip because her mother is eager to meet the new-born grand-daughter. Li will also join them since he does not need to work. This time Lily still plans to ask Mr. H. to take charge of brideprice negotiations. When asked why she will not bypass Mr. H. but is allowing him to profit from her family members, Lily answered, "This is the way to do it. There is no other way. We are not capable of preparing legal documents ourselves." Li added, "We don't want to be accused of ruining 'what has normally been done' (*hangqing* 行情)." <sup>443</sup>

Lily's experience is a typical example of the way many Indonesian brides are matched. For Lily, profit making is not the main purpose of matchmaking. It is a way for her to be able to renew her ties with her natal kin by both physically visiting home and bringing relatives to Taiwan. Many Indonesian women feel more confident marrying to Taiwan because they have female relatives living there. What Lily and her aunt did – matching young women from their native village to men from their new village as a way of consolidating their network in both villages and enhancing their status in the new villages – has been very common in China for a long time (Jordan, 1999). This is a major way in which marriage migration generates migration chains (Davin, 2001).

Long distance and cross-border marriage migration require complicated legal procedures and travel arrangements that traditional "women's networks" cannot handle. Mr. H. plays the multiple roles of solicitor, marriage broker and tour agent and at times these tasks are done by a group of people. In Indonesia and Vietnam, a person like Mr. H., who has an influential local network and connections with local

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<sup>443</sup> *Hangqing* is a term used in Taiwanese Mandarin that originally refers to the price of commodities in the market, but it is also used generally to describe the relative values of people, acts and traits as perceived socially. Literally it can be translated as the "market value", but here the "market" should be interpreted as a social evaluation system rather than a commodity. That is why in the main text I translate it as "what has normally been done".

government officials, is indispensable in “getting things done”, such as bribing officials to acquire a passport, marriage approval and so forth. In the PRC, it seems easier for prospective couples to apply for legal documents and to complete marriage registration because the information is more transparent, although it also varies from place to place and depends on the level of education of the couples and their social capital.<sup>444</sup> This is one of the main reasons that Mainland brides can easily bypass marriage brokers and take up matchmaking tasks.

It is understandable that after Lily had left Kalimantan for a few years and had gradually lost ties with younger women there, she turned to Mr. H. to introduce more potential brides. However, it is puzzling why she still needs Mr. H. in matching her own sister and brother-in-law. Even if Mr. H.’s services in legal matters are required, does it make more sense and is it more economical for Lily to pay a fixed amount to Mr. H. to get legal procedures done than entrusting him with the task of negotiations and allowing him to make a big profit? There are two possible and interrelated explanations. One is that the institutionalised and marketised matchmaking operations so commonly practised in Lily’s and Li’s hometowns have eroded the traditional practices and have now become the norm for matchmaking in cross-border marriages. In a few years after the institutionalisation, the marketised operations have been accepted as “what has normally been done” for cross-border marriages, which is not how it is normally done in the local marriages. This is one of the major reasons that people perceive cross-border marriages, and the matchmaking of it, as different from the local marriages.

There are many matchmakers in these towns, including Lily herself. As Li points out, even in matching his own family members he has to follow the market norm, otherwise he would jeopardize the profit-making opportunities for others and for Lily in the long run and damage his own social reputation. The other explanation is that marketised operations have eroded the meaning of matchmaking activities that were traditionally perceived as a voluntary act of good will. To deal with such erosion a mechanism of a division of labour has developed among a number of matchmakers and the aspects of voluntary match making and profit making are dealt with separately. I will discuss this point further in Section 5 of this chapter.

#### **4.4.2 Recent variations**

As mentioned earlier, in China a recent trend is observed that both the brides and bridegrooms pay brokering fees to their respective matchmakers and share travel and

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<sup>444</sup> It is not because the PRC and Taiwan share similar legal systems. On the contrary, the political ambiguity makes any authentication of legal documents more difficult and the barriers set to cross-strait marriages are far higher than other cross-border marriages in Taiwan.

wedding expenses. In such cases brides will receive a small sum of the brideprice from the grooms, and the wedding ceremonies follow traditional practices. This kind of practice has not been observed in any other place than China.

#### *Afong and Lai's story*

Afong is a 39 years old woman from Fuqing, Fujian province in Southern China. Her previous husband committed suicide three years ago, leaving her three children, the youngest one being 16 years old. All the children have been working and are financially independent. Although her parents-in-law are kind to her, Afong wanted to work and earn income. There is not much job opportunity for a woman of her age in Fuqing, an area known for large number of labour and marriage out-migration of both men and women. Afong's cousin, also a widow, was recruited by a local marriage broker, Ms. C. (Type B) and had attended several match-making functions with Taiwanese men but was not successful.

Lai is a 45 years old Minnan bachelor from Baihe in Taiwan. He did not have a stable job and had been living with his widowed father and married elder brother. A local marriage broker, Ms. Liu (type B), who is a neighbour of Family Lai, approached Lai's father and persuaded Father Lai to marry a bride for his youngest son. Father Lai thought that marriage would help the son settling down and develop a sense of responsibility. Lai was happy with the idea of marrying a foreign bride, as he had not been able to find a local wife due to his age and unemployment. He (son Lai) was approached by another local broker earlier who is specialized in brokering Vietnamese and Cambodian brides. Son Lai was interested, but Father Lai trusted Ms. Liu more than Son Lai's broker. Ms. Liu managed to persuade Father Lai that it is better to choose a daughter-in-law who can speak Mandarin, and in addition, the cost involved in marrying a Chinese woman is lower than that of marrying a Vietnamese bride (approximately NT 200,000~250,000). Since Father Lai was the one who would pay the expenses, he got to decide. He paid a fixed fee to Ms. Liu, NT 180,000 (USD 5,300) that covered the traveling cost and brokerage fee.

One day when Afong was working in the vegetable field in her village in Fuqing, China, Ms. C. went to her to look for her cousin. A matchmaking group from Taiwan had arrived and women were called to meet them. Ms. C. could not find Afong's cousin, so she persuaded Afong to join the match-

making gathering in a hotel. *“It is just to fill the number! You won’t be selected. Please, just do me a favour”*, Ms. C. said. Afong went to the hotel and met Taiwanese men. Among them Lai liked Afong and expressed the intention to marry her. The reason Lai picked Afong was that *“she is not particularly pretty, but she looks honest (laoshi 老實) and submissive (guai 乖). She does not look like the type that will cheat and run away from [the husband].”* Afong did not dislike Lai. She told Lai that the only condition for her to agree marrying him was that he had to allow her to work and keep the money she earned for herself. Lai agreed. The common practice in this village (and in Fuqing in general) since 2001 is that the bride and bridegroom of cross-strait couples both have to shoulder expenses. The bride must pay brokerage fee to Ms. C., amounting to RMB 25,000 (USD 3,200) and the bridegroom pays brokerage fee to the Taiwanese broker. Afong negotiated with Lai to pay for wedding expenses and her return air-ticket to Taiwan. Lai agreed. In half an hour Afong decided to marry Lai. She simply informed her parents-in-law and children this decision but no consent from them was necessary. Afong and Lai completed marriage registration in two days. Normally it is customary for the Taiwanese bridegroom to visit the bride’s natal family to perform a proposal ritual and exchange gifts with the bride’s parents and relatives, followed by a wedding banquet. However, since this is Afong’s second marriage, she decided to skip this ritual. Nevertheless, Lai invited Afong’s children and natal parents for a dinner in the best restaurant in town.

From Afong and Lai’s story we can see that the brokers/matchmakers, in this case involving two type B brokers, play a major role in motivating their marriage. Both Afong and Lai did not take initiatives in entering a matchmaking operation, though cross-border marriages are popular in the communities they live. Afong sees marrying into Taiwan as a mean of labour migration and starting a new life, while Lai and his father are aware that he would probably never be able to marry a local wife. Cross-border marriages provide advantages for both and therefore they were persuaded into it and make a swift decision. Neither Father nor Son Lai had a clear preference for the bride’s ethnicity, age and place of origin before the matchmaking. They opted for a Fuqing woman instead of a Vietnamese or Cambodian person, not based on their knowledge of the place or of the women from these places, but solely relying on the broker’s recommendation and persuasion. It can be argued that they have picked the broker/matchmaker rather than the bride. The deciding factor of their choice of

broker/matchmaker is based on social and kin relations as well as the price and package of services that a broker offers.

Ms. Liu is a typical Type B broker in my categorisation. Ms. Liu had been brokering mainland Chinese brides in the neighbourhood for seven years. She first started with women from Hainan Island and a few from Guangxi province, and recently shifted to Fuqing and Hunan province. She entered the business seven years ago when her (male) cousin married a woman from Hainan Island, whom he met during business trips. The cousin proposed to Ms. Liu to collaborate on the matchmaking business. Ms. Liu would find local Taiwanese men and the cousin's Hainanese wife would locate women from Haikou,<sup>445</sup> the capital of Hainan province. Their joint venture lasted only for a year. As Ms. Liu became more resourceful and familiar with Hainan, she decided to shift to Qyonghai city where she was able to find more local women who were willing to marry Taiwanese than local men. *"Haikou women have seen the world. They prefer to marry rich Taiwanese businessmen or Japanese and Singaporean men"* she said. Ms. Liu worked with several counterpart brokers/matchmakers in Qyonghai city, one of them being the mother of one bride that she matched earlier. In 2001, Ms. Liu decided to terminate her matchmaking operations in Hainan and moved to Fuqing. She gave me the reasons: *"It is getting difficult to do matchmaking in Hainan. Hainan women are becoming very demanding and picky on the men. Now they don't want just any Taiwanese but rich and good-looking ones. Plus Fuqing women are so desperate to marry to Taiwan that they are willing to share the cost. I can reduce the matchmaking fee, which is good for my business. And I still make more profit."* Ms. Liu's husband added, *"It is also because there have been so many Hainan women in this village over the years and there have been a few 'bad examples', so nowadays people do not like Hainan women any more. They want something fresh!"*

While the potential bridegroom and his family rely on broker/matchmaker's recommendations, Type B brokers' choice of ethnicity and place of origins of the brides is based on business interests. The deciding factors are: availability of women;

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<sup>445</sup> Haikou is the provincial capital of Hainan Province, a special economic zone which attracts a lot of foreign investment (including Taiwanese capital) since the early 1990s. Qyonghai is a smaller and economically less developed semi-industrial town, although it also attracts foreign investment and was developed into a favourable retirement place for overseas Chinese, such as Hong Kongese and Singaporeans.

successful rate of matchmaking (i.e. the likelihood of a bride's consent); cost involved (i.e. the *hangqing* or the brideprice demanded by the bride's parents; and whether the brides are willing to share the expenses); and the desirability of women in men's communities (reputation and stereotype, which can be largely constructed and manipulated by the brokers but also depend on how the existing foreign and mainland brides of certain origins are received in the community).

From the broker's perspective, this matchmaking operation is a pure business deal. From the perspective of the bridegroom and bride, with the prior need and motivation of cross-border marriage, selecting a trust-worthy matchmaker is the primary concern. Once the matchmaker is identified, or in Afong and Lai's case when they are persuaded by a trust-worthy matchmaker, they would simply follow the matchmaker's arrangement and make the mate choice among the women and men available in a particular matchmaking operation. The criteria of mate choice within this small pool seems to be random and often based on instincts, although the traditional matching principle of measuring the bride and bridegroom's social status and personal traits to ensure a more stable marriage is clearly applied.<sup>446</sup>

#### **4.4.3 Exception: consistent pattern of cross-strait marriages in the veterans' settlement**

The trends and practices in the brokering industry described above are widely observed all over Taiwan among different ethnic groups, with the exception of veterans in the *juancun*. As explained in Chapter I and IV, the lower rank veterans who remained single for most of their life live a secluded life in the military camp and in the veterans' settlement after retirement without much kinship and social ties. Experiences of war and years of seclusion from the local communities made most of them insecure and taught them to trust no one with the exception of their co-veterans. In addition, the media's representation of veterans being easy prey of greedy young mainland brides further strengthens their insecurity. As a result, most of the veterans are skeptical about cross-border marriages and mainland Chinese women and seldom look for brides via type A and B brokers. In late 1980s and early 1990s when the veterans had opportunities to visit their homeland in China, many married mainland Chinese women in their hometown. These earlier marriages were mainly matched by veterans' relatives in China, though in some case the veterans themselves took

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<sup>446</sup> Lai is aware that he is not a particularly attractive man in terms of his job security, age and physical appearance, therefore he would not choose a too pretty and young woman, whom he thinks has a higher risk of abandoning him later.

initiatives in looking for a bride via local marriage agencies<sup>447</sup> in China. As the number of cross-strait marriages in the veterans' settlement increases, married brides start to match their natal relatives and female friends with their husbands' co-veterans. Below is a typical example of the matchmaking practice in *the veteran's settlement*.

*Story of Mr. Zhong and Mr. Guo*

Both Mr. Zhong and Mr. Guo are veteran soldiers aged above 80. Mr. Zhong is originally from Hunan province and Guo from Shandong province. They had worked together in the army, retired and settled down in Hukou *juancun* as neighbours. In 1988 upon the lift of the no-link policy, Zhong visited his hometown in rural Hunan. During his six months' stay, his nephew suggested that it would be nice to find a wife in China as a *laoban* (老伴)<sup>448</sup>. Zhong had never been married before and he longed for a companion who could speak the same dialect. Although he was in considerably good health then, he was aware that in a few years his health would deteriorate and he would need someone to take care of him physically. He expressed his intention and his nephew introduced him a woman aged 28 from the neighbouring village, who was a remote relative of the nephew's wife. Zhong did not bother to meet other women and decided to marry her straight away, since he knew the bride's grandfather and trusted that she had good upbringing. In his next visit Zhong collected necessary documents and went on to register marriage with this bride. A simplified version of a wedding ceremony was held but only close relatives were invited to the banquet, since it was considered not appropriate to have an elaborate banquet in view of the huge age gap between the partners. Zhong did not give the bride's family any bride price; instead, he built a two-story house in his hometown and registered it under the bride's name. He was planning to spend his last years in this house with his wife and die in his hometown. He and the bride returned to Taiwan and lived in Hukou and they had a child aged nine at the time of my fieldwork.

Guo had witnessed many cross-strait couples in the *veteran's settlement* for years. However, he resisted the idea of marrying a mainland Chinese wife as he had seen many unhappy and tragic marriages. He also visited his hometown in Shandong but he did not get along well with his relatives there

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<sup>447</sup> That is, marriage bureaus specialised in matching local Chinese men and women, but not international marriages. They are legal and regulated by local authorities.

<sup>448</sup> *Laoban* literally means a companion or partner to spend the old age together. It often refers to spouses or life partners, but not necessarily refer to old aged people. People who marry young with the intention to find a life-long companion can use the term, too.

with some financial dispute, so he was not very keen in marrying a Shandong woman. Once for a while when he witnessed Zhong's happy marriage and the child he was motivated, but it was not strong enough for him to take any initiative to look for a mainland bride. In 2000 a close friend of Zhong's wife, who was at her mid 40s, was widowed and expressed a wish to find a Taiwanese husband. Zhong and his wife persuaded Guo to correspond with this woman. They exchanged photograph and letters for three months and Guo was prepared to marry her. In the next spring, Guo, accompanied by Zhong and his wife, went to Hunan and complete the marriage registration on the next day he met his bride. No brideprice is requested and offered, but Guo promised to provide the college education for the bride's son from her previous marriage.

The matchmakers in veterans' settlements are predominantly Type C, the cross-strait couples themselves. Similarly to Lily's case mentioned earlier, the primary motivation of doing matchmaking is not profit making, rather it is a way for them to be able to renew their ties with her natal kin by both physically visiting home and bringing relatives to Taiwan. The desire of bringing the natal kin, and added to that, the pressure from the kin and friends in China wanting to marry to Taiwanese, are so strong that a married bride often actively seeks single veterans and second-generation mainlanders living in the veterans' settlement to persuade them into marrying her kin. As a result, it is common to observe a sister, at times mother or daughter, marrying to neighbouring veterans. The matchmaker does it out of good will and seldom charges the matchmaking fee, although a *hongbao* from the newly wed couples is almost guaranteed. Due to the age gap and oftentimes the marriage being the bride's second, the wedding ceremonies are simple and only take place in the natal home of the brides. There is no ceremony and banquet in Taiwan after the bride arrives as the veterans do not have many kin in Taiwan. The strict definition of brideprice -- economic exchange prior to the wedding -- is seldom realised, instead, long-term security, such as housing, bank saving, valuable jewellery, or investment in the bride's children from her previous marriage, etc. is promised. These security and material well-being aspects are either offered voluntarily by the bridegroom or negotiated by the bride and bridegroom themselves, without little help of the matchmaker and other relatives. They are often provided gradually after the marriage as a strategy of the veterans to make sure that the younger bride would stay with them until the end of their life, which I will elaborate in Chapter 5.

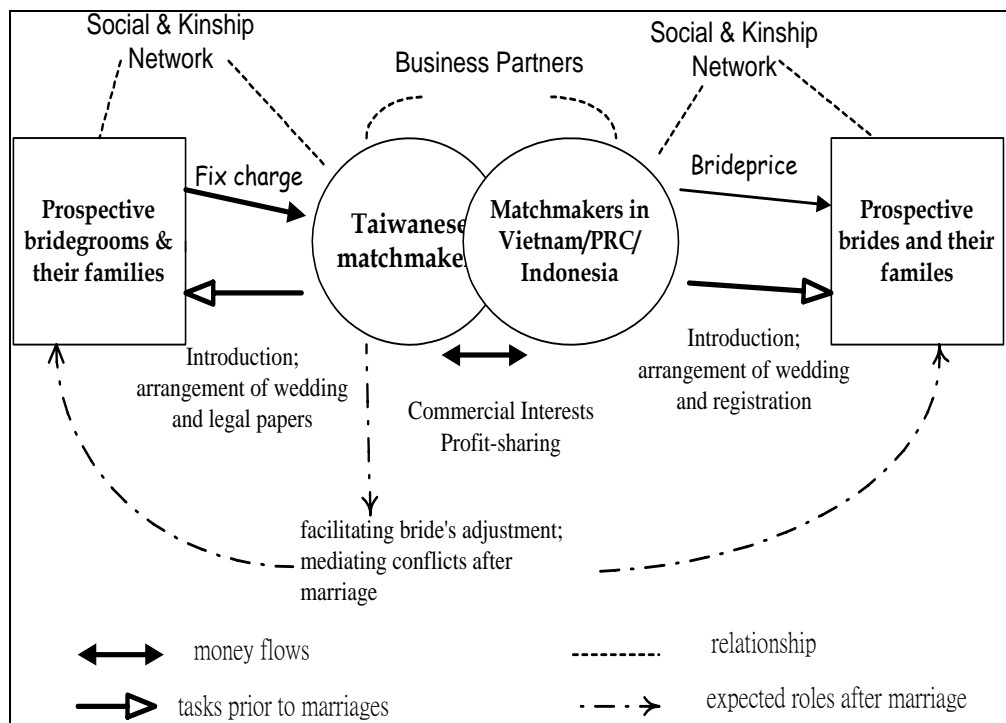


## 4.5 The role of matchmakers

### 4.5.1 Actors, services and money flows in matchmaking practices

The decline of Type A agencies and growing popularity of Type B and C matchmakers after the mid-1990s indicates a trend of distancing from institutionalized, impersonal marriage brokerage and a return to relying on existing social and kin networks to mediate cross-border marriages. In this section I take a closer look at the tasks of matchmakers and the internal division of labour among different matchmakers. The diagram below summarises the relationships, the flow of money transfers and the expected services provided in the preferred matchmaking practice.

**Diagram 1: Actors, services and money flows in matchmaking practice**



As explained in Chapter 1, traditionally Chinese matchmakers have two main tasks: 1) introducing the interested parties to one another, and 2) negotiating the dowry and the brideprice as well as making the wedding arrangements. It is common that a successful match involves more than one matchmaker, one who is in charge of the introduction and another one who does the negotiating (Jordan, 1999). As Jordan points out, one can only guess at the motivations of matchmakers, but it has been observed that all types of brokers/matchmakers would hesitate to acknowledge profit making as their primary purpose. One common motivation that has been identified is

that matching a happy marriage is considered good merit and the rewards would be reflected upon oneself or one's offspring. Although thank you money is to be expected from the parents of both bride and bridegroom, usually a *hangqing* follows in which the amount is in relation to the brideprice and/or dowry. It is not common for matchmakers to demand or even discuss the matchmaking fee, as it would contaminate the voluntary motivation. This is even more so if the matchmaker is closely related to the families of prospective couples. In the act of negotiating the dowry and brideprice the matchmaker should mediate without favouring either party and without considering his/her own profit.

In the second case study, Lily took up the task of introduction easily. However, if she were to take up the task of negotiating monetary transactions she would be caught in an embarrassing situation and be accused of favouring either one party or another. She would need another independent matchmaker. Because of the disparity in the wealth of two families in both real and relative terms (between Taiwan and Indonesia) it is difficult to arrive at a socially agreeable bride price, therefore the established operations and prices in the market have become the reference point. As mentioned earlier, the commercial operations require the bridegroom to give a fixed sum that includes all expenses, and it is commonly known that the profit matchmakers make is larger than the bride price. As Lily and Li do not want to be seen as making a profit from their own family members – and according to traditional perception she cannot demand a matchmaking fee – she leaves the task of negotiating to Mr. H., an unrelated professional, to play the role of “money sucker”. Afterwards, when she asks commission from Mr. H. she will not have to face the dilemma of voluntary versus profit making intentions.

It is curious to observe that the division of labour among brokers/matchmakers, conflicts of voluntary good-will and profit-making intentions and regulatory *hangqing* does not happen in veterans' settlements. It is quite possible that the veterans' settlements have never experienced the erosion of marketed and institutionalized marriage brokerage and therefore retain traditional practice of matchmaking in the mediated marriages. It is also possible that the marriages between the veterans and younger brides are not considered as a “normal” marriage, in view of their age gap. The actors then can bypass the traditional marriage customs and enter a contractual arrangement between two individuals.

#### **4.5.2 Matchmakers' role in deciding ethnicity and origin of brides**

The potential bridegrooms and families that opt for Type A agencies often have a pre-fixed preference over the bride's ethnicity. As each agency is specialized in brokering

women from one or two countries, the potential bridegroom would contact the agencies specialized in the country and ethnic background of their preference. The families opting for type B brokers/matchmakers seldom have pre-fixed preferences concerning the bride's ethnicity and place of origins, except perhaps in Hakka communities. In the third case study (Afong and Lai and their broker Ms. Liu) I explained that once the potential bridegroom's family decided to look for a foreign wife or were talked into it, the choice of matchmakers would determine the range of bride choice they have. The choice of matchmakers is largely based on existing social and kin relations. In the case of choosing type B matchmakers, the price involved in marriage can be a factor for consideration. Still, many families prefer to opt for type C matchmakers despite that the cost involved is much higher and the process is more time consuming.

**Table 16 Typology of marriage brokers/matchmakers**

<b>Type of matchmakers</b>	<b>Client's preference on brides' ethnicity and origins</b>	<b>Client's relations with matchmakers</b>	<b>Matchmaker's choice of brides' ethnicity and origin</b>	<b>Matchmaker's motivation</b>
<b>Type A agencies</b>	Yes, coinciding with agencies' specialty	Commercial; advertisement	Fixed specialty	Profit-making
<b>Type B brokers</b>	No	Social and kin relations	Constantly changing	Profit-making and sustaining long-term cliental relations and future business prospects
<b>Type C matchmakers</b>	No	Social and kin relations	Fixed, confined within the matchmaker's own social and kin network	Good will; strengthening ties with brides' natal families and social support network

The table above summarises the differences between the three types brokers/matchmakers in the choice of brides.

Type B matchmakers' choice of ethnicity and places of origin of the brides is driven by business interests, depending on the availability of women, success rate of matchmaking, cost involved and desirability of women. They resemble entrepreneurs who constantly look for more profit-making opportunities and more marketable commodities, yet they rely on and utilise their social capital to secure new clients. As a result they operate in the locality where they have enduring and strong social networks, while shifting the place of matchmaking operations (women's origins)

frequently. Type C matchmakers largely confine to their social kin ties and introduce women from the same or neighbouring villages/towns.

While Taiwanese macro-economic parameters increase, the correlation between Taiwanese business investments and origins of the brides decreases. Preferences concerning ethnicity and origins of the brides are largely determined by the brokers/matchmakers, whose choices are either based on market mechanisms or their existing social and kin ties. The market mechanisms, as discussed earlier, depend on a combination of factors (i.e. the availability of women, success rate of matchmaking, cost involved and desirability of women), that does not always correlate with the degree of poverty or economic (under)development of the countries and areas where women come from. The macro framework of placing cross-border migration under (economic) globalisation and internationalisation of capital and labour therefore suffers limitations (Hsia, 2001; Wang 2002; Piper, 2000; Han, 2002). Similarly, the assumption that people prefer to choose a marital mate based on shared ethnicity, language and culture, as diaspora studies suggest, also has its limitations.

#### **4.5.3 Tasks of matchmakers after marriages**

In earlier cross-border marriages, restrictive immigration policies and legal complications required the matchmaker to take up more responsibilities both before and after the marriage. This included hosting the bridegroom during the matchmaking trip, facilitating his communication with the bride's family, making sure that the marriage was consummated smoothly, and so on. In Kalimantan where the majority of Indonesian brides come from, many matchmaking groups stay in the house of the brokers, as is also done on the second visit after marriage. In some cases the matchmakers provide sexual education and knowledge of contraceptives. As the legal procedures often take months, a matchmaker may also act as the guardian of the bride in the period when she waits to join her husband, monitoring her to make sure that she does not run away or commit any "immoral" acts. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Taiwanese immigration policy only allows a Mainland bride to reside in Taiwan for no more than six months a year during the first two years of marriage. In Family Pang and Aji's case, Aji stayed at *meiren* Mrs. Wang's house for the first two years of marriage because it is not customary for a married woman to stay in her natal house.

When the brides arrive in Taiwan, in the absence of social and kin support, they often seek advice and help from matchmakers. Type C matchmakers can best provide cross-cultural experience and knowledge, and are often proud to be of help as it enhances their status in the family and community. Even if the bride has not had any prior social or kin relations with a Type B matchmaker, she will still count on the

matchmaker if she has no one to turn to. Type B matchmakers often provide legal, health and cultural information and emotional support in helping the bride to adjust to the new environment, which may even include references in job opportunities. The husband and parents-in-law often welcome the assistance of Type B matchmakers especially when it helps the bride to settle in and earn income for the families. However, the assistance of the Type C matchmaker is not always welcomed and treated with suspicion, especially if they talk in languages or dialects that the husband and parents-in-law do not understand.<sup>449</sup> At times such assistance continues for years and the bride and matchmaker build up a friendship. Not every matchmaker is as helpful since such assistance is provided on a voluntary basis<sup>450</sup> and depends on how resourceful he or she is. Nevertheless, as they live in the same locality and now share social and kin relations, it is difficult for the matchmaker to refuse the bride's demands. In the veteran's settlement, Type B and C matchmakers are often the comrades of the veteran husbands or their mainland brides. In the absence of in-laws and other relatives, the comrades and their wives form a close support network.

Since the bride lacks social support in her new environment, the matchmaker is also expected to mediate in the couple's conflicts and any conflicts with the bridegroom's family members in the initial stage of marriage. This often happens when the bride's expectations and imaginings concerning her husband's material situation fail and a feeling of deception develops, and likewise in the case of domestic violence.<sup>451</sup> When prior social or kin ties exist with the husband (not the wife) the Type B matchmaker often tends to defend the interests of the husband rather than the wife. The Type C matchmaker is often not powerful enough to defend the bride, so the bride is often persuaded to accept reality. Nevertheless, there are matchmakers, often female, who are sympathetic to the bride.

#### **4.6 Meanings of economic transactions prior and during weddings**

In traditional practices there are two flows of money transactions: 1) the brideprice and dowry, negotiated by both families with the help of the matchmaker; 2) a gift of money to matchmakers to be given at or after the wedding. Both are given in the form of cash without commercial connotations. The practices of brideprice and dowry are highly diverse in different parts of China among different classes and ethnic groups and are undergoing change in response to socio-economic realities.<sup>452</sup> The detailed

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<sup>449</sup> I will discuss the networks and friendships among fellow foreign and mainland brides in Chapter 5.

<sup>450</sup> Although they have the incentive to do so as they can make small profits from the renewal of legal documents for the brides.

<sup>451</sup> In some advertisements the brokers specify that the warranty of a "one-year marriage" is not valid if the husband beats the wife.

<sup>452</sup> See Siu (1993) and Whyte (1993).

analysis of the changes, who controls them and how they are used, renders insights into intra-familial relations and family strategies. On the whole, the brideprice and dowry symbolise the social status of two families, the exchange of which strengthens the alliance of both families, although an unbalanced exchange affects the bride's status in her husband's family. The money for the matchmakers is given voluntarily by the parents of both parties as a sign of gratitude.

How do we understand the money transactions of cross-border marriages in the light of traditional practices as indicated in the diagram? Chang (2002) and Shen (2003) both argue that this kind of matchmaking operation is a commercial activity disguised as traditional practice. Institutionalised or not, the brokering industry is driven by market mechanisms. I have illustrated earlier how market rules of standardised operations and fixed prices have eroded traditional practices. The pre-fixed charges have changed the traditional meaning of brideprice and gift money to matchmakers, as it leaves no room for negotiation and is not given voluntarily. The goal of matchmakers is not to identify a suitable match that will lead to a sustainable marriage, but to complete a match within the limited time permitted by a standardised tour operation. Otherwise they would suffer a loss of profit. It is the profit-driven aim and time limit, not the money transaction per se, which makes matchmaking a commercial activity.

If matchmaking is a business deal, how should we understand the continuous involvement of matchmakers in couples' family lives? Any business deal has prescribed tasks, corresponding prices, and a time of closure. But the matchmaker's never-ending involvement is often voluntary and bound by moral and social obligations, which cannot be analysed by business logic. Here we see the interplay of economic transactions and social relations. The commercial deal does not exclude the meaning of gift exchange and reciprocal duty.

#### **4.7 Actors' perspectives on trade marriage**

When I asked cross-border couples and members of the studies communities what the difference was between a trade marriage (*maimai hunyin*) and a "normal" marriage, I was told that a trade marriage is a more problematic and unstable form of marriage because,

- 1) the marriage decision is made in haste without a period of courtship, in contrast to the "love marriage". However, this does not mean that there exist no love between the couples. They think they have made a commitment toward each other and toward respective family members and develop "love" after the marriage. Therefore the duration of the courtship does not matter;

- 2) the disparity between the husband's and wife's ages, physical appearance, and social and economic status of their natal families (and of their countries and ethnicity) as well as cultural differences make it more difficult to maintain a good married life, although they also acknowledge that such disparity does not necessarily constitute a major problem as long as there is love (developed after marriage);
- 3) questionable motivations: the brides see marriage as a means of labour migration or securing citizenship and are therefore not fully devoted to their husbands and their families in Taiwan.

The interviewees agree that although *maimai hunyin* is a more vulnerable form of marriage, this form is sanctioned and it is possible to develop a successful marriage as long as the couples and family members are committed to it. For instance, in the first case study I quote (Family Pang), Mother Pang suffered no moral guilt when she identified the first matchmaking trip to Indonesia as “buying a wife”, but she did not consider her second daughter-in-law Aji as a bought commodity. The different perception does not derive from the difference in matchmaking operations of finding two brides. In her perception she considers the first marriage with the Indonesian bride a trade marriage because it failed, while Aji has been fully accepted as a member of the family and therefore this marriage is no longer considered a trade marriage. The perception changes over time as the relationship between the brides and the family members develops. I will discuss this point in Chapter 5. In other words, *maimai hunyin* is used to describe the failed, problematic marriages or is attributed to the causes of victims' suffering from exploitative situations, but is not used to describe a particular matchmaking practice and the economic transactions of the marriage.

To summarise, the commercial elements of money transactions and matchmaking operations are not identified as major causes of problems in the actors' perceptions. It is not the money, but the lack of courtship and the social and economic gap that make cross-border marriages vulnerable. This is to say that the actors involved do not perceive women entering into commercially arranged marriages as trading commodities. It is rather an exchange based on consensus, and acknowledges that women exercise agency in marital decisions. This is closer to the meaning of marriage of convenience as there is always the hope of developing emotional bonds after marriage. This kind of exchange leads to an imbalance in power, in both gendered conjugal relations and inter-generational relations, but it does not signify commodified relationships per se. Having instrumental motivations does not exclude the possibility of developing emotional and social bindings in the course of time.

#### **4.8 Concluding remarks: making sense of mediated cross-border marriages**

Coming back to the discussion on trafficking, MOB and the commodification of marriages, if we put aside the phenomenon of women entering sex work via bogus marriages, can we see the phenomenon of commercially arranged marriages as human trafficking? In the aspect of coercion and deception, it has been observed that from the point of view of profit making and time limits, the matchmaker would persuade the prospective couple, especially the bride, to make a hasty decision without providing enough information and time for mutual understanding. However, all brides are aware of the risks involved and are prepared to accept the consequences of their decision. The question lies in whether it is possible to reach a fully informed decision, as the brides have some imaginings and expectations of the receiving society which often differ from reality. This point will be further elaborated in Chapter 5. Not only the lack of social support but also the social stigma could indeed make brides vulnerable and their working conditions could be exploitative. However, arguing that these brides are brought to Taiwan for the purpose of exploitation is questionable.

Emphasising profit-making and institutional aspects, the MOB and commodified marriage discourse equates the commercialisation of matchmaking operations with the commodification of women although it acknowledges women's agency in utilising this system. However, it also carries moral connotations concerning the monetary transactions in marriage, derived implicitly from an ideal of conjugal relations based on romantic love between two independent individuals. Any commercial operations and material considerations would contaminate this ideal. Thus this discourse attributes women's decisions in using commercial systems to enter marriage as a consequence of the corruption of value systems caused by free-market forces.

The discourse of trafficking projects images of women either as powerless victims or as ignorant, uneducated and backward, and their husbands and brokers as vicious exploiters and criminals. The MOB discourse projects images of calculating, morally questionable women. Such images in popular discourse further stigmatise the actors involved, especially the brides. This has led to the policies that hold them responsible for the population and social problems of the receiving countries as discussed in Chapter 3.

These two discourses are embedded in a Eurocentric ideal of romantic love, sexuality and equal partnership in marriage in a contemporary setting of the nuclear family (Aries and Duby, 1987). Historians studying the history of family institutions in the United States and Europe have documented how such an ideal was constructed (Coontz, 2000; Stone, 1979). The situation of two individuals making a life-long decision of marriage and mate choice out of love and continuing to stay in love is



also a very private matter based on a dichotomous distinction between the public and the private (Kumar, 1997).

In contrast, the ideals of marriage in contemporary Taiwan and China have undergone several currents of changes, as discussed in Chapter 1, as a complex process encompassing the intervention of the state, engineered ideologies, and resistance and responses from the changing family institutions. I demonstrate in this chapter that the matchmaking operations involve more actors than the couples themselves. It is both a “private” and “public” matter, involving the kin members and intermediaries, and the meanings of wedding rituals and economic transactions are subjected to multiple interpretations depending on the contexts and the social relations of the actors involved. Though the mate choice is seemingly made in a haste, love, whatever it means, can be developed and fostered over time. The meanings of such decisions, arrangements and economic transactions can also change over time.

However, there lies a danger of completely accepting the actors’ perceptions. People living under exploitative conditions and inequality which are justified by existing economic structures, social relations and cultural notions may not feel that they are exploited. I have demonstrated in this chapter that the standardised, marketised operations have altered the meaning of matchmaking and economic transactions, although there is no clear distinction between what is commercial and what is traditional. The vulnerability and relatively weaker power position that the brides experience are real. When the brides feel that they made an autonomous marital decision and mate choice, it may be argued that they exercise their agency and freedom. However, their decisions are also influenced by the socio-economic conditions and time constraints, and subjected to the pressure of their family members, friends and matchmakers, and are later justified by the concept of “fate” as discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>453</sup> Because Chinese marriage is not a individual, private matter, the concept of agency as autonomous, free action therefore can be problematic.

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<sup>453</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.4.4.

## Chapter 5 Negotiation of gender and kinship relations in everyday life

A Taiwanese marriage is not conceived of in terms of a man taking a wife, but of a family calling in a daughter-in-law, and every bride is well aware that pleasing her husband is the least of her concern, that it is her mother-in-law's face she must watch.

*Margery Wolf (1972: 142)*

This chapter is an ethnographic account of daily life experiences of cross-strait families. The objective is to study the interaction among the members of cross-strait families along the course of marriage and family life as well as the strategies these members employ to cultivate their relationship under the political and economic conditions and cultural perceptions as laid out in previous chapters. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is important to study the social positioning of members of cross-strait families before and after marriage by understanding who and how they benefit or lose from cross-strait marriages (Massey, 1994; Constable, 2005), so as to explain not only why these family members opt for cross-strait marriages but also why their marriages work or break down; and eventually, we can answer the question why the stream of cross-strait marriage migration is sustained despite the policy constraints and the negative image towards cross-strait families as explained in Chapter 3. Because in the public discourse the gender ideology of mediated cross-border marriage places women at home, mainland brides' experiences are primarily defined by their relationship and interaction with the members of their husbands' kin in the domestic domain (Freeman, 2005).<sup>454</sup>

These interactions and strategies are analysed taking into account the actors' priorities and concerns at different stages of their life cycle - both emotional, physical and material. The life of cross-strait families follows two mutually-shaped cycles. One is the cycle of immigration and welfare policies that determine the brides' entry, duration of stay, citizen status, right to work, entitlement to medical service and social benefits etc. The other circle is the marriage experience commonly shared by all newly-weds including clarifying responsibilities, establishing division of labour, pregnancy, childbirth, child-rearing, and building up future security. The former has been extensively discussed in Chapter 3, where I argue that the stages of the brides' residentship are largely designed based on women's roles in the family. In this chapter I will discuss the latter cycle in the face of the former, with the focus on the brides' efforts and strategies of gaining recognition in the husbands' kin.

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<sup>454</sup> Freeman's research is on the Chosonjok brides (ethnic minority in Northeast China) in South Korea but the same comparison can be drawn with foreign wives in rural Taiwan and Japan.

I will illustrate the life cycle of cross-strait families based on two demographic categories of mainland brides as sketched in Chapter 2, one comprising of women between 20 and the early 30s at the time of marriage and without previous marital experiences, and the other of women aged above 40 and who are widowed or divorced, with or without children from the previous marriage. In Chapter 2 I discuss the significance of the factors of age, marital and prenatal experience in migratory and marital motivations.<sup>455</sup> In this chapter I will show how age and previous marital experience not only influence marital motivations, but also fundamentally shape women's perception of marriage and their strategies of coping and negotiation. Analysing the rationale of these relations and strategies - how it reproduces and/or deviates from traditional cultural norms - brings out both the sameness and difference between local marriages and cross-border marriages, and hence challenges the persistent images of "the other" in popular and public discourse.

Social positioning and power relations cannot be analysed merely among the family members, because families and kin groups do not determine themselves the norms and patterns of sociability, which are rooted in wider communities (Rose and Rapp, 1999). Though public discourse and state policies have an influence on the life of cross-border families, the actors may or may not choose to comply with them. The norms and patterns of sociability, however, are much more difficult to escape and resist. I use the community cross-border family live in as a locus of social relations. The community here is broadly defined as a group of people who have frequent physical contacts and whose opinions and expectations shape its members' behaviour and perceptions. It has no strict physical boundary, yet it is within certain geographical confines that frequent social contacts are sustained.<sup>456</sup> In my research it often refers to the localities where I conduct my fieldwork, that is Baihe town and Hukou veteran's settlement and neighbouring Hakka villages.

### **5.1 Perception and expectation of cross-strait marriages and mainland brides prior to marriage**

Mainland brides are widely regarded as women marrying for economic gains. This impression is dominant in mainlanders, Hakka and Minnan communities, however, the judgement of this motivation varies. Some consider mainland brides having ill intentions who are after the wealth of Taiwanese men and families, while others think

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<sup>455</sup> See Chapter 2, 2.4.2.

<sup>456</sup> Although a community can transcend physical distances, for instance, a virtual community or an ethnic community, I limit the definition in geographical confines because this is where my informants' social relations take place primarily. For discussion on the characteristics of Chinese rural communities, see Li, Y.H. (2003:62-68).

that they are victims of poverty and are forced into marriage. These two judgements are based on the assumption that cross-strait marriages are not favourable and problematic because the marriages are not based on love. This is particularly the case in the veteran's settlement where the age gap between the couples is identified as a major problem, as well as in Hakka and Minnan rural communities where matched cross-border marriage are common. A local staff member of a Veteran Service station, Mr. Huang, pointed out,

*Well, it is not my business and I do not intend to say ill things about these mainland women, but as far as I know most of the mainland brides marry for money. That is why they pick old veterans whose remaining days are limited and who have a bit of savings.*

His colleague Mr. Chen, the husband of a mainland woman, confirmed,

*most mainland [brides] marry veterans for money, because life in the mainland is harsh. Some veterans have savings and own houses, but other veterans are very poor and live on meagre government subsidy. But mainland brides were not aware of this and thought all veterans were rich. After they came to Taiwan and realised that the economic situation of their husbands was not so good, many soon filed for divorce.*<sup>457</sup>

A medical doctor and local opinion leader<sup>458</sup> held a different opinion:

*Of course they [mainland brides] marry Taiwanese men with economic motivations. That is because they are from poor families [in China] so they have to sacrifice themselves for their family. They love their country and family. Their spirit is admirable. They are not bad. They have no option.*

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<sup>457</sup> Mr. Huang is the coordinator of one of the Veteran Service stations in Hukou town who is in charge of the welfare of veterans in the veterans' settlement where I conducted my fieldwork in 2004. A veteran Service station is the local office of the Veterans Affairs Commission, Executive Yuan, a government department taking care of the welfare of veteran soldiers. Mr. Huang is a full-time staff member of the Veterans Affairs Commission in charge of Hukou office. Mr. Chen works under him as a part-time, residential liaison officer. Mr. Huang is at his 40s and of Hakka origin. Mr. Chen, aged 80, is a veteran from Hunan province. Mr. Huang works with veterans and their mainland wives on a daily basis and Mr. Chen himself married a mainland wife. Their views are shaped by daily contacts with cross-strait couples and personal experiences in the veterans' settlement.

<sup>458</sup> Dr. Lin is a Chinese medical doctor specialised in sexology. He is also a landlord and owner of a local radio station in Hukou town. Many veterans and their mainland wives are his patients. He is one of my key informants who helped me entering the fieldwork site.

Based on these two judgements two contrasting images of mainland brides are formed. One is that of evil greedy women preying on aged veterans, and the other of good women caring for their family selflessly. This contrast fits the ideal of good women and good wives as discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>459</sup> As Mr. Gan<sup>460</sup>, the former head of Zhongxin village said bluntly,

*well... I don't know what motivates them to marry veterans, but it is a fact that many veterans were cheated and lost their savings. They [mainland brides] know very well how to please [veterans].....; most of them [mainland brides] are pretty and have good temperament, and they know how to catch a veteran's heart. But soon they [brides] drain you and leave you. However, there are 'good ones' who really take care of their husbands when they are old and sick. It is mainly because their husbands have a permanent pension. .... Nevertheless, they are admirable. No Taiwanese women are willing and able to care for these old men.*

Mr. Gan also acknowledged that these mainland brides in fact take up the major caring responsibility of these veterans, a responsibility which should be primarily shouldered by the government.

In Hakka and Minnan rural communities where mediated cross-border marriages are common, the contrasting images of good versus bad women are also pertinent. There mainland brides are often compared with foreign brides from Southeast Asian countries based on these contrasting images. A taxi driver in Hukou told me that one of his cousins married a Vietnamese woman and his neighbour married a mainland woman from Hunan province. He is 46 years old and was still looking for a wife. He did not want to marry a foreign woman because,

*"after all, their way of thinking and customs are different [from us]; it is difficult to communicate [with them]." I asked how he thought of mainland women, he said, "[a] Mainland [wife] is alright. We would share the same language but the customs are still different. It takes time to 'teach them the basics' (cong tou jiao qi 從頭教起). Besides, most mainland [women] come to Taiwan with the intention to make money. They have to return [to China] every half a year. Who knows what will happen then?"*

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<sup>459</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.1.3.

<sup>460</sup> Mr. Gan is the former head of Zhongxin village in Hukou town where the veterans' settlement I conducted my fieldwork is situated. He is of Hakka origin and aged mid-40s.

He continued to say that most of his passengers thought that Vietnamese brides are better than mainland brides, because mainland brides were greedy, while Vietnamese brides tended to surrender to fate (*renming* 認命) easily and were more hard-working, although “*they are not clean because in Vietnam there is no water and people there were unhygienic.*”

The view of the taxi driver is commonly shared by kin members of cross-strait couples. A sister-in-law of a mainland bride in Hukou town told me that she pitied Southeast Asian brides because their families and countries were so poor that they married Taiwanese in order to improve their family’s economic situation. “*But mainland brides are not worthy of my sympathy,*” said she, “*because they are greedy and always take money back to China.*” When I asked her why the same act of sending money to natal families means sacrifice for Southeast Asian brides and greed for mainland brides, she simply said, “*mainland brides are different. They are communists!*” She thought that this statement was sufficient to explain why mainland women are greedy and morally decayed, not knowing that Vietnam was also a Communist state. Nevertheless, she emphasised that her own sister-in-law was an exception because “*she worked so hard in the family farm and never kept a cent for herself.*”<sup>461</sup>

The mainland brides themselves also clearly differentiate themselves from Taiwanese women and Southeast Asian brides, but they hold themselves in a higher social position than Southeast Asian brides. In a casual social gathering a few mainland brides came to a conclusion,

*“if they allow the man [husband] to choose for himself, 90% will choose mainland [women]. Why? Because they [mainland women] are clever. Vietnamese are stupid and clumsy. Only the families controlled by the elders [parents-in-law] would choose Vietnamese. Because they [Vietnamese women] are more submissive. [If] you want obedient [women] you go for Vietnamese!”* They continued to say, “*richer Taiwanese men prefer to marry mainland [women]. Only poor men marry Vietnamese. This is because it costs much more to travel to China. It is not necessary [to travel and spend money] for [marrying] Vietnamese..... However, when comparing with Taiwanese women, they [Taiwanese women] are even more costly [than mainland women]. I am not talking about the wedding cost. I mean if you marry a wife you have to support her, right? Taiwanese women are not very easy to please. They are very*

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<sup>461</sup> Mrs. Deng’s elder brother-in-law Mr. Deng and his mainland wife Wang from Hunan were my key informants. The extended family, including two brothers, their wives and children and a widowed father live together in a farm located in the area populated with Hakka in Hukou town (outside the veterans’ settlement). Except for Wang, all the other family members are of Hakka origin.

*demanding on material things. So, getting married is very easy, but supporting (yang) a wife and making her happy is difficult. That is why the men here [in this community] cannot afford to marry Taiwanese women.”*<sup>462</sup>

Their criteria of difference are not based on the (constructed) images of themselves but based on their husbands' economic and social position. Nor is their identity based on national or cultural differences. In fact, most of the brides from the southern provinces in China, such as Fujian and Hainan, do not consider themselves “mainlanders”. At their hometowns in China the term “mainlander” refers to people from inland provinces or Northern China and they do not associate Fujian and Hainan as part of mainland.<sup>463</sup>

The stigma attached to mainland brides was so strong that one mainland bride faked her identity in the public. Aju, a mainland woman at late 20s, worked in a noodle stall in an open market in a predominantly Minnan neighbourhood in Taichung city. She always told the customers that she was from Vietnam, not from the mainland. She told me that people were generally more friendly to Vietnamese brides although they were also looked down upon. *“It is better to be pitied than to be sexually harassed. If I said that I am from the mainland some men would take for granted that I would sleep with them for money. When I said no they said dirty words to me. It is disgusting!”*<sup>464</sup>

I have explained that in traditional practice a wife's labour and income belongs to the collective household, and keeping money for herself or sending money to her natal family would be considered as appropriating the property of her husband's family.<sup>465</sup> The “economic motivation” of marriage does not refer to the brideprice and the monetary exchange at the time of the wedding, but the continuous transfer of wealth from the husband's family to the bride herself or to her natal family. Following the discussion in Chapter 4, the problematics of the cross-border marriages do not primarily lie in the commercial transactions at the wedding. Mediated cross-border marriages involving monetary transaction should be considered as marriage of

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<sup>462</sup> The above conversation was recorded during a gathering of three mainland brides at one of bride's home in Baihe town in November, 2003. The gathering was not planned. Soon after I arrived at the home, two other brides in the neighbourhood dropped by and we started chatting. All three brides were from Hainan province, at their 30s and had been married for more than six years.

<sup>463</sup> These women's usage of the term “mainlanders” is different from the Taiwanese' usage of term *waishengren* (mainlanders) in which is commonly used in Taiwan to refer to people migrated to Taiwan from all parts of Mainland China during or after the civil war in 1949 as well as the second and third generations born in Taiwan. See Introduction, p.1 and footnote 1.

<sup>464</sup> Interviews with Aju in May 2002 and June 2003.

<sup>465</sup> Discussion of the common household economy and private pocket money (*sifangqian* 私房錢), see Chapter 1, 1.1.2. However, different studies on different (sub)ethnic communities drew very different conclusions on whether a woman gets to keep the private pocket money either from the gift given by her natal kin during the wedding or from the income of her own job.

convenience and not as commodification of marriage and trafficking in women. In the perceptions of the community where cross-strait and cross-border couples live, marriage of convenience, though not as preferable as love marriage, is still an acceptable form of marriage.<sup>466</sup> It only constitutes a problem when it poses a threat to the family, especially when what is considered to be the family property is appropriated. If a bride fulfils the expectation of contributing all her labour to the husband's family, she can be accepted or even admired by both the kin and the community.

What puzzled me, however, is why the same act of sending money to brides' natal families is interpreted differently when done by Southeast Asian brides and by mainland brides. It is interpreted as an act of selfless sacrifices by Southeast Asian brides and as an act of greed by mainland brides. While it is difficult to pinpoint the direct cause of such differentiated interpretations, I observe two major factors. One is the public discourse in the media and government policy, and the other is the stereotypes used and reinforced by the advertisements and language of persuasion used by marriage brokers.

In Chapter 3 I have addressed the image-shaping process of mainland brides and cross-strait marriages in the public discourse. Although public and private discourse can be very different, public narratives can have impacts on private perceptions (Nyíri, 2004:121). Although there is a lack of systematic study on how political propaganda against communism during the KMT period has shaped the images of mainland Chinese, I observe that it is very common for Taiwanese to attribute any difference and undesirable traits of individual mainland brides to the communist influence without any supporting fact as if it were self-evident. Mr. Huang, the Veteran Service officer mentioned earlier summarised his criticism of mainland brides by concluding, "*you know, the mainland is different from us. Communist [China] is a matrilineal society. That is why they [the mainland brides] take all the money back to their natal families.*" Communist influence is used conveniently to put all mainland brides into one category and to justify their difference from Taiwanese women and Southeast Asian brides.

Another traceable factor is effort of the marriage brokers/matchmakers in projecting Southeast Asian brides as more desirable than mainland brides. In Chapter 4 I have discussed that the broker industry of cross-border marriage in Taiwan has shifted from mainland brides to Southeast Asian brides as the brokerage of the latter is more profitable. The demand of mainland brides to hold the matchmakers accountable is often interpreted as being greedy and ungrateful. The brokers/matchmakers often emphasise how hardworking and submissive the Southeast Asian brides are by

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<sup>466</sup> See Chapter 4, 4.6.



comparing with the mainland brides. As a result, the brokers/matchmakers of the mainland brides often stress that their brides are “*not like the other [mainland brides] because they are from poor rural families (often from inland provinces) and are equally submissive and obedient as Southeast Asian brides.*”<sup>467</sup>

Other than submissiveness and hardworking attitude, another desirable trait of Southeast Asian and mainland brides is their femininity. Ms. Lin, a young single woman working in the Household Registry Office in Baihe told me, “*the mainland brides I met here are generally very good. I mean, they are better educated [than Southeast Asian brides], look very pretty and have a good temperament. They speak with soft voices and are very feminine. No way we [Taiwanese women] can compete with them!*”<sup>468</sup> Mr. Gan, a former head of a veterans’ settlement, also made the same comment.<sup>469</sup>

These traits -- submissiveness, accepting fate (*renming*), hard work and femininity, makes Southeast Asian brides and mainland brides different from Taiwanese women. These traits may be desirable for husbands, parents-in-law and potential bridegrooms, yet in the eyes of the community they are not necessarily preferable. I have discussed earlier that in public discourse the men who marry foreign and mainland brides are portrayed as socially and economically marginalised and being left out in the local marriage market. In the community these men are also considered culturally backward, badly educated and “being left behind the times” (*gan bu shang shidai* 趕不上時代). As Ms. Lin said,

“*The men [and families] who marry foreign brides are normally different [from us].*” By “different”, she clarified to me, she meant “traditional” - people who look for wives and daughters-in-law who never talk back. She added, “*It is different now. Taiwanese women of our times opt for perspectives of modern [gender] relations because it is more advantageous to us [Taiwanese women]. But these men and families want traditional wives and daughters-in-law because it is to their advantage. They look for foreign brides because they cannot find traditional and submissive women among Taiwanese any more. A few days ago, a couple, both Taiwanese, came to file for a divorce simply*

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<sup>467</sup> Interview with Matchmaker Liu in Beihe town in August 2003. For matchmaker Liu’s profile see Chapter 4, 3.2.

<sup>468</sup> Ms. Lin works at the Household Registration Office in Baihe township as a registry officer. She is 31 years old and single. She is a Minnan and has a university degree. She talked to every single cross-strait couple in Beihe when they came to the Household Registration Office to register their marriages. She offered a great help when I collect statistical data from her office. The quotation here and below are from our conversation in October 2003 when we worked together in her office. Written with her permission.

<sup>469</sup> Mr. Gan’s profile see footnote 462.

*because the wife talks back to her husband. Which Taiwanese woman can stand such a thing?"*

Ms. Lin's view, widely shared in Hakka and Minnan communities, particularly among the more educated and well-off members, created a shaming effect to the cross-border families. Even the mainland brides themselves share the same perception. As a mainland bride told me, *"It is common knowledge that those who went over there [Mainland China] to marry us are not of any good!"*<sup>470</sup> In the perception of the community and the mainland women, the men intending to marry foreign or mainland brides are not capable of finding local wives – that they are too poor, too old, having physical or mental problems, or being culturally backward – they often keep their intention secret. One example is Aming,<sup>471</sup> a young man who is at his late 20s, who was persuaded to join a matchmaking trip to China. He did not tell anyone other than his parents. He only declared his marriage when his newly-wed wife from Hainan arrived in Hukou. When I asked him why he kept the secret that long, he said, *"If I told my boss (Dr. Lin) he would not let me go. He would think I am doing a stupid thing. I want to tell people when they actually see her [his wife's] face. Then they will think she is good for me. What if I told them earlier and something went wrong, or she did not come? I would be the laughing-stock of the town!"* Nevertheless, Aming told me that he still became the laughing-stock of the town for a while. Due to his earlier secrecy, rumours had it that Aming's wife was a prostitute and he met her during his sex leisure trip to China. It was only years after their marriage that the rumours and suspicion gradually disappeared.

To summarise, because cross-border marriages are considered inferior to marriages between Taiwanese in the public discourse, it is assumed that no woman would make such a choice unless for economic gains. Both Southeast Asian and mainland brides are considered different from Taiwanese not for their lower socio-economic status, but also for certain characteristics associated with traditional ideals of women, such as submissiveness, hard working, accepting fate and femininity.<sup>472</sup> These characteristics made foreign and mainland brides a desirable choice for some

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<sup>470</sup> Interview with Ayin in Hukou, August 2004. Ayin is from Fuqing, Northern Fujian province. She was a widow at mid-30s. She married to Ke, a Minnan man aged late 40s. Ayin's story will appear later in this and the next chapter.

<sup>471</sup> Aming lives in one of the veteran's settlements in Hukou town (not Zhongxin village where I did my fieldwork though). His father is a mainlander veteran and his mother a Hakka. He works for Dr. Lin (see footnote 2 of this chapter) as a driver. At his late 20s he was persuaded by a friend to join a matchmaking trip to Hainan Island, during which he met his wife Axiu and they were married at the end of the trip. They were married for 7 years and have two children by the time I interviewed them in July 2003.

<sup>472</sup> It is worth noting that these traits often do not associate explicitly with physical beauty. It was considered dangerous to marry too beautiful wives/daughter-in-laws.

Taiwanese men and families, yet in the eyes of the community the men and families opting for foreign and mainland brides are considered socio-economically and culturally backward. This explains why although the intention of looking for a wife or a daughter-in-law with the above mentioned traits is perfectly justifiable and common among Taiwanese, the foreign and mainland brides with these traits do not give pride to the families. Thus the brides, their husbands as well as their families share the stigma.

Though foreign and mainland brides are both considered different others, among them are differentiated images. Southeast Asian brides are often associated with the image of the good daughters who sacrifice themselves to bring their families out of poverty, while mainland brides are more often associated with the image of evil women preying on vulnerable veterans or appropriating the property of the husbands' kin. This is to say that women's economic motivations prior to marriage can be justified as long as they fulfil the role of ideal women after marriage, that is, as selfless care-givers of the husbands' families and to a certain extend of natal families, and do not seek personal gains.

## **5.2. Marginal status, controlling and shaming mechanisms**

When I first went to Hukou town to explore the possibility of conducting fieldwork there, I was told that a mainland bride, Fuling, might be willing to talk to me. Fuling had been married to a Hakka man, Qiang, for nearly eight years and had two children both at primary school age.<sup>473</sup> I was told that I could find Fuling in the local market where she sold preserved vegetables and other food produced by Qiang every morning. When I approached Fuling in the market, she was shocked at first but she soon agreed to talk to me as I was referred by her friend. However, before I could prompt any question, a middle-aged Taiwanese woman tending the vegetable stall next to Fuling's shouted to Fuling, *"you'd better discuss with your husband first."* And she turned to me, *"you are not supposed to talk to her without her husband's permission."* Later after a few months' ethnographic fieldwork and a few interviews with Fuling and Qiang, I discovered that Qiang was not particular strict to Fuling concerning who she befriended with or talked to. On the contrary, he encouraged Fuling to make friends with young Taiwanese women and fellow mainland and Indonesian brides. The earlier incident of the neighbouring woman's intervention in our conversation was that woman's own initiative.

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<sup>473</sup> Fuling is from Meixian, Guangdong province. She is also a Hakka. She married Qiang at her early 20s when Qiang was at his late 40s. For both it is their first marriage. They were matched by marriage brokers/matchmakers in 1995. With regards to Qiang's attitude towards Fuling's social activities, I will elaborate more in section 4 (consolidating social network) of this chapter.

It is quite possible that Fuling's neighbour thought that I was a journalist and therefore was suspicious of me. Given the tabloid style of local news reports on cross-border marriage, it is understandable that cross-border families tend to be hostile towards strangers.<sup>474</sup> Nevertheless, in my fieldwork I observed that it was not uncommon that members of the community, particularly women, assumed the authority of controlling mainland and foreign brides' movement, speech and social activities. And they claimed to do so with good intentions of protecting the name of the brides' families. Some members of the community might not openly "advise" the brides, but their opinions and disapproval would always be made clear to the brides, either by gestures or via open gossip.<sup>475</sup> As a result, all foreign and mainland brides are aware that all of their moves and utterances are constantly being watched.

Such a sanction mechanism is not only applied to foreign and mainland brides, nor is it unique in Chinese societies. Any young bride marrying into a rural community from another village will probably experience the same until she is fully accepted as a member of the community. However, compared with Taiwanese women, the sanction period for mainland and foreign brides seems to last much longer, or never ends. In other words, they remain "brides" for a very long period of time or forever.<sup>476</sup> In the next section I will elaborate on different stages of the brides' integration into the kin and community.

The reasons why the sanction mechanism applied to foreign and mainland brides is prolonged are manifold. First, as foreign and mainland brides are perceived as social-economically and culturally backward, the members of the community assume the responsibility of "educating" them. In the words of the taxi driver mentioned earlier, "*teach them the basics*". These "teachings" are largely centred on how to be a good woman and fulfilling the role of a good wife and daughter-in-law. As for other areas of "cultural enhancement", such as learning languages and acquiring knowledge of Taiwanese society, etc., these remain the public concern of the State and the experts whose primary concern is the population quality and to a lesser extent the brides' integration and self-empowerment. In fact, in communities people generally hold the view that the foreign brides should not be given an opportunity to know too much as it increases the risk of them running away.

The media's representation of "runaway brides" and "bogus" marriages had also made the community constantly on guard. If a bride went to another town temporarily to seek job opportunities, rumours would spread that she had run away.

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<sup>474</sup> Description of tabloid style reports, see Chapter 3, 3.4.3 and 3.5.2.

<sup>475</sup> The "open gossip" is a kind of gossip that was done purposely to let the objects of gossip be aware the gossipers' opinions and therefore to achieve the objective of sanction and control. For instance, the gossipers talk about A's private life without A's presence but make sure that the talk is loud enough so that A would hear it, or that A would hear it from someone else the contents of the talk.

<sup>476</sup> For the position of newly-wed brides in the husband's kin, see discussion in Chapter 1, 1.1.3.

Earlier I discussed that all mainland brides had to register in and regularly report to the local police station. In late 2004 when the policy of tightening control over “bogus” marriages was introduced, the local police patrolled and visited cross-strait families regularly and made sure that the brides stayed at home all the time. When a mainland bride was not at home and the husband failed to indicate the whereabouts of his wife on that particularly day, the police advised the husband, “*Be a man and take control of (guan 管) your wife! If you don’t keep her under control she will run away sooner or later.*”<sup>477</sup> The husbands who gave freedom to their mainland wives were at times ridiculed because they were seen as not masculine enough to take control and allow their wives to overpower them.

With the sanction mechanism and stigma applied to the brides and the shaming mechanism on their husbands, the husbands easily felt insecure about their marriage. Many husbands already had a low self-esteem prior to marriage, either resulting from long-term unemployment or frustration of their disadvantageous positions in the marriage market. The husbands who were not particularly disadvantageous in the marriage market and married mainland brides by choice were also affected by the shaming mechanism.

Within the kin, the foreign and mainland brides’ were in general more marginalised compared with Taiwanese daughters-in-law especially at the initial stage of marriage. It is difficult to identify one single reason though. Some brides thought that they were marginalised because of the media representations and stigma towards the mainland brides in general. Others thought that they were marginalised because their natal family was not there to back them up, in other words, they had less social support compared to Taiwanese women. Some attributed marginalisation to the “trade marriage” - that they were looked down upon by other family members because their marital motivations were questioned. In some rare case the mainland brides experienced extreme hostility from their parents-in-law because they were considered enemy and communist spies.<sup>478</sup> Most of the brides I interviewed thought that it was the combination of the above factors that caused their marginal status; and very few brides living in rural communities thought that their marginal status was directly linked with the political tension between Taiwan and China. Rather, they felt that “*I am bullied because I am an outsider and my natal family is far.*”<sup>479</sup> Their understanding of the situation is crucial in shaping their experiences and in their

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<sup>477</sup> In this particular case, the local police were well aware that it was not a bogus marriage because they knew that the couple had been married for years and the police knew the mainland wife personally. Some local civil servants also share similarly attitudes. This information is from my fieldwork observation.

<sup>478</sup> For instance, the story which will be elaborated in the later section addressing political and national identities. See footnote 205 and 526.

<sup>479</sup> Interview with Yan, December 2004, Baihe.

strategies of gaining recognition. In comparison, the brides living in (not originally from) urban areas tend to link their marginalisation to the national identity (Taiwan versus China). This aspect will be addressed extensively later.

The issue of the “trade marriage” (*maimai hunyin*) undoubtedly affected the mainland brides’ entry to Minnan and Hakka rural communities.<sup>480</sup> In the previous chapter I have discussed that cross-border families view *maimai hunyin* to be closer to the concept of “marriage of convenience” rather than the commodification of marriage, in other words, the brides are not necessarily considered a bought commodity. *Maimai hunyin* is deemed problematic and more vulnerable because the lack of pre-marital courtship, the socio-economic disparity between the husbands and brides and their families, and the questionable motivations of the brides. These problems can be overcome once the love between the couple is developed (after marriage) and the loyalty of the bride to her husband and his kin is proven. Nevertheless, at the initial stage of marriage the brides are treated with suspicion. The existing image of the mainland brides as greedy and calculating women also reinforces the suspicion and contributes to their marginalisation.

A mainland bride’s status in the husband’s kin is also largely determined by the existing status of her husband within the kin and his relationship with other members. If a bridegroom is in good terms with his kin and secures approval before the matchmaking trip and the marriage, the bride would be better accepted. In many cases the cross-border marriage is a collective family decision and the parents of the bridegroom are heavily involved in the mate selection process and pay the wedding expenses, thus the bride is accepted as a member of the kin easier. If a man joins a matchmaking trip and marries a mainland bride without informing the kin and their approval, the brides are likely to be rejected or to experience extreme marginalisation and hostility. To start with, some men who married without the permission from their parents either had a bad relationship with them or were marginalised in the kin due to various factors such as unemployment, mental or physical illness, drinking problems, having a tendency for violence, and previously failed marriages, etc. Some others did not secure the permission because they knew that they would not get it and thought that the marriage would be accepted once it became a reality. The reasons of the kin’s objection could result from the disapproval of the cross-border marriage (as trade marriage), the preference over the bride of other nationalities (Vietnamese are better than mainland women, for instance), or simply opposing the man getting married. The latter often happened when a divorced or widowed man remarrying a mainland woman, he would face fierce opposition especially from grown-up children of the previous marriage.

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<sup>480</sup> Definition of trade marriage (*maimai hunyin*), see Chapter 4, 4.7.

The mainland brides who married veterans and live in the veterans' settlement experience a different kind of control, not from the kin members but from their veteran husbands as well as the fellow veterans and their wives, including fellow mainland brides. To start with, many of the veterans had remained single until age 70 or later; some left home as a boy and lived their whole life without kin. For them their compatriots and neighbours in the veteran's settlements function as their "kin", providing the social and emotional support, the physical care and at the same time also giving meanings and sanctions to their social life. Having lived in the extreme masculine environment of the military camp for the most part of their life, the veterans are inexperienced in dealing with women.<sup>481</sup> When I first started my fieldwork in Hukou *juancun*, I was warned by Mr. Huang and Mr. Chen that I should not approach any veteran by myself because "*they are very suspicious of young women; many of them have been cheated before and lost all of their savings.*"<sup>482</sup> The idea of their being an easy prey of young women due to their emotional and physical vulnerability has been deeply rooted even before the entry of mainland brides in the veteran's settlement.

The insecurity of the veterans is largely centred on the wife's sexuality and economic independence. Every afternoon, veterans sat on small benches along the narrow alleys of the Zhongxin veteran's settlement to avoid the heat accumulated indoors during the day. Sometimes their wives would join their talk, but most of the time their mainland wives were either at work or cooking in the kitchen. A typical talk started with the memories of their life in the army, especially the earlier harsh years after the retreat from the mainland, which was normally followed by extensive details of a recent visit to homeland by one of the veterans. These stories were already repeatedly told, so soon the topic would change to one of recent cross-strait marriages. For instance, who planned to go to the mainland to marry a wife; whose wife had recently arrived, followed by lengthy comments on her. The veteran who married a young and attractive wife was envied, however, nasty comments often followed that he should keep an eye on her otherwise she would drain all his money and run away soon. They then exchanged tips for making sure that their wives stay loyal to them. Another popular topic was whose mainland wives had secret lovers either in Taiwan or in the mainland and whether the veteran husbands were aware of it or not. The evidence of a mainland woman's having an affair was often her frequent visits to the mainland or that she suddenly "became" pretty and feminine, and dressed differently.

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<sup>481</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.3.2.

<sup>482</sup> Profile of Mr. Huang and Mr. Chen, see footnote 459. Here the young women they referred are not necessarily mainland women. The stories of the veterans (socially or legally) adopting young Taiwanese women and being cheated are common.

While the veterans' gossip was very open and impossible not to overhear, the women's gossip was often close-door and secretively shared among a few friends. Nevertheless, it spread in the village rapidly and soon the subject of gossip would definitely hear it. Apart from exchanging the tips of negotiating with their veteran husbands, the mainland women in the veterans' settlement were very obsessed with the sexual conduct of fellow mainland brides and their husbands. If a mainland bride was seen in public talking to any man, particularly another veteran without the presence of her husband, she would be immediately labelled of trying to seduce the man. Rumours would have it that she was planning to abandon her husband and eyeing on a wealthier veteran. One example is that when Peng<sup>483</sup> went to take care of a neighbouring veteran who was terminally ill, who happened to be the life-long compatriot and friend of her husband, several mainland women on her street accused her of having an affair with the sick veteran and eyeing on his inheritance and house. Peng took care of this sick veteran until his death, however, since then she was isolated and she decided not to befriend any mainland woman any more.

The mutual sanctioning of the mainland women's social interaction with men can be partly explained by the influence of the popular image of evil, calculating mainland women. Every mainland woman was eager to differentiate herself from "the others" by claiming that "*I am not like them, I don't.....*". As the economic motivation of marriage in the veteran's settlement is obvious and there is no way to disguise it, the differentiating characteristic is thus centred on a woman's moral and sexual conduct, which is expressed in the actual care she gives to her husband and her fidelity to him. This is what being a good woman means in the veteran's settlement. Of course, the sanctioning of the social interaction with men other than the husband can also result from the "real" danger of their own veteran husbands' being seduced by another mainland woman, however, the perceived danger is again affected by the popular image.

### **5.3. Gaining recognition and acceptance in different stages**

#### **5.3.1. Initial stage**

Xinxin recalled her experience when she arrived at her husband's home in Taiwan,

*on the way home from the airport, when he [my husband] drove [the car] out of the city and further and further into the countryside, my heart sank..... He told me that he did not live in the big city, but I did not expect that it was this remote*

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<sup>483</sup> Interview with June 2003 in Hukou *juancun*. Peng's profile and life story will be elaborated later in the section Work and Autonomy, see footnote 557 and 566.



*and isolated. I thought that Taiwan was modern and full of tall buildings and busy streets. I am a city girl. How was I going to survive in the countryside?*<sup>484</sup>

Like Xinxin, most of the brides experienced either disappointment or shock when they first saw the economic and social conditions of their husbands and the family when they first arrived in Taiwan. While in some cases it was clear that the marriage brokers and the husbands themselves gave wrong information and cheated the brides, in most of the cases the disappointment was caused by the unrealistic expectations the brides developed either by the modern images towards Taiwan represented in the media or by the “successful” stories told by the other brides.<sup>485</sup>

Xinxin’s husband is a wealthy businessman whose family runs a medium-size textile enterprise with several factories both in Taiwan and China. Xinxin was aware of the wealth of her husband when she met him and agreed to marry him. What she did not expect was the location of his residence and the lifestyle associated with it. During the matchmaking operation the brides would inquire the potential bridegrooms’ profession, income and the family’s social and economic status, etc., however, to interpret and evaluate the factual information given, the brides have to fill the gap by creating a mental picture of their future life after marriage. Such a mental picture is the major aspiration motivating a bride’s decision, yet it is often based on unrealistic expectations due to the different criteria of measuring socio-economic positions in Taiwan and in China.

Ayu and Axiang were from the same village in Fuqing county in Northern Fujian, both at their late 20s and were never married before. They joined the same matchmaking meeting and got married around the same time. Axiang decided to marry a Taiwanese man working in a mechanic workshop in Chungli, an industrial town in Northern Taiwan, while Ayu married a farmer in Tainan county in Southern Taiwan. When Ayu was chosen by the farmer first during the matchmaking meeting, all her friends and the women in the same meeting were envious of her, because it was told that her future husband’ family owned a large piece of land and several houses. Axiang, on the other hand, felt that she had to settle for a less desirable man because of his profession as a mechanic labourer and his not owning any real estate property. Little did they know that in Taiwan the ownership of land and houses did not necessarily guarantee a man’s high social status. It turned out that the farming land and houses of the family of Ayu’s husband was located in a remote hilly area and was

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<sup>484</sup> Xinxin’s story and the profile of her and her husband, See footnote 207.

<sup>485</sup> For a discussion on the brides’ imagination and expectations on Taiwan, see Chapter 2, 2.4.3

not of much market value due to its location as well as its designated agricultural usage.<sup>486</sup> Ayu complained,

*I knew that I wouldn't be that lucky to marry the son of a rich landlord, but I thought that the land ownership at least provided some security. By now I know that owning land does not mean anything. Where he lives, I mean, in the city or in the countryside, is more important. But how would we know these things before we went to Taiwan?*<sup>487</sup>

From time to time Ayu went to visit and stay with Axiang for a few days when she wanted to taste a bit of “modern life”. Ayu envied Axiang and thought that she made a right choice:

*Axiang is very lucky. Her husband is very nice to her and she does not need to live with her parents-in-law and other relatives. Chungli is a big town and there are more job opportunities there. They have shopping centre there. Unlike my village [in Tainan] there is only a night market once a week and the clothes sold there are old-fashioned, worse than the market in our hometown [Fuqing], and much more expensive .....Anyway, there is no point dressing pretty because I either work in the field or stay at home the whole day. I am becoming an unattractive old woman. I don't want to be a farmer's wife forever. I felt trapped here.*

Although Ayu and her husband later wanted to leave his hometown and go to the urban areas, they were not able to do so because of the disapproval of other kin members. Should they insist in moving to the town they would be forced to give up their share of the land property.

Xinxin and Ayu's experiences are widely shared by the brides who have lived in urban areas or who have worked in economically fast developing regions prior to marriage, in other words, those who “have seen the world”. Xinxin and Ayu's husbands were relatively well-off. Their disappointment was not associated with the husband's condition, but rather with the location of his residence and the life style associated with it. It confirms my argument in Chapter 2 that the migratory motivation

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<sup>486</sup> According to the land policy in Taiwan, in order to protect the agricultural industry, some land in rural areas is designated for agricultural activities and cannot be transferred or sold for other purposes. For the prospects and limits of the economic development in the rural communities, see description of fieldwork site, Introduction; criteria of measuring social status and mate selection, see Chapter 1, 1.4.1; and demographic description Chapter 2, 2.3.

<sup>487</sup> I met Ayu and Axiang in Fuqing when they visited their natal families. The quotation was recorded in a conversation with them together during an excursion trip nearby Fuqing in January 2004. The quotation in the next paragraph was recorded in Axiang's home in Chungli in March 2004, after they had returned to Taiwan and during one of Ayu's visits to Axiang.

is not entirely driven by monetary gains, but rather by the aspiration of having a better life; and the betterment of life is not limited to the material gains offered by the husband's economic condition and that of the migratory destination, rather, it is often associated with the modern lifestyle. It also confirms the "paradoxical hypergamy" I discussed in Chapter 2 that women seemingly "marry up" when marrying men in richer countries, yet the social and economic positioning of their husbands is often relatively lower than that of their own in the receiving countries, thus in a sense they "marry downward" (Constable, 2005; Oxfeld, 2005). The paradox is caused by two contrary directions of spatial movements, one is from poor to richer countries and the other from urban to rural areas. While attractiveness of cross-border marriages comes from the upward social mobility in the former (spatial movement from poorer to richer regions/countries), the brides hardly expect the latter (marrying downward) during the matchmaking operation. Even if they do, it is impossible for them to have a real picture of their future lifestyle due to the lack of geographic knowledge of Taiwan, not to mention the efforts of the matchmakers and bridegrooms to conceal or distort the information in order to persuade the brides into marriage.

To apply Massey's concept of gender geometry to analyse paradoxical hypergamy (1994; Constable 2005), it can be found that the brides had control over the first level of spatial movement, that is, the enhanced social positioning resulting from migrating to a richer country. They however, had very little control over the second spatial movement, linked with the social positioning of the husband and his family in the receiving society and in the specific community, as well as their own social positioning in the affinal kin. It is this inevitably limited control that makes migrant wives vulnerable, but it does not make them ultimate victims of marriage trade, rendered them completely powerless. If we analyse international marriage migration in the context of local development, rural-urban migration and paradoxical hypergamy, the cross-border marriages should not be seen entirely as a result of globalization as in the academic discourse of commodification of women. The present analysis also partly solves the problematic dichotomy between victimhood and agency, the latter can be understood as the exercise of control in one's life.

For the brides marrying for the first time, it is of great importance to have an official wedding ceremony upon their arrival in Taiwan. Although all couples must have completed the legal procedure of marriage registration in China and in most cases with a wedding banquet with the brides' natal family, another wedding banquet that follows the local traditional customs in Taiwan is essential, as it symbolises the public acceptance of the bride's being a member of the husbands' kin. As the wedding banquet, the social and ceremonial expression of the wedding, constitutes the determining point of recognition of the marriage for both the couples and the

community,<sup>488</sup> it becomes the reference point of whether the brides feel they are treated differently. The brides often compare the scale of their wedding banquet with that of their sisters-in-law and of other mainland and foreign brides to show that they are well accepted and welcomed. In the course of marital life when disputes and conflicts happen, or when the brides feel they are discriminated, they would claim that they should be treated fairly because they were also “properly wedded”.

Because the significance of the wedding banquet and its symbolic meaning is commonly shared in Taiwan and China, the mainland brides can refer to it as an indicator of their status in the kin, and use it to claim their rights as a legitimate member. The foreign brides from Southeast Asian countries do not share the same cultural reference and thus are unlikely to demand a wedding banquet and claim their kin membership. This constitutes a major difference in the brides’ strategy of gaining recognition and cultivating relationship with kin members.

The mainland brides who did not have a wedding banquet often felt rejected. Meifang<sup>489</sup> recalled that when she first arrived in Taiwan it was during the Chinese New Year, but at the family dinner no one talked to her except her husband Awan. She was expecting a wedding banquet but it never came. Later she came to know that Awan went to China to marry her against the will of his father, thus his father refused to pay for the wedding banquet. It was also partly due to the fact that it was Awan’s second marriage and his father thought that there was no point of having a wedding banquet, in his father’s words,

*it [the second marriage] was not something to be proud of and there was no need to tell people on the street about it.*

Meifang felt very bad that she did not have a wedding banquet:

*it might be his [Awan’s] second marriage but it was my first one! Why can’t they think for me? Without the banquet I am like a mistress, not a wife!*

Meifang attributed the “no-wedding” to her being from the mainland, although her father-in-law did not think so. She felt rejected since the very beginning of her marriage and the relationship between her and her parents-in-law became very sour.

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<sup>488</sup> For traditional marital rites, see Chapter 1.1.4.; for contemporary marriage regimes in China, see 1.2.2 and in Taiwan, 1.3.1.

<sup>489</sup> Interview in January 2004 in Baihe. Meifang, aged 24 at the time of wedding, is from a village in Fuqing. She married Awan, a Minnan man aged 36 (at the time of wedding) who was divorced and had two young children. They lived with Awan’s children and Awan’s parents lived next door. I have several interviews with Meifang, Awan and Awan’s parents and Awan’s grand aunt and cousins who lived in the neighbourhood.

Contrary to the public discourse that assumes that the mainland brides, as compared to the Southeast Asian brides, do not have language problems, the brides marrying into Hakka and Minnan communities have pressing needs to learn the dialects. The primary reason is to be able to communicate with their parents-in-law who either speak little Mandarin or prefer not to speak it. To quickly learn the dialects shows their willingness to integrate into the kin and be a good daughter-in-law. However, they have to learn the dialects entirely on their own as the language courses offered by the local governments are almost all in Mandarin.

Despite the initial disappointment, most of the brides choose to stick to their choice and cope with the new life. My fieldwork observations show that the younger brides without previous marital or courtship experiences are more willing to adjust their expectations and make efforts to maintain their marriage.

### 5.3.2 Living across Taiwan strait

The mainland brides who married before mid-1995 were allowed to enter Taiwan only after two years of marriage, and after that they were granted a three-months' visiting visa until they reached the quota of permanent residential status. By the end of 1995, it was estimated that there were more than 9,000 mainland spouses waiting for the quota and the estimated waiting time was more than 10 years; this figure does not include the mainland spouses who were married less than two years and not yet eligible to apply for the residential permit.<sup>490</sup> After 1995, mainland spouses were able to enter Taiwan right after the marriage and were granted a six-months' visiting visa every year. This system continued until 2002 when the "double track system" was implemented in which the mainland spouses apply for long-term residence (*juliu*) status after two years of marriage and obtain Taiwanese citizenship after 8 years of marriage.<sup>491</sup> Before the double track system was implemented, estimatedly more than 120,000<sup>492</sup> cross-strait couples either had to make arrangements to live in China or elsewhere, or had to travel between Taiwan and China at least once a year, and some spent half a year or longer apart.<sup>493</sup> In addition, there were 12,818 children born in

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<sup>490</sup> The change of residential categories and quota system in the policy, see Chapter 3, 3.3.3.1 and 3.4.1.1.

<sup>491</sup> This is with the exception of mainland spouses of Taiwanese citizens aged above 65 and with a mental or physical disability. See Chapter 3, 3.3.3.1 and 3.4.1.1.

<sup>492</sup> According to the Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Interior, Taiwan, by the end of 2001 there were 67,423 mainland spouses applying for long-term *juliu* residential status. As this figure only includes the spouses married for two years, I add the figure provided by the Strait Exchange Foundation of the marriage authenticated in the year 2000 (26, 474) and 2001 (32,438) and arrive at the figure of 126,335. For the problem of the incompatibility of the statistical data provided by different governmental offices and the difficulty of coming up with reliable figures, see Chapter 2, 2.3.1.

<sup>493</sup> A small number of mainland brides whose Taiwanese husbands have investments in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, lived overseas during some period of time.

cross-strait marriages before 2002 who either travelled regularly with their mother or lived in the absence of the mother.

In the pre-1995 period, most of the mainland brides spent the first two years of their marriage in China. In the patrilocal system of Han society and the norm that family union (*tienlun*) is natural and constituting the basis of society,<sup>494</sup> this causes considerable problems not only for the couples themselves but also for all members of the cross-border families. It increases vulnerability of these marriages and contributes to the degree of the “abnormality” of the cross-border marriage in the popular discourse.

Contrary to the portrayal of media representation, the age gap between the Taiwanese husband and Mainland Chinese wife does not constitute a major problem of their marital experience. As explained in chapter 2, the earlier bridegrooms of cross-strait marriage are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, with a high percentage of aged veterans and physically and mentally unfit men. They look for brides abroad mainly because they have difficulties of marrying local women. For a bride marrying a veteran soldier, her experience is not drastically different from a peer woman marrying local men. Many veterans returned to their homeland and looked for wives in the same or neighbouring villages and towns via existing kin and social ties.<sup>495</sup> As marriage for these veterans was an integral part of their plan of retirement and old-age care, they often made arrangements to live with the relatives or built a new house in the same village or town. The bride thus moved into a rather familiar environment and probably still had the support of her natal kin. She would be aware of what was expected of her as a newly-wed woman and the strategies of fulfilling such expectation. With the economic resources her veteran husband brought from Taiwan, it was likely that she enjoyed a respectable social status in the community. Although her veteran husband would have to return to Taiwan every half a year in order to be eligible for the pension fund, she stayed in the hometown in China. After two years of marriage, the bride could then obtain a three-year residential visa as the veteran husband aged above 65 years. Although some couples continued to reside in China, most of the brides preferred to move to Taiwan.

For a bride marrying a Taiwanese man who does not have kin in China, the husband is unlikely to live with the wife in China with the exception of those Taiwanese businessmen who had residence and worked in China prior to marriage. If the couple wants to be together, the only option is for the husband to visit the wife on a short-term basis. As the majority of them were from socio-economically

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<sup>494</sup> For neo-Confucian ideals of family, see Chapter 1, 1.1.1; how this ideal affects the policy governing cross-strait marriages, see Chapter 3, 3.3.3.

<sup>495</sup> For marital motivation of veteran soldiers, see Chapter 2, 2.4.1; matchmaking practices of veterans soldiers, see Chapter 4, 4.3.3.

disadvantaged backgrounds, financial constraints would not allow them to travel across the strait frequently, thus in the first two years the couples practically lived apart. In most of the cases the bride stayed with her natal family in the waiting period. In other cases where the local custom followed a strict interpretation of the patrilocal system, the bride was no longer permitted to live with her natal family and other arrangements are made to accommodate the bride. The story of family Pang gives a picture of the interim arrangement.<sup>496</sup>

After a long bride-searching and successful matchmaking endeavour, Mother Pang selected Aji as her new daughter-in-law. After the marriage registration required in China, a wedding ceremony following the traditional practice took place in Tongshan island, Aji's hometown. The wedding was elaborate in the local standard, however, only Aji's natal kin were invited and from the bridegroom's side only Mother Pang was present. After the wedding Son and Mother Pang returned to Taiwan right away and in the next two years they did not visited Aji. According to Tongshan's custom, a married woman should not live at her natal home until she bore a child or at least got pregnant. Mother Pang arranged Aji to live with the matchmaker Mrs. Wang, who happened to be a neighbour of Aji's natal family, and asked her to take care of Aji in the waiting period. During these two years Mother Pang paid Mrs. Wang RMB400 per month to cover Aji living allowance and rent. Mrs. Wang felt morally responsible for Aji and acted as her guardian. She often restricted Aji's freedom of movement and asked Aji to do domestic chores and babysit her own children. Aji felt that she was treated like a domestic servant and often complaint to Mother Pang on the phone. Mrs. Wang justified it by saying that she was teaching Aji to be a good wife and made sure that she would not run away. Aji was quite relieved to leave Mrs. Wang and go to Taiwan. Mother Pang was very anxious during these two years and had no confidence that Aji would stick to the marriage vow. This was partly due to Son Pang's first failed marriage with an Indonesian bride, and partly due to the fact that the newly-wed couple did not consummate their marriage right after the wedding in China. Soon after Aji arrived in Taiwan she got pregnant, only then the whole family Pang was relieved and accepted Aji as a member of the family.

For Aji, her social positioning has been enhanced after moving to Taiwan, she has a more equal power relation with Mother Pang than with Mrs. Wang, and she enjoys relatively more freedom and autonomy. Similarly, many women's social positions are improved within the affinal kin after marriage despite other aspects of downward social positioning. This explains partly why women use marriage as means of escaping the control from their natal family and community, which is a common

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<sup>496</sup> Family Pang's story and profile see chapter 4 4.2.

experience not only limited to migrant women (Jaschok and Miers, 1994; Davin, 2004).

I have discussed earlier that the ceremonial and social celebration of the marriage, often manifested in the form of a wedding banquet, is the determining point of recognition of the marriage. In family Pang's case, the ceremony was left half completed, and the marriage was only recognised by the bride's natal community and not by the bridegroom's community in Taiwan. For the bridegroom's family it was like a prolonged betrothal. The two year's waiting period creates an awkward situation full of anxiety and uncertainty for both sides, which contributes to the vulnerability of the marriage. Although it is not uncommon that matchmakers of cross-border marriages assume the responsibility of guarding the brides before and shortly after the marriage in order to guarantee that the bride remained chaste and obedient until the bride could join the bridegroom in Taiwan,<sup>497</sup> acting as a guardian for as long as two years is quite an exception. Therefore most of the bridegrooms simply have to trust the brides, which was often not the case.

The uncertainty of the waiting period also gives space for either side to overturn the marital decision arbitrarily. As the betrothal does not have the same social binding effect as the marriage, calling off a marriage with a woman who was never seen by the bridegroom's kin could be easily justified. If a man wanted to call off a betrothal, the potential bride's kin would demand a sum of compensation, especially when the couples had consummated their relationship. In cross-strait marriages the bride's kin would not be able to do so, whether the couples consummated their marriages or not. In addition, the legal aspect of marriage registration was only valid in China and not in Taiwan before the bride arrived, if a bridegroom wanted to repeal the marriage he could do so simply by not applying for the visiting visa for the bride. Not being able to enter Taiwan, the bride would have to be very resourceful to be able to change the bridegroom's mind or to take legal action against him. This is mainly because Taiwan and China do not acknowledge each other's legal system and the cross-strait dispute cannot be solved in international law. In principle the bride could also call off the marriage, however, the social pressure (as the marriage was socially recognised by her community), legality (that she needs the bridegroom to sign the divorce document), and Taiwan's immigration regulations all worked in favour of the bridegroom and against the bride.

The brides married after 1995 are able to unite with their husband right away, however, after six months they had to return to China. The brides who have aged and ill parents-in-law could apply for a three-months' visa to care for them, however, they have to exit Taiwan in order to apply for the re-entry visa. On top of the re-entry visa

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<sup>497</sup> For the role of matchmakers, see Chapter 1, 1.4.2 and Chapter 4, 4.4.3.



to Taiwan, every time a bride returns to China she needs to apply for a permission to leave China from the local government. Such an application could be rather time and money consuming. Some couples thus arrange for the bride to live in Hong Kong waiting for the visa to be issued. These long-term expenses of frequent travel and application for legal documents pose financial constraints on cross-strait families and became a major source of tension among husbands' kin members. The frequent travelling and long-term living-apart were often attributed as the main reasons why cross-strait marriages were more problematic and vulnerable, and hence less desirable than other cross-border marriages.<sup>498</sup> However, instead of criticising the policies, the kin members often blame the brides for consuming the family resources and not contributing to the household economy while they are in China. This was often used to justify the marginalisation of the bride's and her husband's status in the kin.

A majority of bride do not engage in paid employment in China during the waiting period, thus they are financially completely dependent on the husband's remittances. This is partly due to the difficulty of looking for temporary jobs for a few months. It is also partly because some husbands preferred their wife to stay at home so as to limit the opportunities of wives' contacts with other men. However, a more important reason is that the bride assumed that they have found a good match because a Taiwanese man is normally considered wealthy in the standards of the natal community, allowing them to enjoy full financial support from him from now on.<sup>499</sup> A bride who used to have a managerial position in a local hotel before the marriage was asked to continue to work when she returned to her natal home in Hainan island. Despite the handsome salary and a sense of fulfilment from the work, she turned down the offer because "*I will be a laughing-stock. People might think that my husband is too poor to support (yang) me.*"<sup>500</sup> The expectation of being able to enjoy material comforts and not needing to work is often met with disappointment when the brides realise that their husbands are not that rich once they get to know the husbands' economic situation. How they adjust their expectation and change their perception about work will be elaborated in the later section.

The obligation to economically support wives (*yang laopo* 養老婆) in gender and conjugal relations has sanctioning effects on both the husband and wife. Generally a man is likely to shoulder much heavier pressures from such a norm as it is intrinsically linked with his manhood. However, in the case of cross-border marriages, paradoxically it is women and particularly mainland women who are scrutinised for following this cultural norm and accused of being greedy and demanding. One of the possible explanations is that although this gender norm is deeply rooted and expected

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<sup>498</sup> Interview with Ms. Lin, an officer at the Household Registry Office, Baihe town. October 2003.

<sup>499</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.3.

<sup>500</sup> Interview with Aping, November 2003, Baihe. Aping's profile see footnote 205 and 526.

socially, it should not be openly articulated especially by the receiver of *yang*, the dependent one. It is also possible that underneath this gender norm there exists a deeper layer of anxiety and fear towards the “polluting others”, the wife and daughters-in-law, who potentially could appropriate the wealth and cause division of the patrilineal kin (*fenjia*).<sup>501</sup> Any newly-wed woman may experience the same scrutiny, however, Taiwanese women as compared to migrant women have a better social positioning to demand the husbands to fulfil this obligation with the backing of the social support from their natal kin. As for why mainland women are singled out with this attached stigma, this has been dealt with extensively in Chapter 3 and in the first section of this chapter. [rephrase and cut into shorter sentences]

Cross-strait families developed various strategies to cope with the reality of living separately and the economic expenses of frequent travel. Frequent telephone conversation was a must. Some families actively prepared the bride for her future life in Taiwan by developing practical skills. For instance, Family Pang enrolled Aji in an accounting course so that she could be equipped with housekeeping and management skills. Another family asked the bride to learn and obtain a qualification of hairstyling so that she could work in the family-run beauty salon and hopefully take over the business one day.<sup>502</sup> Such situations often existed in the family where the bridegroom was the only son or mentally or physically disabled, and parents-in-law would take measures to prepare the brides to take up the responsibility of running the household in the future. Some brides took initiatives in getting qualifications or gaining working experiences that would help the business of the husband’s family. These efforts not only helped building a trusting relation between the bride and the husband and his family, it was also a practical arrangement in view that these qualification and skills were easier to acquire and with a more affordable price in China than in Taiwan.

Another strategy is to pull up family resources to allow the husband to visit and stay with the wife in China. This was on the condition that the husband did not have regular employment or worked in the small-scale family-run business. As many of these enterprises faced economic difficulties when the husband stayed with the wife in China he often actively sought opportunities of setting up business in the wife’s hometown in China because the business venture required less capital in China. For instance, Mr. Chan who ran a photocopy shop in Taichung with declining revenue planned to close down his business and moved to a small town in Guangxi province where his mainland wife came from and opened a small supermarket there.<sup>503</sup> However, the plan of allocating family resources to China was often severely objected

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<sup>501</sup> For a discussion of *fenjia* and women’s potential threat to destroy the unity of kin, see Chapter 1, 1.1.2, and 1.1.3.

<sup>502</sup> Interview and fieldwork observation with Family Liu, Hukou town, May 2003.

<sup>503</sup> Interview with Mr. Chan in Taichung city, May 2002.

by other kin members and thus created tension among them. In such situation the mainland wife again is considered a threat to the husband's kinship.

The initiatives taken by both the bride and bridegroom to maintain frequent communication and to explore and prepare themselves for future opportunities created a sense of purpose for the married life. The trusting relations and anticipation towards the future security, in which the mutual economic opportunities and material well-being are embedded as an integral part, can overcome the physical absence. It is such anticipation and the will to cultivate and consolidate the relationship that sustains a marriage without courtship or strong emotional and romantic attachment prior to the marriage.

The amount of economic resources and emotional energy required to maintain a cross-strait marriage under the circumstances of physical separation highlights again that these marriages remain desirable. The argument that mediated cross-border marriage is driven by rational motivations of economic gains is not sufficient in explaining decisions and behaviours of cross-strait families.<sup>504</sup> It also challenges again the discourse of commodification of marriage in which women as the brides are seen as objects.<sup>505</sup>

The frequent travel and physical separation also offers a form of protection for the brides in case the marriage becomes abusive and unpleasant. Because the matchmaking and the marriage decision were done in haste, the brides were acutely aware of the risk involved. They were also aware that if the husband was violent and the marriage became unbearable, it would be difficult for them to secure the protection from the police in Taiwan and support from the husband's family in the beginning of the marriage. Therefore knowing that they were able to return to the homeland after six month encouraged them to take the risk. A bride Axue told me,

*If I could not return [to China] in six months, I probably would not make this decision [of marrying and migrating to Taiwan]. Well, he looked decent in the matchmaking meeting, but who knows? There were so many wife-beaters everywhere. If the worst scenario happened, it was only for six months. After I returned to China he would never be able to find me here and I could get a divorce.*<sup>506</sup>

Similarly, some Indonesian and Vietnamese brides also shared the same view. Although at the back of their mind they knew they can always return to natal families, the brides rarely returned to China to disappear. Most of them chose to stick to their

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<sup>504</sup> See Chapter 2, 2.1.2.

<sup>505</sup> See Chapter 4, 4.7.

<sup>506</sup> Interview with Axue in Hukou town, July 2003.

marriage and coped with it. In some cases when the brides were very disappointed with the marriage or when marriage became unbearable, they might run away from the husbands but would remain in Taiwan at the risk of becoming illegal immigrants. Depending on how resourceful they are and how much social support they can generate, some brides manage to find jobs and support themselves, although it is extremely difficult because at this stage they are not allowed to work legally and without the approval of husbands they would not be able to apply for work permit anyway. The only way they could continue to stay in Taiwan is to find another Taiwanese man and remarry. In fact, many mainland brides chose and managed to do so. The reason why some brides chose not to return to China despite the unhappy marriage or the risk of staying illegally in Taiwan is mainly because they would be shamed in their natal communities. For young and old brides alike, how their natal communities think of them is their utmost concern. As a bride Yin told me,

*No, I cannot go back. My life here is full of pain and misery. I don't want them [natal family] to know this. When I got married, my parents were a bit worried but I insisted on my decision. My neighbours and friends were all jealous of me because I found a good man, so eventually my parents accepted it. Now that it [the marriage] did not turn out so good, they would tell me that I should have listened to them. If I go back now it will bring shame to them [parents]. No, going back to China is not an option. I just have to stick with it [life in Taiwan] no matter how harsh it is.*<sup>507</sup>

### 5.3.3 Pregnancy and child birth

The first pregnancy and childbirth is the most important stage of marriage life for most of the mainland brides, as it constitutes the turning point of recognition in Taiwan in legal, social and personal aspects. Legally, as the discourse of the policies governing the brides' residential status and citizenship is based on their role as mothers of future Taiwanese, it is assumed that the brides' foremost function is biological reproduction. Based on this assumption, the brides who did not get

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<sup>507</sup> Interview with Yin at the FATS office, Taipei, May 2005. Yin is from Jiansi province and 34 years old at the time of interview. At the initial stage of her marriage her husband was very nice to her and Yin was happy although she did not have a high regard for her husband, who she considered "not cultured". Later when her husband became unemployed he started drinking and gambling. Yin decided to leave him temporarily and managed to get a loan to open a massage parlour. The business went well, but her husband kept harassing her and demanded her to give him money. During my interview several brides joined our conversation. Two of them left their first Taiwanese husband for various reasons and remarried again. They share the same idea with Yin that they would never return to China for good because they would "lose face".

pregnant and bear children soon after marriage would be considered ill-intentioned, and their marriage would be suspected of being “bogus”. It was proposed in the parliament that childbearing should be used to determine whether a cross-strait marriage is “real” or not.<sup>508</sup> Since mid-1995 the brides who gave birth to a child with Taiwanese husbands were granted residential permits valid for three years instead of six months per year.<sup>509</sup> On the one hand, these policies open doors for cross-strait families and relieve them from economic and emotional expenses of frequent travelling and living apart; on the other hand, it puts pressure on cross-strait families and the brides particularly to get pregnant as soon as possible. The couples who were not able to conceive were punished and the brides often took the blame and suffered from the stigma attached to “bogus” marriage. As the long-term (three-year) visas<sup>510</sup> were only granted to female spouses, the male mainland spouses and their family were also punished with long periods of physical separation even when they had children.

Socially, as illustrated in the story of Family Pang and Aji<sup>511</sup> the bride did not enjoy social recognition among the husband’s kin and community due to the uncompleted or delayed wedding ceremony in Taiwan. Without a clear point of declaration that the bride had become a member of the kin, cross-strait families including the brides themselves lived in an ambiguous state until the brides’ pregnancy. Taiwanese men and families identified a very clear motivation of marrying mainland and foreign women, that is to carry on the family lineage, thus the parents-in-law were very anxious to have a grandson as soon as possible. The brides who did not produce a child soon after the marriage were often criticised and marginalised in the kin. As a sister-in-law of a mainland bride commented,

*It’s been two years since they married and up to now she is barren. She doesn’t care that the parents [in-law] cannot wait to have a grandson. I wonder whether she got some contraceptive from China. All she cares is to make money and send it back to China..... Well, not all mainland or foreign [brides] are that bad. Some are very renming, hardworking and caring for the parents, and bear children [get pregnant] as soon as they arrive.*<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> See Chapter 3, 3.3.3.2.

<sup>509</sup> The pregnant mainland spouses still had to return to China and deliver the child there. Not until 2003 the policy was changed that once pregnant the brides could extend the visa to three-year.

<sup>510</sup> Brides who have children or whose husband are old (above 65) or sick (mentally or physically disabled) are granted long-term visa in view of the family’s need. See residential status (Chapter 3, 3.3.3.2) and quota system (3.4.1.).

<sup>511</sup> See Chapter 4. 4.2.

<sup>512</sup> Interview with Mrs. Hsu in Shinyin city, Tainan county in March 2004. Mrs. Hsu’s brother married a woman from Hainan province in China in 2002 and they lived in Baihe.

At the personal level, many brides too share the traditional perception that the primary objective of marriage is reproduction and that it was the natural duty of the wife to produce a (male) heir to carry on the husband's family lineage. Some identified finding a good and reliable man to be the father of her children as a major motivation of marriage.<sup>513</sup>

Many brides felt very proud that they got pregnant soon after marriage and felt that they were settled and accepted. They were puzzled by the fact that some women took procreation as a matter of choice. A bride commented on a fellow bride from the same province, *"This one [she] is not very bright. I really don't know what she is thinking. It's been one year [after marriage] and she still doesn't want to have a child. I told her, 'if you don't want children what's the point of getting married anyway?'"*<sup>514</sup>

The brides who did not consider procreation as their natural duty faced tremendous social pressure. In view of the stigma of questionable motivations for marriage and "bogus" marriage, many brides were eager to prove their sincere devotion for "real marriage" and to meet the expectation of the parents-in-law. It is also to their advantage that after pregnancy and child birth her social positioning within the kin and in society at large would be improved and secured. While adjusting to their marriage and new life in Taiwan as well as coping with the physical separation of living across the strait, they were overwhelmed by the changes accompanying pregnancy and motherhood. However, some brides preferred to wait until the marital relations were stable and secure. For instance, Axue,<sup>515</sup> who treats the policy of six-months' visas as a safety net and was prepared to escape to China in case the marriage became unbearable, was very careful not to get pregnant during her first six-months' visit. Axue returned to Taiwan and got pregnant on her second visit. For her the pregnancy was a confirmation of her willingness to stay in this marriage and cultivate the relationship with her husband and his kin members. Her husband and in-laws were relieved and needed not worry that Axue would become a "runaway" bride as they were sure that a mother normally would not abandon her child.

The brides who had the intention to delay or plan pregnancy had to be resourceful. Although contraceptive pills are readily available in every drugstore in Taiwan, they are very costly. Even if a bride can afford it, she had to purchase it outside her husband's village/town otherwise the community would inform her husband and gossip about it. Most of the brides prepared a bulk of contraceptive pills from China, as they were often freely distributed by the village nurse in charge of

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<sup>513</sup> For marital and migratory motivations see Chapter 2, 4.2.1; criteria of mate choice, Chapter 1, 1.4.1.

<sup>514</sup> Interview with Ayan, in Baihe, December 2003.

<sup>515</sup> Footnote 506.

family planning. Due to the population policy in China, all mainland brides have a high level of knowledge regarding reproductive health. Similarly, Vietnamese and Indonesian brides also brought contraceptive means from their countries. They did so mainly because they were unfamiliar with and did not trust the medical system in Taiwan and were unable to communicate with Taiwanese doctors. Vietnamese and Indonesian women acquired knowledge on reproductive health mainly via peers and female kin. Contrary to the image of innocent virgins presented in the media and advertised by the marriage broker agencies, Vietnamese and Indonesian women also have rich knowledge on matters of sexuality and reproduction. An Indonesian bride confided to me, “*Taiwanese men went there [Kalimantan] thinking that they can find young and innocent girls. What they did not know is that back at home we started very early. We were not as innocent as Taiwanese women, who were not very knowledgeable about these things.*”<sup>516</sup> She also told me that a Vietnamese woman living next door to her borrowed money to buy a lot of condoms from Vietnam in order to protect herself from sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy.

Due to the six-months’ separation policy, many children of cross-strait marriages were born in China. During the childbirth the Taiwanese father was not always present due to financial constraint. Hence the brides relied heavily on her natal kin to provide social support during pregnancy and childbirth. The husband and parents-in-law were very anxious because they did not trust the medical system in China which they believed to be backward. Long distance calls were made frequently to instruct the brides to follow local (Taiwanese) customs to safeguard the health of the baby and the mother. A bride told me that she was glad that she had her first child born in China, as she enjoyed the care of her female kin and needed not to live with her mother-in-law who she thought was a difficult person. She compared the experience of her first birth with that of the second birth in Taiwan, “*The first was good. I was scared but my mother took care of me. The second was not so good. Not only that no one did zuoyuezi (坐月子) for me, I had to do all the housework too. And my mother-in-law kept picking on me. She despised me and thought that I was filthy.*”

<sup>517</sup>

By the end of 1995, there were around 5,600 children of cross-strait marriages born in China who had to apply for visiting visa in order to unite with their father.<sup>518</sup> The children of Taiwanese men could in principle obtain Taiwanese citizenship, however, the policies governing cross-strait marriage interpret the principle in a very

<sup>516</sup> Interview with Hui in Hukou town in July 2003. Hui is of Hakka origin from Kalimantan, Indonesia. She married a Hakka man aged 35 when she was 19 years old.

<sup>517</sup> Same as footnote 69. *Zuoyuezi*, literally “sitting the month”, refers to the period (roughly a month) after childbirth that a mother stays at home while kin members take care of her and the baby by preparing nutritious food so that her health can be regenerated.

<sup>518</sup> Source: Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Interior, ROC

strict definition of biological fatherhood.<sup>519</sup> A compulsory DNA test was required for children to obtain an entry visa, which was exclusively applied to cross-strait couples and not to other international families. This measure assumed that all brides potentially cheated their husband and bore children with another man. This, coupled with the difficulty of intermittent physical separation and lack of trust created tension among couples and made marriages more vulnerable. I came across a case in which a jealous husband suspected his mainland wife of adultery throughout years of marriage, and despite that the DNA test proved that their child born in China was his biological son, he accused her of faking the medical document. As a result his first son was laughed at as a bastard by the members of the community. Another example was that in Hukou veterans' settlement a mainland wife decided to place her son under the care of her parents in China because she had to work full time while caring for her veteran husband who was very ill. Rumour had it that she was not able to bring her son to Taiwan because the son did not pass the DNA test.<sup>520</sup>

#### 5.3.4 Household economy and sexual division of labour

In the standardised matchmaking practice of cross-strait marriage, the bride receives a sum of brideprice.<sup>521</sup> For the brides marrying for the first time the brideprice normally goes to her own parents. Some parents give the brides a small sum of dowry, normally in the form of cash or jewelry and the brides gets to keep it for herself. This somehow deviates from the local wedding practices in which the dowry is given to couples' new household either in the form of furniture or electronic goods or by shouldering the wedding cost.<sup>522</sup> A large proportion of the income that the brides earn from work prior to marriage have already gone to their natal family, though some brides have a small sum of savings that they keeps for themselves as private pocket money, *sifangqian* (私房錢).<sup>523</sup> In cross-border marriages, because the brides keep the dowry for themselves, there is no economic contribution to the husbands' families or the new nuclear households of the couples from the brides' natal families at the time of wedding. This is accepted by the husbands' kin because it is understood that the brides are from "poor families". This deviation is one of the major reasons why cross-border

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<sup>519</sup> See discussion in Chapter 3, 3.3.3.3 and 3.3.4.

<sup>520</sup> The rumour was collected during my fieldwork in Hukou *juancun*, told by other veterans living in the same street with this couple. Later I approached this mainland wife and casually asked her why she left her son in China and this was the answer she gave me. Although I was not able to verify whether what she said was true, it made sense to place her son in China judging from their meagre financial situation and her workload as the major breadwinner and the principal carer of her husband, and she did not have any social support from her husband's kin.

<sup>521</sup> See Chapter 4, 4.3.1.

<sup>522</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.4.2; Chapter 4, 4.3.

<sup>523</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.1.2.



marriages are considered abnormal, marking the beginning of an unbalanced power relation between a bride and her husband.

After arriving in Taiwan, due to the policy of six-months' visiting visa and the difficulty of acquiring a working permit, the brides were dependent on their husbands economically. They were either a full time housewives, helped at the husbands' farms or worked in family-run small businesses. In none of those cases were they paid and their labour was not considered of economic value. The undervaluation or non-value of women's domestic labour is nevertheless a universal phenomenon (Young et.al., 1981; Neysmith, 2000), which not only applies to migrant wives. Most brides had to manage with whatever the husband offered them materially. As many husbands of cross-border marriages were unemployed or with a low income, their wives needed to be very resourceful. If a husband was unemployed or with alcoholism problems, the mainland wife would be unlikely to get much financial support from the husband's kin. Many brides were forced to take up illegal work in order to cover the household expenses. In some rare cases a bride took control over the management of household economy even without a monetary contribution from herself.

Some younger brides who married for the first time were entrusted with managing the household finance only after years of marriage.

Ayan managed and budgeted her household economy even though her husband brought in the cash, after some years of marriage. By then she had won trust from her husband's kin. She fought years for the control and eventually persuaded her husband by arguing that the husband would spend all the money in drinking and they needed to save money for their son's education. She proved to be very good in it and her husband became very dependent on her management skills. Ayan admitted that such case was rare, *"I am lucky because we [the husband's kin] had already divided the household (fenjia) and my mother-in-law had passed away. Not possible to intervene in the money matters if she was alive and we lived together!"* Ayan's friend Aping also manages the finance of a small business her husband runs.<sup>524</sup> The business is officially owned by her parents-in-law who are not very happy that Aping takes control of the accounting. Aping's husband Su backs her up, however, the financial management becomes a major source of tension between the in-laws.

Under this circumstance, if a wife is economically completely dependent on her husband and has no control over the management of family resources, it is very difficult for her to ask him for money if she needs to send money back to her natal family. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, sending remittances to the bride's natal

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<sup>524</sup> Aping is from Hainan island. She married Su in 1996 at her late 20s. They live with two sons in Baihe. They did not live together with Su's parents although they live in the same neighbourhood. Su owns a jewelry shop in Baihe market. The shop is registered under Su's parents but they gave the shop to Su. Aping takes care of the shop most of the time.

home constitutes a major source of tension and conflict among kin members. In the traditional perception the wife's labour would belong to the husband's family. The financial transaction to the bride's natal family should be given as a gift, often voluntarily either by the husband or by the couple collectively, at the occasion of festivity. Although in both Taiwan and China, particularly in urban areas and among better educated women, this norm has undergone changes and increasingly married daughters become the primary economic supporters and physical carers of natal parents. Hakka and Minnan rural communities where cross-border marriages are popular still follow traditional practices. The act of sending money back to China was interpreted as a social behaviour of the "matrilineal society", as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter.

As for the brides married for the first time, both they themselves and their natal families were well aware of this perception and therefore in most cases they were not expected to send money home regularly. Or at least, if a woman decided to do so she most probably had to do so without the knowledge of the husband's kin. There was an exception that if a bride was the only daughter, which was not uncommon under China's one child policy, it could be accepted that she had a primary care responsibility towards her natal parents and she could send remittance to China regularly. This proves that the cultural perception of children's obligation of caring (*yang*) for parents and children can override the patrilineal organisational principles in the changing situation of modern Chinese societies.

Most brides did send money back home in the festive occasions or during visits to China, which was accepted as a cultural norm by the husband's kin members. If the bride's natal kin were in dire need of financial support, the bride would have to negotiate with her husband's kin, which often proved to be a very difficult and embarrassing task. In some cases the husband was sympathetic towards the wife's request and was willing to support her natal kin, yet his kin members did not always agree with it, thus causing intergenerational conflicts. In the cases where the husband was unwilling to support it, the bride would have to find other ways to fulfil her obligation as a daughter or sister. If a woman had regular income from paid employment, no matter how meager it was, she was in a better position to utilise the money she earned, though not without scrutiny of her husband's kin as her income was still considered as property of the collective household. If a wife was adamant to take up paid work without the approval of the husband and other kin members, she would be accused of neglecting her natural duties of domestic work and eventually labelled as a bad woman.

Some husbands, in rare cases, were known to be very generous towards the wife's natal family. It had to be under the condition that they [the husbands] were

economically well-off relatively and that they were in full control of the family's economic resources without the interference of other kin members.

Mr. Jiang in Hukou not only sent regular remittances to his wife Ahui's parents in Kalimantan, Indonesia,<sup>525</sup> he also matched Ahui's younger sister with his friend and took in Ahui's younger brother and supported his college education in Taiwan. He was very proud of becoming the primary breadwinner of two families, both his own and Ahui's, which made him a legend and model among the circle of cross-border families in Hukou. He admitted that the remittance sent to Kalimantan "*costs nothing, only the money you would spend in one beer-drinking and karaoke singing session with friends. .... with this small amount of money Ahui appreciated and loves me more and I never have to worry that she will run away.*" Ahui's brother's education and living expense was rather costly, but he spent all his free time working at Jiang's business. Once Jiang had a slip of the tongue after a drinking session, voicing an opinion he might otherwise have suppressed, "*he is cheaper and better than foreign workers. Nowadays you cannot easily hire one. After all, he is part of the family and it is natural that he should help.....*". Jiang's actions served several purposes. On the one hand, he extended his obligation of economically supporting (*yang*) his wife to her natal kin by sending money to Indonesia and by paying her brother's education. These actions increased her dependency on him. Indeed Ahui considered herself very lucky to find such a caring husband. On the other hand, Jiang's generous gesture can be interpreted as his insecurity towards Ahui. Ahui was a very attractive young woman who was 21 years younger than Jiang. He confided that he had extremely frustrating courting and matchmaking experiences with local Taiwanese women. He was rejected after a marriage proposal several times and was not able to marry until age 39 when he decided to go to Kalimantan to look for an Indonesian bride. Utilising the economic support to Ahui's kin he regained respect both in Hukou and in Kalimantan and his social positioning improved greatly. Jiang and Ahui's story shows that economic support can also intentionally be used to maintain dependent and unbalanced power relations, although most of the Taiwanese men and family chose to use other mechanisms to maintain their control than sharing family economic resources.

Overall, the bargaining power over the distribution of family economic resources is intrinsically linked with the income that a woman can generate, however

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<sup>525</sup> Interview with Mr. Jiang and Ahui in Hukou city, June 2003. Mr. Jiang is a Hakka man who married Ahui, a Hakka woman in Kalimantan, Indonesia. Jiang was 40 years old and Ahui 19 years old when they got married. They have been married for seven years and have two sons. They live together with Jiang's widowed mother and Ahui's younger brother. Ahui's younger sister married Jiang's friend and lives in Hukou too.

it also depends on the intervention of other kin members. In the next section (5.4) I will discuss the dynamics of economic dependency and independence further.

It is observed that at times of household-splitting (*fenjia* 分家),<sup>526</sup> which often occurs after all the sons are married, some husbands of mainland brides are given a lesser share. During my fieldwork in Baihe, I witnessed a *fenjia* dispute of Family Su. The youngest son of Su married a mainland bride and not long after his marriage his eldest brother demanded Father Su to *fenjia*. The elder brothers and sisters successfully persuaded Father Su to give the youngest son a lesser share of the property because “*there is no point of giving him much. His [mainland] wife will take everything back to China anyway*”. Father Su’s view echoes the discourse of the law on the inheritance rights (in the AGRPTM) that assumes mainland brides’ motivation to be appropriating the property of Taiwanese families and hence that of the state.<sup>527</sup> Of course, the division of household economic resources depends on many factors such as a son’s capacity to support his own family after splitting, the gender and number of grandchildren, the relationship of individual sons and daughters-in-law with the parents and their financial contribution towards common household prior to the division, the likelihood of a son and daughter-in-law’s continuing support and care for the old-aged parents, etc.<sup>528</sup> The fact that marrying a mainland wife is used to justify the deprivation of the youngest son’s equal share of household property proves that not only the mainland bride is marginalised, but also the husband’s status within the kin may be lowered due to the marriage. The youngest son of the family Su and his mainland wife put on a fight, but their action of claiming a just share was interpreted as the wife’s greedy motivation and manipulation, which in turn reinforced Father Su’s decision to give a lesser share to them.<sup>529</sup>

### 5.3.5 Older brides who were married before and have children

As the demographic figures (Table 7) show, the percentage of mainland spouses who had previous marital experiences were much higher than other foreign spouses, in that 24.3% of male spouses and 19.4% of female spouses from mainland China had

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<sup>526</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.1.2.

<sup>527</sup> Discussion see Chapter 3, 3.3.3.3.

<sup>528</sup> The eldest son is often given the largest share because it is assumed that he will carry the family lineage and shoulder the major care responsibility of caring for the parents at old age. Although in recent times this caring responsibility is increasingly shared by all children and at times mainly by daughters, the custom of giving the eldest son the biggest share still persist. See Chapter 1, 1.1.2.

<sup>529</sup> My interviews with several members of Family Su in Baihe, November and December 2003. Other than Family Su, I have not personally witnessed another case of similar *fenjia* dispute, however, I was told that it was not uncommon that cross-strait couples got a lesser share of household property. However, it should be noted that this does not happen to every family. Some families have a more equal distribution and no dispute in the *fenjia* process.

married at least once before.<sup>530</sup> The household survey I conducted in Hukou *juancun* suggests that the majority of mainland women married to veteran soldiers had previous marital experiences and had children from earlier marriages, while most of their veteran husbands had no previous experiences and had no kin in Taiwan.<sup>531</sup> Most of the children from previous marriages were either teenagers or young adults. As explained in Chapter 2, the major motivation of remarriage and migration to Taiwan for the mainland brides who were married before is the material well-being and future security of themselves and of their children. The veteran husbands' motivation, on the other hand, is to find someone to care for them at their old age. These motivations are often articulated clearly before the marriage. On the surface, these motivations, coupled with a wide age gap between the husbands and wives, seemingly made these marriages deviant from the "normal" marriages in which love and romance elements are considered to be fundamental. However, in traditional perceptions the remarriage of divorced or widowed women and aged men is considered as "pragmatic", which is widely accepted and justified as a strategy for both the women and their families (both natal and husbands') to attain security.<sup>532</sup> The pragmatic characteristics render flexibility to their financial and care arrangements.

Hu was a veteran soldier originally from a small city in Sichuan province. His family were landlords and quite wealthy. After graduating from high school he took up a shoemaking apprenticeship. In 1941, at the age of 17, his family arranged for him a local marriage. He did not like the "country girl" that his family arranged for him so he excused himself by going to Chungqing city, the provincial capital to start his own business. He had an idea to marry a "city girl" while still keeping the first wife in the country side. Unfortunately, before he materialised his plan of marriages, he was accidentally forced to join the Kuomintang army to fight against the Japanese.<sup>533</sup> His legion was assigned to support the allies in Burma and Vietnam, where he experienced a near-death gunshot. Eventually in 1951 he retreated to Taiwan with the Kuomintang army when he was 27 years old. In the first decade it never came to his

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<sup>530</sup> See Table 7, p.93. Source: Report on the Survey of the Conditions of Foreign and Mainland Spouses, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Taiwan, 2003.

<sup>531</sup> According to my household survey in Hukou *juancun*, the average age of the veteran husbands at the time of marriage was 70.8 and that of the mainland wife, 41.7. 86.4% of mainland wife were married and divorced before, and only 8% of veterans were married before. The average age gap is 29.1 years.

<sup>532</sup> It is justified only when a widowed woman has no other means to care for herself and her young children, however, in practice, both her husband's and natal kin may push for remarriage for economic gains. See Chapter 1, 1.4.2 and 1.4.3.

<sup>533</sup> At that time the Kuomintang issued an order concerning compulsory military service, that every household with three males should send one to join the army and those with five males two. In reality, the wealthier families could bypass the order by bribing the government. To fill the number the army officers simply went to the street and forced passers-by to join the army. Although Hu's family was wealthy enough, they were not in Chungqing to bail Hu out. By lack of social support and identification, Hu was forced to stay in the army. Interview with Hu, September 2003, Hukou.

mind to marry a local woman because of the marriage ban.<sup>534</sup> Later he had opportunities of marriage, but he did not dare to marry because he felt that he was not a good match. This was partly due to his near-death experience and ill physical conditions. He had a relationship with a widow of his colleague. He helped raising her children and supported them financially, but he did not marry her. Later when he was older he became close to a young Taiwanese woman who he legally adopted as daughter. However, she took away a substantial amount of money and became distant to him. Other than her, Hu had several experiences of being cheated by young women who approached him for money. These experiences made him extremely suspicious of young and pretty women.

At age 78, Hu went back to his hometown in Sichuan province to visit his remaining relatives in the late 1980s. Though he had in his mind looking for a mainland wife, he turned down several matchmaking offers from his relatives because he did not trust them and the women they intended to match him with. Instead of marriage, he decided to adopt his nephew, the son of his brother in China with the hope that the nephew would take care of him in the future. He lived with the nephew and his brother's family for some time until he got into constant disputes with them. Later he adopted an unmarried niece, the daughter of another brother, but he soon broke up the relation with her too because she wanted to marry a man that he disapproved of. Feeling betrayed, Hu thought that both the adopted son and daughter were not genuine in caring for him and they only cared about the money he brought back to China and the inheritance.<sup>535</sup> He then started thinking of finding a wife.

Yun is at his mid-30s and has a son aged 10 from a recently ended previous marriage. Yun's fingers are deformed as a result of an industrial accident in the factory where she used to work. Hu spotted Yun selling food on the street and thought that a physically disabled woman would be less likely to run away because no one else would take her. Hu approached Yun and asked her to be his carer (*baomu* 保母) on the condition that he would take care of the education of Yun's son. Hu bought an apartment in Sichuan and registered it under Yun's name. Yun lives with Hu and her son in Sichuan, acting as his *baomu* for three years. They did not register marriage until Hu got seriously ill. He decided to marry Yun legally so that she could be entitled to his pension and house in Taiwan. After marriage Yun persuaded Hu to

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<sup>534</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.3.2.

<sup>535</sup> Hu did not legally adopt his nephew and niece. The "adoption" was done socially with the promise that Hu would give them substantial amounts of money regularly and the rights to inheritance and that the adopted son and daughter would care for him when he became old and ill and give him a proper funeral after his death.

move to Taiwan in view of the better health care facilities there. Yun sent her son to a prestige boarding school in Sichuan.<sup>536</sup>

In the late 1980s and early 1990s when cross-strait interaction resumed, the first wave of veterans visiting their hometowns in China often brought with them a comparatively large sum of money in the eyes of relatives in China. This created an impression that all veterans were wealthy. In addition, veterans were acutely aware that judging from their age and physical condition, the only incentive for the brides to marry them was the material wealth and security they could offer. Some veterans bragged about how rich they were in order to impress their relatives and prospective wives. As the brides had to spend the first few years of marriage in China due to the Taiwanese policy, they only grasped the economic conditions of their husbands and the pension system after years of marriage. In such cases many of the remarried brides were often shocked by the meager living conditions of their husbands as the houses in veteran's settlements are shabby even in the standard of the brides' hometowns in China. In the later stages, with increasing numbers of cross-strait marriages, the brides were better informed about the economic and social status of veterans in Taiwan. Many mainland brides had friends or acquaintances who had married veterans and many were matched by fellow mainland brides, so that they were able to acquire information about their husbands and life in Taiwan.

With or without prior knowledge of their husband's economic situation, most of the older mainland brides do not expect financial support from veteran husbands. In contrast to the media representation that portrays an image of greedy woman preying for vulnerable veterans, most of the older mainland brides seek job opportunities and are economically independent.

Peng<sup>537</sup> and many mainland brides marrying veterans have reached agreements with their husbands prior to marriage. Peng's husband gives a portion of his monthly pension to Peng for household expenses; in addition, he also pays the tuition fee of Peng's daughter in China. Peng keeps the income she earns for herself; she sends part of it back to China for her daughter's living allowance, and saves the rest for her own old-age security. Peng describes this way of managing finance and their relationship as "[we are] together in bed, outside bed I am on my own." (*Shangchuang yiqi, xialechuang geguan gede* 上床一起, 下了床各管各的). She acknowledges that it is an unconventional marital relation, because ideally "*married couples should build a family with one heart*". (*fuqi tongxin* 夫妻同心) However, as she considers herself more as a care-giver rather than a wife, she thinks this arrangement is good. She

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<sup>536</sup> This account was summarised from my interviews and conversations with Hu and Yun, both separately and together, from June to September 2003 in Hukou *juancun*. Most of the information was provided by both of them and verified individually.

<sup>537</sup> See footnote 205 and 557..

emphasises that she is self-reliant and “*unlike other [mainland brides] who just want to get their husbands’ money*”.

Compared with younger brides living in the extended family, in the veterans’ settlements it is more common that the mainland wives take control and manage the household economy. They often prove to be a better financial manager and there is no intervention from other kin members. Nevertheless, many veterans who are insecure about their wives’ fidelity often keep a very tight control over finance and prohibit their wives to work.

Mainland wives married to veterans and second-generation mainlanders are often able to negotiate for a more equal sexual division of labour at home as compared to Minnan and Hakka communities. This is partly because the sexual division of labour in some provinces in China is not as rigid as in Minnan and Hakka groups where all domestic chores are shouldered by women. It is common in veterans’ settlements that mainland wives go to work in the day while retired veterans stay at home and do some domestic chores.

### **5.3.6 Discussion: gendered power relations in the life cycle**

In Chapter 2 I discuss the significance of the factors of age, marital and prenatal experience in migratory and marital motivations. In this section I go a step further to illustrate how these factors shape migrant women’s experiences, their position in the affinal kin group and their coping strategies. For the younger brides who have no prior marital experiences, their positions in the husbands’ kin group and the process of gaining recognition and acceptance are not much different from local women in rural communities in both Taiwan and China. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a new bride is often treated with suspicion by the husband’s kin at the initial stage of marriage life, and gradually she will be accepted as a full member of the family. Pregnancy and childbearing is an important turning point determining her membership. Mainland brides also go through the same process. What makes cross-strait marriages different from local marriages is that constraints posed by government policies. In Chapter 3 I argue that policies governing cross-strait marriages are largely based on women’s gender roles in the family, and that the categories of the brides’ residential status and their social entitlements are based on the family’s need of women’s reproductive (care) functions and economic contributions. In this chapter I show conversely how policies affect the life cycle of cross-strait couples and their marital experiences.

Whereas the policy aims at “protecting” Taiwanese citizens from “bogus” marriages and from “women with questionable marital motivations”,<sup>538</sup> it makes the

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<sup>538</sup> See Chapter 3, 3.3.3.2. and 3.3.4.



initial stage of married life vulnerable by imposing a long period of physical separation. The economic resources and emotions needed to maintain a marriage in the separation period are a huge burden to all members of cross-strait families, however, it is the mainland brides who have to endure the prolonged process of integrating into the husbands' family. On the other hand, this system (six months living in Taiwan and another six months in China) offers advantages to the brides by providing a safety net and an escape avenue, as well as by giving them and their husbands opportunities to develop ties with their natal families in China. For a young bride who takes the biggest decision in life (marrying a stranger and moving far away from home), knowing they can go home is an incentive of taking a risky decision. Once pregnant, the brides' membership of their husbands' family and of the nation (Taiwan) is secured, as long as it is proved that they bear biological children from their husbands. They can obtain long-term resident permits and start the naturalisation process. From this point on, the focus of their life will be their children, husband and husband's kin members, and their ties with natal families will be loosened.

For the older, remarried brides the experiences are rather different. If their husbands are above 65 years old, they can get long-term resident permits right away as they are expected to care for old or sick husbands. Most of them do not live with their husband's kin and have nuclear households. Therefore they do not go through the process of gaining recognition by the husband's kin group and by the state. The focus of their life centres on their husbands, children from previous marriages and themselves. At this stage of their life cycle they are concerned about the future and building up old age security. They do so by investing in their children's education and career, by negotiating for pensions and inheritance from husbands after they die, and by saving as much as they can from their own income.

In the analysis of policy discourse, it is discovered that the state takes the position of the husband's kin group and treats mainland brides as potential threats of appropriating collective family property and of causing division within the family. The older brides' action of saving money is interpreted as "preying" on poor veterans. However, when we put the life cycle at the center of the analysis, we get a very different picture and find explanations of the brides' actions based on cultural norms, the gendered norm shared by Taiwanese and Chinese families. In this picture mainland brides are no longer seen as "the others".

## 5.4. Work and autonomy

### 5.4.1 Availability of job opportunities: a gendered and ethnic labour market

Despite the right to work, whether mainland spouses have high or low educational attainments, or who live in rural and urban areas, they have difficulties in finding a job. Like with local Taiwanese women, mainland brides' employment and income are subject to local economic development. In addition, the negative image of mainland brides puts mainland spouses in a disadvantageous position in the labour market. A survey shows that only 15.2% of mainland spouses surveyed hold stable jobs and 9.7% have temporary jobs in 2003. Their employment rate is far lower than other foreign spouses and Taiwanese.<sup>539</sup>

Their difficulties result from the following factors:

- 1) The Taiwanese government does not acknowledge the education degrees at the tertiary level in the mainland;
- 2) The right to work is restricted to brides from low-income families;<sup>540</sup>
- 3) Spouse's age and family obligations such as child care and caring for the parents-in-law or aged husbands;
- 4) Taiwanese employers prefer not to employ mainland spouses in view of the negative images in the media.<sup>541</sup>

Although the right to work is granted to mainland spouses in 1998,<sup>542</sup> only until 2003 some local governments start to acknowledge special needs of mainland spouses and set up a desk to facilitate them entering job markets.<sup>543</sup> Mainland spouses are advised

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<sup>539</sup> Source: Survey Report of the Living Conditions of Foreign and Mainland Spouses, Table 12, p.28, Ministry of Interior Affairs, ROC, 2004. This figure includes both male and female mainland and foreign spouses. According to this survey, 22.3% of foreign spouses have stable jobs and 12.3% have temporary jobs. Compared to the national figure, the labour participation rate of married (including cohabitating) women is 47.77%. (Statistical Yearbook, 2004, Executive Yuan, R.O.C.) What needs to be noted is that the male foreign and mainland spouses have far higher employment rates than female spouses, (foreign male spouses 81% and foreign female spouses 32.1%; mainland male spouses: 51.6% and mainland female spouses 23.6%; this is including stable and temporary employment). For the reliability of these survey data, see Chapter 2, 2.3.1.

<sup>540</sup> See Chapter 3, 3.4.1.2.

<sup>541</sup> Interview with Ms. Xiao at Guanghua Employment Service Center on 15 and 16 August 2003. These four difficulties are identified by the mainland spouses who attended the vocational training seminar organised by the Center on 16 August 2003. In addition, the spouses attending another seminar organised by a non-governmental organization, the Chinese Association for Relief and Ensuing Services (Taiwan) in Hsinchu on 3 September 2003 also identified the same causes.

<sup>542</sup> For a discussion on the right to work, see Chapter 3, 3.4.1.2.

<sup>543</sup> The first special desk for mainland spouses was set up in Guanghua Employment Service Center (now Ximen Employment Service Center) by the Labour Department, Taipei Municipality. The first year (2003) the center organised three half-day seminars for mainland spouses to orientate them how to find jobs. I attended two of these seminars in August and September 2003, each was attended by 20 to 30 mainland spouses who had already acquired work permits. One special officer offered individual

to take up lower paid jobs in the beauty industry (hair-dressers, skin care and massage therapists) and as care labour (nannies, non-professional nurses and domestic workers).<sup>544</sup> These jobs require some skills and a certificate of vocational training at times helps them to find better and more secure jobs.<sup>545</sup> Many other mainland spouses work in the informal sector such as washing dishes in restaurants and eateries, and janitors in factories and offices. As most of the mainland brides have on average high school education and working experiences prior to marriage, the jobs they are likely to find are often below their qualification. Most are on a temporary basis and have no labour protection.

In Hukou *juancun*, mainland brides of veterans mostly work as janitors or nannies. The settlement is situated in Hukou Industrial Zone where factories employ large numbers of migrant workers. Male migrant workers mainly work in construction and labour-intensive work and female migrant workers in the assembly line of electronic and garment factories. Since the limited quota of migrant workers were introduced, a shortage of affordable cheaper labours is observed, however, only a few mainland spouses have been able to find factory work. If foreign and mainland brides fill the gap of labour shortage, as argued by some scholars (Wang, 2001),<sup>546</sup> why are so few mainland brides working in factories? When I participated in the language course catered for foreign and mainland spouses in a neighbouring primary school, I discovered that many young Vietnamese, Indonesian and Cambodian brides work in small-medium garment and electronics factories situated outside the Hukou Industrial Zone. Their labour is obviously in demand.<sup>547</sup> However, their husbands or parents-in-

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consultation to registered mainland spouses and tried to match their qualifications and expectations with the jobs available in the database. In addition, mainland spouses can search the database by themselves. The service is free of charge. I interviewed the special officer Ms. Xiao on August 15 and 16, 2003.

<sup>544</sup> This is according to the lecturer of the above-mentioned seminar at Guanghua Employment Service Center. Mainland spouses were encouraged to take courses offered by the Center on cooking, nursing and beautification and apply for qualifying certificate. Other jobs suggested included telephone operator (provided the brides speak Mandarin “without accent” and preferably Fokkien too), direct sale of cosmetics and medicines, etc.

<sup>545</sup> The professionalisation of child-carer (*baomu*) started in 2001. Those who have high school education and receive vocational training for 126 hours can participate in the exam and obtain a child-carer certificate. However, it is not compulsory to have the child-carer certificate to do child-caring work either in institutions or at home, although those who have this certificate have more advantage in employment opportunities. (*Lifayuangongbao*, 95 (54):227-245). The domestic workers and carers for the elderly are not licensed or regulated.

<sup>546</sup> See Chapter 2, 2.1.2. Wang’s work is based on research on Southeast Asian brides, not including mainland brides.

<sup>547</sup> A majority of the assembly line work in Hukou is done by migrant workers and foreign brides; the Taiwanese workers are a minority. This is mainly because the migrant workers (mainly from the Philippines and Thailand) and foreign brides (Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia) receive much less pay than local workers. While a Taiwanese worker receive NT25,000 per month for a full-time day shift, migrant workers and brides are paid below NT20,000. In addition, migrants and brides comply to the demand of overtime work more easily.

law prefer them to work in the small and family-entreprise factories near their home rather than the large factories in the industrial zone because the proximity of the working place makes it easier for the husbands and in-laws to control the movement of the brides.<sup>548</sup> The explanation of the undesirability of mainland brides' labour in these factories lies not so much in racial discrimination, but rather in age discrimination. The work in the factory assembly line in Taiwan and elsewhere is known for demanding largely young single women. As most of the mainland brides in veterans' settlements are at their middle age, they are deemed not suitable for the assembly line work that requires "nimble fingers". As a result they can only find cleaning jobs in offices and domestic work. Among all working mainland brides in Hukou *juancun*, only one works in the assembly line at a factory and she was below age 30 when she started working.

Compared to factory work, janitors, nannies and carers for elderly people are paid much less and work longer hours.<sup>549</sup> Few Taiwanese are willing to take up these jobs, therefore there is a large demand in the labour market and mainland spouses have no difficulty of finding these jobs. Mainland brides are generally paid much lower than Taiwanese for the same work, and slightly higher than migrant workers. This is mainly because the employers of legal migrant workers have to pay recruitment agencies' fees, government tax and migrants' insurances, and these costs are often deducted from migrants' income. For mainland and foreign brides there are no external costs and for most of jobs in the informal sectors there are no labour contracts and insurances. This makes mainland and foreign brides a more popular choice in the informal and service sectors and many employers prefer to employ mainland brides. In their eyes, mainland brides are subservient workers, in an employer's word,

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<sup>548</sup> The control of movement is done, for example, by husbands picking up their wives to and from work. In the larger factories it is easier for the brides to conceal the information about the working shifts and income. The owners of the family-run factories, who are often the friends of the brides' affinal family, often willingly help control the movement and behaviour of the brides and communicate the information of working hours and income to the brides' family directly. This is the reason why although the pay in the large factories is a little higher than in the family-run factories and the labour protection and safety regulations are better, most of the foreign brides work in smaller factories. It should be noted that despite the controlling mechanisms by the owners of family-run factories, many in-laws do not allow the brides to work for fear of the brides' gaining independence and establishing their own social network. In a bride's words, "*I begged my husband and in-laws to let me work. I begged and begged for a long time. Finally after my second son was born they let me. They are very worried that I will make bad friends and run away.*" (Fieldwork observation in June 2003 and interview with Indonesian bride Ahui and Aju on June 25 2003, Shinpu., Hsinchu County).

<sup>549</sup> For instance, janitors cleaning the factories and offices receive NT18,000 per month in Hukou (Taiwanese NT19,000). Nannies and carers are paid above NT20,000, however, their working hours are much longer. Jobs such as dish washing and cooking in the eateries are paid NT600 per day in Baihe. In urban areas the pay is slightly higher. These figures are collected during my fieldwork in 2003 and 2004.

*“mainland brides are hard-working and stay-put, and they do not mind to work long hours. They know their place in the society. Unlike some Taiwanese young girls, who work for a few days, get tired and quit very soon. These women [mainland brides] are from poor backgrounds and they survived all sorts of harsh conditions [during the cultural revolution] so they can really endure hardship (Chiku nailao 吃苦耐勞).”*<sup>550</sup>

Mr. An<sup>551</sup> is the owner of a company offering cleaning and landscaping services to factories and offices in Hukou Industrial Zone. His father, a retired veteran soldier, established the cleaning company together with fellow veterans in 1988 to generate some additional income because the pension fund was not enough for them to support their families. With the expanding Industrial Zone their services had always been very much needed. Soon the cleaning work became too taxing for aging veterans and “[mainland] aunties took over and continued to provide the services to the community”, (in Mr. An’s words), as by then many veterans married Indonesian and mainland wives. At the moment of interview Mr. An’s company had 126 registered workers, however, not all are actively working depending on how many contracts An get and all workers are paid on an hourly basis.<sup>552</sup> Of the more active workers 45% are Hakka and aborigines, 10% are Minnan, 40% mainland brides and 5% Indonesian brides (ethnic Chinese). The Hakka and aborigines are mainly male workers who do heavier work, while mainland and Indonesian brides mainly work as janitors in the offices. Most of my mainland bride informants in Hukou and neighbouring veterans’ settlements had worked or still worked for Mr. An.

An’s view towards mainland brides is mixed. He shares the view that some mainland brides prey on veterans and are morally corrupted, while some others are hardworking and take care of their veteran husbands.<sup>553</sup> For those who are

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<sup>550</sup> Interview with Ms. Zhang, owner of a noodle stand in a open market in Taichung. She employs two mainland brides. (Interview at her noodle stand, Taichung, July, 2002.) Mr. Zhong, an owner of a bakery and catering company in Taipei county also shares similar comments. (Interview at the FATS, Taipei, September 2003.)

<sup>551</sup> Mr. An is at his early 40s. As a second generation mainlander, his father is a veteran soldier who married a Hakka woman and settled in Hukou veterans’ settlement.

<sup>552</sup> An’s company belongs to the new and fast growing “human resource agency” industry (*renli paiqien yie* 人力派遣業) that do subcontract work or service for larger companies. Their employers, often on part-time and temporary basis, are sent to different locations to do a fixed task that is often labour-intensive and low-paid in nature. By doing so the larger companies can maintain a flexible labour force and do not need to shoulder social costs such as insurance, tax and pension for the workers. Although in principle the workers should sign labour contracts with the sending agencies, it is very difficult to monitor the agencies due to the characteristics of temporary and irregular work. In addition, the employers constantly work at different locations; therefore they do not receive the same training and protection of workplace safety as regular workers.

<sup>553</sup> An’s view towards mainland brides is a result of the common perception in the community, as described earlier (see footnote 553), as well as his own personal experience. In the mid-1990s when An was at his 30s, his father had an intention to persuade him to marry a mainland woman. He worked in

hardworking, he considers himself doing them a favour by giving them job opportunities and giving them independence and dignity, although he acknowledges that he also benefits from employing a large number of mainland brides as he pays them less than the locals.<sup>554</sup> According to him, most of the Taiwanese factory managers do not like to employ mainland brides. His strategy is to send local workers first, and after the factory managers are confident with the agency, he would replace locals with mainland brides. He told mainland brides working for him that “*the boss [factory managers] is doing you a favour by giving you a chance to work for them, so you should work hard like you are indebted to them*”. In contrast, he claims, local workers are less cooperative in extra demands such as change of working hours and overtime, and tend to quit when conflicts arise in the workplace. As a result, the managers are often impressed with the hardworking attitude of mainland brides and soon accept them.

Peng is one of the mainland spouses working for Mr. An as a janitor. She used to be a high school teacher in her hometown in Sichuan. Prior to marriage, she had the intention to work and was prepared to work hard to support herself and her daughter in China.<sup>555</sup> However, she did not expect that with her education and teaching experiences it would be so difficult to find a decent job. She soon realised that her education qualification is not recognised in Taiwan and the jobs in the educational field are not available either because no one would employ a mainland bride as a

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Hainan province for a short period of time then, and discovered that “*mainland is a very backward place. I don’t trust communism because they are hostile to Taiwanese.*” As a result he decided not to marry a mainland woman. He returned to Taiwan to take over the management of the company and married a local Hakka woman who is five years older than him.

<sup>554</sup> He pays mainland brides with working (cleaning) experiences NT18,000 per month (estimatedly 48 hours per week work load with regular extra hours on Sunday). For the same work he pays local women NT19,000 plus overtime bonus. Although it is not clear how much the factory owners pay him, I was told by one factory manager that the hourly wage (paid to Mr. An) of local woman and foreign and mainland brides is the same.

<sup>555</sup> Peng was at her late 40s when she married a veteran Shu aged late 60s. She is from Leshan city in Sichuan province and is a devoted Catholic. When her former husband, a high school principle, died of lung cancer, her only daughter was about to enter the college. Her meagre salary as a high school teacher was not sufficient to support her daughter’s education. She thought of remarriage or even being a mistress (*ernai*), however, she was not able to find a good match due to her age. She heard that perhaps marrying a Taiwanese could be a solution. She was introduced to Shu by a friend, a relative of Shu. Shu claimed that he was really rich, however, Peng was suspicious and thought that Shu must be mentally ill otherwise he would not remain single at this age. It took her a year to “observe” Shu (her own word), during which she requested her matchmaker to verify the information Shu provided and inquired from the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) about the general situation of veteran soldiers in Taiwan. Eventually Peng decided to marry Shu based on three conditions that Shu would 1) treat her daughter as his own; 2) support her daughter’s education; and 3) allow her to work and keep her own income. In return she promised Shu that she would take care of Shu when he gets old and sick and never leave him. When I met Peng, Shu has become very ill and lied in bed most of the time. Peng keeps her promise to take care of him. She considers herself a “carer” rather than a wife and she takes care for Shu just like she cares for her own father or in-law”. Her daughter has graduated from college and found a good job in Sichuan. For Peng’s profile, see footnote 485.

private tutor. Struggling to come to terms with the reality, she took the job working in an old-aged home as a carer. After some time she quitted this work because she injured her hand and the work became physically too taxing, as she said, *“it is enough to take care my own old man and his comrade.”* She also worked as a nanny and a dish washer for some time, however, she eventually settled for the janitor’s job because,

*.....it is easier, the working hours are regular so I get some time for myself to read books, even if the pay is lower. And the people in the office [where she does the cleaning] are kind to me. They are better educated, you know.”* Peng thinks that Mr. An is an *“O.K. boss. He is very good in talking nice words but he exploits us [mainland brides] just like everybody else. But what choice do we have?”*

In Baihe where factory work is scarce, most of the mainland brides work in family-run businesses and farms. In some cases families do not own their own land and women work as farm labourers together with their husbands. However, not many mainland women are willing to do farm work.

Ayu, mentioned earlier in this chapter, has accepted her fate as a rural wife despite initial disappointments and failed attempts to move to the city.<sup>556</sup> She got a share of the family owned land from her father-in-law where she grows pumpkins and vegetables. In the pumpkin harvest season, she goes to their small plot of land before dawn to pick up the matured pumpkins,<sup>557</sup> works diligently for some hours, then goes home to wake up her son, to prepare him for school. After that she returns to the land to fertilising and weeding the vegetable plot until the heat is too strong. She then goes to the market to do grocery shopping and returns home to cook lunch for her husband and father-in-law. In the afternoon she cleans the house, waits for her son to return from school and they go to the land to work more hours until it is time to cook dinner. Her husband works in the collective land owned by the family (under the father-in-law) and occasionally works as farm labourer wherever he is needed because the income from the output of their land is not enough to support the family. Ayu spends the evening supervising her son’s study and helping with his homework, while her husband goes out to drink with his friends. After sending the son to bed, Ayu takes out a photo album and shows me photos taken before her marriage. *“See, how white and pretty I was! Now look at my hand, it is all hard and dirty. Last time I went back to hometown my mother cried when she saw my skin so dark and ugly. I never did any [farm] work before I was married, you know. But I do not regret it. He [the husband]*

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<sup>556</sup> For Ayu’s profile, see footnote 489.

<sup>557</sup> The matured pumpkins have to be picked early otherwise the heat of sun will dry them out. The land is around half an hour by motorcycle from her house.

*is not bad. He drinks a lot, sometimes in the day too.” She points to a pile of beer bottles that occupies half of the living room. “But he is nice to me, and most importantly he does not have other women. My only hope lies in my son. He is so smart. He will have a bright future.”*

Ayu’s sister-in-law Aqin<sup>558</sup> was not willing to live such a harsh farm life and decided to go to Tainan city to work in a restaurant. Due to the long working hours it is not possible to commune, so she rents a room in the city and lives alone, leaving her three children behind in the care of her husband. Soon her husband joined her in the city and the father-in-law has to care for the children. Ayu’s husband and another brother complain that Aqin’s husband does not share the work in the collective farm land and the responsibility of caring for the father-in-law. Nevertheless, Aqin insists to stay in the city by arguing that it is necessary for her to work in the city to earn enough income to support her three children. Ayu’s neighbour Aru<sup>559</sup> is also not willing to do farm work. With the help of her matchmaker, she found a job as a dishwasher in an eatery in downtown Baihe and earns NT 600 a day. She soon finds the job too heavy and feels ashamed of washing dishes. She dreams of opening a hair salon and running the business on her own, however, the remote location of her house would not attract enough clients and she cannot afford renting a place in downtown Baihe. Ayu feels trapped in this rural life. She became very unhappy and quarrels with her husband all the time.

Although the mainland brides living in the cities have relatively more job opportunities, they are equally frustrated with having to settle for the jobs below their qualification and to be paid much less than local Taiwanese. On the web-based forum of the Association of Cross-strait Families, many highly educated mainland spouses write about being discriminated by Taiwanese employers.<sup>560</sup> Some mainland spouses manage to use their prior businesses and social networks in China and entrepreneur

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<sup>558</sup> Ayu’s husband is the youngest of three sons. All three brothers married mainland women. Aqin’s husband is the second brother and he was the first one to marry. The three sisters-in-law did not know each other before they came to Taiwan. Because Aqin’s husband has a gambling habit and loses a lot of money, the eldest brother and his wife demand *fenjia*. Each brother gets a plot of land and a house, however, the father-in-law keeps the collective land where all sons are supposed to contribute their labour. The widowed father-in-law takes turns to live with each son, taken care of by the daughters-in-law.

<sup>559</sup> Aru is from Hainan and was at her late 20s when she married a man aged early 30s. According to the matchmaker Mrs. Liu, they are considered a very good match because both groom and bride are young and good-looking. Aru’s husband works in a mechanic workshop selling and repairing farm machinery in downtown Baihe. They live in a small rural hut in the outskirts of Baihe. Because Aru’s husband is not the eldest son they do not have to stay with the parents-in-law. Aru often complains about the location and shabbiness of their hut and claims that she is “cheated” by the husband. When I interviewed Aru in October 2003, she just gave birth to a baby girl.

<sup>560</sup> For instance, a graduate with English major from Qinghua University in Beijing writes about her several attempts of job interviews. She finally found a job in a foreign-invested company. Chao (2002) also shares the same research finding.



skills to start their own business. The direct sale businesses in cosmetics, health products and in the insurance industry thus target mainland brides in view of their potential to extend the market to mainland China.<sup>561</sup> Some other mainland spouses who met their husbands via business contacts became successful partners of their husband's business in China. However, these opportunities can only be taken by the brides who have substantial social and economic capitals, and who have already obtained permanent residential status, after 8 to 10 years in Taiwan,<sup>562</sup> unless their families decide to relocate to China for good. In most cases the mainland brides would prefer to fulfil the requirements and acquire residential status as it widens their life choices and business opportunities. In this waiting period, the mainland wives stay in Taiwan, taking care of parents-in-law, children or family businesses in Taiwan, while their husbands go to China for work or business. Like many Taiwanese wives of Taiwanese businessmen, they experience physical separation and worry that their husbands would find a mistress in China.

#### 5.4.2 Usage of income

A family member's economic contribution to the family, whether in cash or in labour, affects their position in the kinship. In Chapter 1 I explain that although the blood ties constitute a normative principal of the patrilineal Chinese family, the active economic contribution of a sub-unit (*fang*) to the collective family often determines the perceived share and membership.<sup>563</sup> Although this ideal and practice mainly applies to male members and son-led *fangs*, a woman's indirect contribution in the forms of dowry or her sons' economic contributions determines her position in the kin group. In modern times as women enter the labour market their economic contribution enhances their position in the family both in China and Taiwan. The degree of participation in the decision-making or control over economic resources of the family is an indication of a woman's position in the family. How do mainland brides utilise their own income? Do they contribute to the economy of the husband's family, and if so, how is their contribution valued and how does it affect their position in the family?

For the mainland brides who work in a family-run business or family owned farm land, their labour contribution is considered part of their obligations and therefore not paid in cash, however, their contribution is appreciated by the husband's

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<sup>561</sup> Interview with the lecturer giving a training course to mainland spouses, organised by the Chinese Relief Association, April, 2002, Taipei. Mr. Huang, chairperson of the Mainland Association of Cross-strait families (1997-2005) also shares the view.

<sup>562</sup> Application of a long-term residential permit and citizenship requires residing in Taiwan, thus it is not very easy for the mainland spouses to travel to the mainland frequently. See Chapter 3, 3.3.3.2 and 3.5.3.1.

<sup>563</sup> See Chapter 1, 1.1.2.

kin as a sign of their loyalty to the family. They often work hard to earn the latter's respect and to prove that their labour is indispensable. As these family-run businesses often operate with a collective financial account, it is not easy for mainland brides as well as their Taiwanese sisters-in-law to tap into the collective resources unless it is justified for the benefits of the family, such as children's education and business investments, etc. This is particularly the case in rural Hakka communities. Sending money to the natal families in China is extremely difficult unless it is in the form of gifts during her visit to natal families and during festivities. In comparison, it is easier for Southeast Asian brides to send money home as it often involves a smaller amount of money (as the cost of living in Southeast Asia is lower than that in China) and it is justified by helping their poor families; the same act of mainland brides would be likely to be interpreted as greediness. Nevertheless, both mainland and Southeast Asian brides are discouraged to maintain regular ties with their natal families.

The brides living in nuclear households or with aged parents-in-law only need to negotiate with their husbands on financial matters. Whether a bride is allowed to work and to manage her own income largely depends on how much the husband trusts her and her ability (compared to her husband) to generate income. The negotiations can take place prior to marriage as part of the premarital agreement or in the course of marital life when the relationship is stable. A clear difference is observed between the younger brides of first marriage and the older remarried brides. Many older remarried women have (verbal) prenuptial agreements with their husbands, who should allow them [brides] to work or financially support children from the previous marriage in China.<sup>564</sup> They and their husbands often manage their finances independently. The younger brides have access to the household income at a later stage of marriage, often after the children are born; they often have common household finances although some brides have more freedom of keeping private pocket money than the others.

The power to negotiate freedom to work and to decide how to use the income is also related to the matchmaking operation. Mainland brides who share part of the matchmaking expenses and pay their travel expenses to Taiwan are in a better position to claim the money they earn.<sup>565</sup>

Afong,<sup>566</sup> as mentioned in Chapter 4, has shared part of the matchmaking cost. Afong's husband Lai does not have stable jobs and income. In view of the lack of job opportunities in Baihe, Afong decided to go to Taoyuan in Northern Taiwan to work as a domestic worker. Lai is not happy that Afong leaves home to work. However, since he is not able to support her financially (*yang bu chi* 養不起) he has to allow her to work. Since Afong's three children in China are

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<sup>564</sup> See, for example, Peng's story, footnote 557.

<sup>565</sup> See Chapter 4, 4.3.2, for recent development of matchmaking practices.

<sup>566</sup> Afong's story see page 200.

economically independent, she keeps all the money she earns for her own old-age fund. She also pays all the fees of visa renewal and airfare to China. Afong lives in her employer's house during the week and goes back to Baihe during the weekend.

Another factor that prohibits mainland spouses to gain economic independence is linked to their citizenship. In earlier days, mainland spouses are not able to open a bank account under their name before they obtained a Taiwanese ID, which is only issued after they acquire full citizenship. Without an ID card they also have no rights to own property or even apply for a mobile phone. If they want to manage their "private money" without their husbands' knowledge, they would have to hide the cash or entrust it with friends who had a bank account. Similarly, if they want to send remittances back to China they have to ask fellow mainland brides to wire the money or carry the cash during one of their home visits. Most of the mainland spouses find a way to manage and transfer money via informal channels.<sup>567</sup> They are therefore acutely aware of the importance of building their social network among Taiwanese and fellow mainland spouses. Nevertheless, the lack of legal rights to finance management has inevitably put them in a vulnerable position.

#### **5.4.3 Negotiation between economic independence and familial obligation**

I have argued throughout this thesis that mainland brides' image is intrinsically linked with their gender roles as care-givers, as wives, mothers and daughters-in-law. Reproductive labour is considered their natural obligation rather than an economic contribution. It is essential for mainland brides to fulfil these obligations before they can enter the labour market and earn their income, not only because they need approval of their husbands and parents-in-law to apply for the work permit, but also because these obligations justify their existence and recognition by the kin and community.

Women's familial obligations are related to the age and life cycle of themselves, their husbands and family members. The younger brides who have not borne children have almost no chance to work outside home, mainly because they have to travel between China and Taiwan every six months and they can only apply for a work permit after two years of marriage. By the time they are qualified to apply for a work permit, they are likely to bear children and are expected to stay at home to take care of children and aged parents-in-law.

When the wives' income is much needed in low income families or when husbands are unemployed, the parents-in-law or other kin would have to take care of

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<sup>567</sup> I myself have been asked many times to wire money for my informants. I have also helped several informants to purchase mobile numbers which were registered under my name.

their children. One major motivation for cross-border marriages, especially among Taiwanese of low income families, is to find affordable reproductive labour to care for children and elders. Ironically, due to economic necessity the mainland wives often have to work to support the family, and the burden of child care is again put on the elder members. In Minnan and Hakka families, the burden of care would not fall on middle-aged men even if they are unemployed. Although many parents-in-law and women kins are willing and happy to take up the caring tasks, the mainland daughters-in-law are blamed for not fulfilling their duties by other kin members.

#### 5.4.4 Consciousness of autonomy and self-fulfilment

Work does not only bring economic independence and render power for negotiation for mainland women. Many well-educated mainland brides from relatively well-off families strive to find work to gain autonomy even if their families and they themselves do not need their economic contribution. If a mainland woman does not work outside home, her social contacts would be limited to her husband's kin and neighbourhood. Work therefore provides self-fulfilment and extends their social network. The motivation to work goes beyond economic motivations only.

Xinxin who married to a wealthy businessman is envied by her fellow mainland brides for her material wellbeing. Her husbands and parents-in-law treat her well. She is generally content with her life although she would like to work.

*Everybody says that I have a good fate (haoming 好命). Maybe it is true. But I don't want to sit at home and do nothing. I don't want to be a shaonainai (少奶奶).<sup>568</sup> Everybody [family members] works so hard to run the business. The economic situation [in Taiwan] is not very bright. I don't like people [employees] saying that I am lazy because I am from mainland. I have worked in China before and I know something about the business. But my brothers-in-law would not let me intervene. Maybe they think I am just a pretty face. Or maybe they just don't trust me because I am from mainland. I complain to my husband, but he says that God knows how many Taiwanese women would like to be in my position and that I should be happy with my good fate.*

Xinxin tries to find employment but there is no good job opportunity in the rural location where she lives. "Even if I do not mind to do low[ly paid] jobs my parents-in-law wouldn't let me. I will lose the family's face."

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<sup>568</sup> Shaonainai refers to a woman who marries into a rich clan and enjoy a luxurious lifestyle, and does not have to work or do any domestic chores.

Xinxin told me that the mainland wives of Taiwanese men are not always as well-off as it looks. Most of them marry in view of the husband's wealth and security at the time of marriage. However, many discover that their husband's economic situation is not as secure as expected due to the risky nature of business investment in China in recent years. Many Taiwanese businessmen became bankrupted in China and stay unemployed and in debt. Their mainland wives would have to look for jobs to support the family should they decide to stay in marriage. Resourceful ones could generate a small amount of capital and use their previous social network to start an entrepreneurship between Taiwan and China. The others would have to settle for jobs way lower than their qualification. Some even earn less in real value than what they earned in China. Xinxin comments on their stories, *"We women should be self-sufficient. We should not think of depending on men (kaonanren 靠男人). Who knows what will happen? It is better to count on ourselves"*.

Jieling<sup>569</sup> is a beautician and therapeutic masseur. She had already acquired professional qualification and some working experiences in Sichuan, China. As a computer engineer, her husband's is not exceedingly rich but his income is sufficient to support the family. Jieling had a clear idea that she wanted to work after marriage whether in China or in Taiwan. Because her qualification was not recognised in Taiwan, she entered a chained beauty salon company and received training from scratch and worked herself from the bottom up. After some years, her hardworking attitude and professionalism eventually won her a senior position in the salon. During this period she was pregnant twice but she continued to work right after childbirth.

*"It is very difficult to handle pregnancy and child-care while working full time. The work is long-hour and physically demanding," she says, "but I told myself I would never quit. I want to be an independent woman and I want people to acknowledge me for what I do. Besides, if I stay at home the whole day I will be bored and become old soon. Here [at work] I have colleagues and clients. I like to socialise with them and they tell me many things. If I stay at home I would be a real 'mainland bride.' Here I feel I am just like a Taiwanese."* Luckily Jieling's husband is very supportive and her mother-in-law helps with child-care.

Xinxin and Jieling's stories show that among better educated mainland spouses the consciousness of gender equality and self-reliance is strong. It may be a result of

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<sup>569</sup> Jieling was 28 years old when she married her husband whom she met in her hometown in Sichuan via business contact. They are married for six years and have two children at the time of my interview. I first interviewed her in July 2003 in a skin care salon in Taichung. At that time her first son was just born. During the course of my fieldwork she was pregnant with the second son. She continued to work in the same salon all through two pregnancies.

education in the socialist regime. They are not content with the designated gender roles and image of the greedy women that fixated with mainland brides. Instead they want to be an active economic contributor as Taiwanese women. In the workplace they build their own social network which is not mediated by husbands. Like Taiwanese women they juggle between the reproductive obligations and work. However, only a lucky few are able to find fulfilling jobs and to be paid fairly due to unavailability in the gendered and ethnic labour market.

#### **5.4.5 Discussion: gendered power relations and economy**

Work is an important aspect of mainland brides' life. It provides income and social space outside kinship, and increases brides' bargaining power, opportunities and self-esteem. In traditional cultural norms a husband is expected to economically support his wife (*yang laopo* 養老婆). This cultural norm sustains the sexual division of labour, unbalanced gender power relations, and ensure men as the head of household. Although in modern China and Taiwan, with the increase of women's education and entering labour market, men are no longer the sole breadwinner. Nevertheless, having the ability to *yang* his wife or mistresses is an expression of masculinity and manhood. One of the motivations for men from lower social background to marry mainland and Southeast Asian women is that they are not able to *yang* a Taiwanese woman, who or whose family expect a higher *yang* capacity. The women who have a rich husband and who do not have to work for a living are considered having a good fate (*haoming*). That is why a man's economic status is an important criterion in mate choice.

A wife could demand economic *yang* from her husband, and if he is incapable of doing so, the wife are in principle in a better power relations to negotiate and enjoy more autonomy. As some cases show, some cross-strait marriages have more equal gender relations; in some cases the normative sexual division of labour, that of men as breadwinners and women as care givers, is reversed due to a husband's unemployment. As a result, a higher inter-dependency among the couples and family members is observed and appreciated. In Minnan and Hakka communities, this often threatens men's masculinity and can lead to domestic violence or tightened control of wife's movement from the husband. Contrary to popular representation, the husbands of cross-border and cross-strait marriages are not necessarily *by nature* violent or chauvinistic because of their low socio-economic status or lower education attainment. The high divorce rate and domestic violence should be analysed in light of gender relations.

If a man cannot provide economic *yang* as expected by his wife, he would allow or even encourage the wife to work. When a woman earns income, she again

increases bargaining power with her husband or with other kin. Older women marrying veteran soldiers are able to keep the income they earn and operate independent financial accounts. They may choose to save the money for their own old age security, to invest in children's education or to maintain a life style they desire. The agreements they made prior to marriage that allows them to work and keep the income may seem like "marriages of convenience"<sup>570</sup> and are often interpreted as questionable marital motivations, in fact give them more bargaining power and freedom. Compared with younger brides, older brides have bigger power in acquiring household economic resources and in a fairer division of labour of household chores.

Younger brides who have no previous marital experiences are most likely to contribute their income into the collective household either in the extended family or the nuclear family, and are less likely to keep the money for themselves. Their economic contribution increases their decision-making power, which may improve their position in the kinship, but it may cause tension between kin members as well. Like Taiwanese women, young brides often have to juggle between work and familial obligations of child rearing and caring for parents-in-law. If they can achieve both they win respect from kin members.

For a majority of mainland women, finding a job in Taiwan is a painful and at times humiliating process. The combination of the factors of age, gender and constructed "racial" difference forces them to take up jobs way lower than their qualification. They are most likely to take up the lower-paid and labour intensive jobs that few Taiwanese would take, and the available jobs are associated with their gender roles as care-giver and domestic work. In the aspect of job and income, their social positioning is definitely lower than in China before marriage.

Mainland brides are considered good employees for those who employ them. They are hard-working, less demanding and paid less. Unfortunately, this image of hard-working labourer and important contributor to Taiwanese economy does not enter the public arena. Their motivations of working as a means of helping family economy, gaining economic independence and securing their old-age security are perceived as a ground of "bogus" marriage in popular discourse, and their demand for a fairer division of household labour and economic resources are often interpreted as a product of "matrilineal society".

Despite these difficulties, most of the brides want to work and are willing to take up whatever jobs available. They extend their social network through work and build friendship with Taiwanese colleagues. Unlike the welfare state in Europe where employment is considered an important criterion for social citizenship, mainland brides' work is undervalued and not encouraged by the state and generally also not by

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<sup>570</sup> See Chapter 4, 4.1.3.

husbands' kin. It is to the interests of families and the state to keep migrant women in a dependent position.

## **5.5 Consolidating one's social network**

I have argued extensively that it is essential for mainland brides to build and consolidating their social network in order to gain trust and recognition, to be able to work and find job opportunities, and to gain access to economic resources. Mainland brides develop various and diversified strategies to cultivate their social relations with people they encounter in Taiwan.

### **5.5.1 Maneuvering strategies among different kin members**

As the quotation in the beginning of this chapter shows (Wolf, 1972: 142), Chinese women are conscious that their relationship with other family members, particularly mothers-in-law, are crucial to their being accepted as a member. At times it is more important than their relationship with their husbands. Wolf's quotation should not be taken as face value that one particular member, i.e. the mother-in-law, has the dominant and deciding power over the bride. Certain other members, particularly elder women, can have informal influences.<sup>571</sup>

A mainland bride's experience is not much different that of Taiwanese brides, except that she has no support from her natal kin. In Hakka and Minnan rural communities a mainland bride's primary social support comes from her husband's family, which includes her husband, parents-in-law, husband's siblings and other relatives who live in the same household with her or in the neighbourhood. To win their trust she, first and foremost, needs to show her loyalty and to prove that she has no intention to threaten the family's unity (*fenjia*) or to appropriate the family's economic resources. Secondly she should fulfil her gender role and meet the expectation of a good woman - a loyal and hard-working wife and daughter-in-law. With these expectations met she can then develop various degrees of relationship with different members and secure their support. Hard-working women are particularly appreciated in Hakka community. Many mainland and Indonesian brides of Hakka origin are considered to possess the virtue of traditional Hakka women that has been "lost" among the young Taiwanese Hakka women.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> See discussion on the uterine family, Chapter 1, 1.1.3.

<sup>572</sup> Interview with the mother-in-law of Sha family, Hukou, November 2003. Mother Xie comments, "Regardless mainland or foreign [brides], we treat her as we want our own daughters to be treated. If we treat her nicely she will be kind to us." Her neighbouring woman adds, "these mainland daughters-in-law are very hardworking. They are willing to learn and do anything. It is admirable. You can't find this kind of Hakka women in Taiwan any more."



The support of kin members is particularly important at times of conflicts. Their support can be a result of the bride's effort of forming relations with them. Or, it can also derive from a sense of fairness and sympathy. This is particularly the case when the brides are ill treated or abused.

After a sour start of the relationship with her parents-in-law, Meifang<sup>573</sup> actively seeks support from the grandaunt of her husband who lives next door. The grandaunt has cared Meifang's father-in-law when he was young and has some influence over him. She sympathises with Meifang and holds Awan (Meifang's husband) responsible for Meifang's isolated position. She thinks that it is not fair for a young woman like Meifang to marry an irresponsible man like Awan and that she is expected to take care of two children from Awan's previous marriage. When Awan gets drunk and at times becomes violent, Grandaunt always sides with Meifang. Together with Awan's cousins and other neighbours she intervenes in this couple's arguments several times. When Meifang demanded to apply for a work permit, initially her parents-in-law refused to support her application. Grandaunt stepped in to persuade Meifang's father-in-law into agreement.

Because some of the husbands of mainland brides are mentally or physically ill, have gambling habits, drinking problems, are unemployed or have a record of domestic violence, they have been looked down upon by their family members prior to marriage. Their mainland wives are marginalised due to his existing position. However, it is possible for a bride to alter the impression of kin members and secure her own position if she proves herself loyal and has contributed to the family's economy. Those who have won acceptance are entrusted with decision-making power in managing the family's economic resources.

Liqing<sup>574</sup> is a mid-age mainland woman who marries a Hakka man Liu. She works very hard on the farm owned by the Liu family and cares for Liu's aged and widowed father. Having worked as a mid-level manager in a garment factory in her home town in China, Liqing has experiences in the business world and comes up with innovative plans to boost the productivity of the farm products and to develop marketing strategies. Liu does not always agree with her ideas. They quarrel constantly. When Liqing's plans work and Liu's not, Liu becomes agitated and at times violent. Liu's father and sister often side with Liqing as they think her plan

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<sup>573</sup> For Meifang's profile see footnote 489.

<sup>574</sup> Liqing is from Changsha city in Hunan province. At age 36 she married Liu, an former primary school teacher when he was 49. They have no child. Liu is the eldest son of a Hakka family who runs a farm outside Hukou town. Liu quitted the teaching job to take over the farm when his father became old. Liu, the widowed father and Liqing live together on the farm. Liu's younger brother, his wife and two children also live in another house on the same farm. However, the younger brother and his wife have other professions and do not work in the farm. Liu's sister has married a Minnan man and lives in Hukou veterans' settlement. She visits her natal family nearly every day and has close ties with Liqing.

would be more successful. Liqing expresses, “*I have no hope for this man [Liu]. My heart for him has died. If not for my sister-in-law and my father-in-law I would have packed and gone back to China already. But they [father and sister-in-law] are so kind to me. I cannot fail them.*”

Mother Pang developed close ties with her mainland daughter-in-law Aji.<sup>575</sup> In view of Son Pang’s mental illness, Mother and Father Pang have encouraged Aji to develop business and management skills. They send Aji to night school to take a course on business accounting and encourage her to start her own business. In their view Aji and two grandchildren are the future of the family. They need to make sure that Aji is capable of running the household after they passed away. Aji considers herself very lucky that she has such a kind mother-in-law. She thinks her relationship with Mother Pang is a destined *yuenfen*.<sup>576</sup>

“*My husband has a very short temper. I was so mad at him that I thought of quitting [the marriage] and going back to China several times. I stay here because of my mother-in-law and my children. Maybe I don’t have yuenfen with my husband. My yuenfen is with my mother-in-law.*” Mother Pang also shares the view that she has special *yuenfen* with Aji and that Aji is a god-sent to help this family.

Not every bride is willing to make efforts to build relations with parents-in-law and kin members. Some have attempted to establish their position and claim ownership of (the husband’s share of) property right away. This often draws angry reactions from other family members. Although their husband may support them, it is very difficult to live in the community where the kin ties are strong. As a result, some brides encourage their husbands to move to the cities to seek better economic opportunities and to establish their nuclear household there. This kind of attempt often creates huge tension in the family as it induces the split of household (*fenjia*).

Having constantly argued with her parents-in-law over the financial management of the jewelry shop, Aping<sup>577</sup> dreams of moving to a big city one day. She thinks Baihe is a backward, rural town and they have no future here. She pictures high-rise buildings, clean streets, shopping malls and a modern lifestyle. She is realistic enough to know that life in big cities is expensive and harsh, but she is prepared to work hard to achieve this dream. Her husband Su is not confident that he can find a stable job in the city, although he is not happy with the lack of prospect in Baihe either because the business of the jewelry shop is going down. They both agree

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<sup>575</sup> For Family Pang’s profile, see chapter 4 4.2.

<sup>576</sup> For a discussion on *yuenfen*, see Chapter 1, 1.4.4.

<sup>577</sup> Aping’s profile, see footnote 526.

that for the future of their children it is better to move to the city. Su talks with his friends about “*trying to make a life in the city*” but he has never tried or even proposed the plan to his parents. Su’s parents hint to them that they should stay in Baihe because of the security they enjoy and suggest that they will soon inherit the house, shop and land. When Aping prompts the question of the moving plan, Su claims that he has responsibility to care for his parents. Aping worries that when her parents-in-law grow older it would be even more difficult for them to move. She continues to persuade Su.

### 5.5.2 Social networks among fellow brides and their husbands

It is commonly observed that both in Minnan and Hakka communities and in veterans’ settlements, mainland brides do not organise their social network based on the same ethnicity or places of origin. In contrast to Indonesian and Vietnamese brides who tend to befriend brides from the same countries who speak the same languages, mainland brides do not always befriend fellow brides from the same home towns or provinces who speak the same dialects. The network among mainland brides is based on mutual support and interests, both emotionally and materially, and contacts on a daily basis. New friendships are formed or broken easily.

Matchmaker Ms. Liu<sup>578</sup> comments that it is known that Vietnamese brides like to “*build a gang*” (*chengqun jiedang* 成群結黨) and go everywhere as a group. “*One runs away and the whole group is gone.*” Liu says, “*Mainland [brides] are better and submissive. They stay at home alone quietly. That is why some [clients] prefer mainland [brides] over Vietnamese.*”

In Baihe several brides from Hainan province are close friends and meet daily. When these Hainanese women meet they do not always speak Hainanese, rather, they speak a mixture of Fokkienese, Hainanese and Mandarin. Brides from other provinces do not form groups like them. They are close mainly because they are married around the same time, or of the same age; and some of their marriages are matched by the same matchmakers. Their husbands also form a group and drink together with or without the presence of their wives. One of the husbands told me that the experiences and difficulties of cross-strait marriages draw them together. He feels more comfortable socialising with men who also married mainland brides because they are looked at differently by the community anyway. Later another couple matched by the same matchmaker also joins the group. The bride of this couple is from Fuqing, but Hainanese women accept her into the group. Other Hainanese women in Baihe are excluded from this group.

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<sup>578</sup> Ms. Liu’s profile, see Chapter 4, p.200.

Similarly, in Hukou *juancun* the Indonesian brides developed solidarity among themselves. In cases of domestic violence, Indonesian would meet and discuss strategies and seek support from local leaders.<sup>579</sup> Among mainland brides there are several loosely organised factions that may or may not be based on their place of origins. The group members see each other on a daily basis but there is no collective strategy when familial conflicts or domestic violence arise. Distrust, jealousy and gossips about moral behaviours of fellow brides are common. It occurs occasionally that some brides report to the police authorities about fellow mainland brides who work without work permits. As a result the reported brides are repatriated.<sup>580</sup>

In the veterans' settlements where there is no kinship structure, veteran soldiers rely on the social support of their compatriots. When a veteran husband deceases or becomes seriously ill, local Veterans Service Stations are supposed to facilitate the funeral arrangement and provide legal assistance on inheritance and pensions for the widow, however, mainland brides often rely on their husbands' compatriot veterans to help them. This often causes tension in the community, especially between the widow and the wives of the compatriot veterans. Widowed mainland brides are considered a threat as they are thought to be likely to seduce other veterans in order to remarry.

The brides who have already settled in Taiwan often take up matchmaking tasks for their female relatives or friends. I have explained in Chapter 4 that mainland and Southeast Asian brides take up matchmaking not necessarily for profit-making, rather it is a way to consolidate their position both in their natal and husband's kin group.<sup>581</sup> Another motivation of matchmaking is to reunite with a particular family member such as mother or daughter in view that the only way for adult mainland people to secure a residential permit or even to visit Taiwan is via marriage. In the settlements many older mainland brides want to bring in their daughter from a previous marriage. If a daughter is legally adopted by the veteran husband then she could apply for a short-term visiting visa. However, if she wants her daughter to remain in Taiwan the only way to secure long-term residential status is to find the daughter a match. In Hukou *juancun* there was an attempt of a mother trying to match her daughter with the son of her husband from the previous marriage.

Jieling's<sup>582</sup> father recently passed away. As the only daughter, Jieling would like to take care of her mother but she is not able to visit her often in view of her busy work in the beauty salon and child-rearing. She misses her mother very much, and her mother has not yet seen her two grandsons. Jieling's husband and parents-in-law

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<sup>579</sup> Interview with Mr. Gan, see footnote 462.

<sup>580</sup> This is according to Mr. Gan, *ibid.* I have heard the same story in Taichung and from the members of Association of Cross-strait Families in Taipei. Therefore it is not an isolated case.

<sup>581</sup> See Chapter 4, 4.2.2.

<sup>582</sup> Jieling's profile, see footnote 571.

understand her duty of caring for her mother since she is a single child. However, the only way for her mother to come to Taiwan is for her to marry a Taiwanese man. Her mother has no intention of remarriage and she is economic and physically self-reliant for the moment. However, both Jieling and her mother start to entertain the idea of finding a trust-worthy and widowed Taiwanese man so that she can join Jieling in the future.

### **5.5.3 Covering and strengthening “national” and political identity**

Since 2000, under the growing nationalist sentiment in Taiwan,<sup>583</sup> most of the mainland brides in Minnan and Hakka communities try to cover up their national identity. Although they are not happy with the stigma and hostility towards mainland Chinese in the media, they are aware that once they raise the issue of national identity they will be scrutinised by affinal kin members. The ones who have secured citizenship and voting rights are most likely to vote for the opposition party (pan-blue), not only because of its pro-china orientation, but also because the opposition parties have sympathetic and liberal positions towards mainland brides.<sup>584</sup> Their husbands often criticise government for their restrictive measures against cross-strait couples. However, if a mainland bride would voice the same criticism she would meet defensive or even aggressive reactions. Therefore they often claim that they are not interested in and know nothing about politics. Most of the community members do not target at mainland brides for their political antagonism. However, some brides experience extreme hostility from those who profess a pro-independence stance.

Aping's father-in-law was politically inclined to Taiwan's independence and he loved to watch TV and listened to radio shows spreading sentiments against China. When her husband Su joined a matchmaking trip to Hainan island and got married to Aping there, he did not inform his father. His mother, Aping's mother-in-law, later approved of this marriage and helped Su to lie to his father. When Aping arrived in Taiwan, they told her father-in-law that she was from Northern Taiwan and that is why she could not speak Hokkienese. Although the father-in-law found it strange that Aping was unfamiliar with many things in Taiwan, he thought that it was because Aping grew up in another village and therefore he was especially kind to her. Years after their marriage, after Aping and Su's two children had grown up, the father-in-law accidentally discovered that Aping was from China. His attitude changed overnight and became extremely hostile to her. Aping did not get along with her

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<sup>583</sup> Chapter 3, 3.5.

<sup>584</sup> The positions of political parties towards cross-strait families after 2000, see Chapter 3, 3.5.1.

mother-in-law either, not for the political reason but due to disputes over Su's financial contribution to the household.

#### 5.5.4. Discussion: gendered power relations of the weak

Like traditional rural Chinese and Taiwanese women, mainland brides are aware that their utmost priority in the new family is to gain acceptance from husbands' kin members. Their husbands of course constitute the major source of support, nevertheless, the relationship between husbands and wives are protected by law and social recognition (if there is a proper wedding ceremony). The mainland brides can also have deep emotional bonds (if it can be called "love") with husbands and use erotic power to win their support.

The relationship with other kin members, particularly with parents-in-law, have to be taken care of and cultivated. They do so by fulfilling the affinal kin's expectations, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter,<sup>585</sup> and by physically and emotionally care (*fengyang* 奉養 *zhaogu* 照顧) for them. Victimhood or unfair treatments are used to win sympathy from kin members.

After the brides are accepted as a full member of the affinal kin group, they develop various degrees of relationship with different members of the kin group, most likely the elder women. This pattern follows the "uterine family" that Wolf proposes.<sup>586</sup> When family conflicts arise, for instance, between parents-in-law and brides or between sisters- and brothers-in-law, the support and mediation of senior members in the kinship play a crucial role.

Despite the dominant image of "the others" and various mechanisms of social exclusion in Taiwanese society,<sup>587</sup> mainland brides can be treated as "one of ours" (*zijiren* 自己人) in the domestic domain. At times parents-in-law appreciate the brides so much and entrust them the future of the family, as the story of Mother Pang and Aji portrays. The mutual care and emotional bonds between parents-in-law and daughters-in-law can override the patrilineal principle of Chinese family organisation.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> See 5.5.1.

<sup>586</sup> Chapter 1, 1.1.3.

<sup>587</sup> Discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, 5.2.

<sup>588</sup> Chapter 1.5.

## **5.6 Concluding remark: Gender and care: reconceptualising kin in Chinese society**

In Chapter 2 I discuss the concept of “gender geography of power” that challenges the economic and rational explanation of migration motivations and decisions. This concept places the changing social positioning before and after migration at the centre of analysis in the migratory process, that is, to evaluate migrants’ “positions within power hierarchies created through historical, political, economic, geographic, kin-based and other socially stratifying factors” (Pessar and Mahler, 2001:6; Massey, 1994). The advantage of social positioning gained in the migratory process does not only explain why people move, it also explains why people stay in a marriage and in a migratory destination.

I have explained that Chinese women’s gender role is primarily to perform reproductive functions of producing and socialising children as well as care for the elders. In exchange for women’s reproductive labour, men are expected to be capable of providing economical support for wives and children. With the increasing awareness of gender equality in both Taiwan and China, this gender ideology is considered traditional and backward although the normative perception is persistent. The reason that socio-economically lower Taiwanese men and families have difficulties in marrying Taiwanese women not only lies in their not being capable of supporting their wives; it is also due to Taiwanese women’s increasing unwillingness to subject themselves to the power of various kin members and carry the caring tasks.

The marital motivations for cross-border marriages and expectations of husbands and his kin indicate that the mainland and Southeast Asian brides can fulfil this traditional gender role. Their legal and economic positions and lack of social support in the beginning of marriage put them in a weaker power position so that they have to comply with the expectation of the husbands and his family.

The Taiwanese men and families have much to gain from cross-strait marriages despite that risk that they carry stigmas of being backward and traditional, and their position in the community is marginalised. How about mainland brides? How does their social positioning change? It depends on the age and life cycle they are in. Young women leave their natal families and are exempted from her filial duties. They may experience autonomy and economic independence while working in the cities, the cultural norm of the universal marriage reminds them that the autonomy and freedom as single women are temporary. They make a decision to marry abroad and select a mate based on limited information following the cultural principle of hypergamy. The cross-border nature makes the hypergamous principle ambiguous, because one can never be sure what is up and what is down at the other side of the

strait. One way to increase the certainty and to minimise risks is to make sure that there is someone to turn to seek support from other than the husband and his family, either fellow mainland brides or the matchmaker. They believe that life in Taiwan will be better not because of the immediate improvement in economic terms, but rather the opportunities it offers and the prospect of long-term security. Above all, the risks they take are justified by fate.

The older, divorced or widowed women have much less choice in China. Subsistence may not be an immediate problem but long-term security and old age care is the main concern. Remarriage is one of the few options either to make some savings or to invest in their children's education, who in turn will take care of them when they are older. After the main concern of security is taken care of, the life style, adventures and leisure that Taiwan offer comes as bonus.

On the surface, the social positioning of mainland brides or their economic gains appear to be lowered in the beginning of migratory process. Incorporating the temporal dimension of life experiences challenges the structural analysis of migratory motivations and behaviors and explains the seemingly irrational decisions driven by *aspirations* for the future yet to be realised.<sup>589</sup> It also challenges the dominant discourse on commodification or commercialisation of marriage.<sup>590</sup>

Seeing migratory decisions as a future to be realised leads us to ask the question how it is achieved. This will place the concepts of agency and strategy at the centre. A Secure future for mainland brides can be built by expanding economic and social capitals. The former can be obtained either through the access to husbands' or their family's economic resources or through the brides' own income. The latter refers to social support and knowledge or skills enabling and sustaining the former. The social capitals are particularly crucial before the brides' formal citizenship rights are protected. The strategy of developing these capitals can be analysed by the concept *yang* (養).

*Yang* in the context of parent-child relations refers to mutual obligations of providing mutual material assistance and emotional support. Parents provide *yang* to children knowing that they will be provided for when they are old, and it is the children's obligation to "*fèngyang* (奉養)" – respectfully care for – their parents in return. (Stafford, 2000).<sup>591</sup> *Yang* is not necessarily subordinated to the notion of patriliney, because it can be applied to social kin (foster parents/adopted children) and the absence of *yang* may end biological kinship. Mainland women can actively give *yang* to in-laws and other kin members, which can be in the form of physical caring tasks, emotional bonds or economic contributions. By doing so they gain protection

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<sup>589</sup> Chapter 2, 2.4.

<sup>590</sup> Chapter 4, 4.6.

<sup>591</sup> Chapter 1, 1.5.



and support from them. The support from a particular kin member can compensate the marginalisation from the other and overrides the blood ties.

In Chinese the same word “*yang*” (養) is also used to describe the material support in conjugal relations, although it is different from what Stafford theorises as physical, emotional and material care between parents and children with a reciprocal nature (Stafford, 2000). The *yang* between husband and wife, or even between a man and his mistresses, has a clear connotation of unbalanced power relation and economic dependency. On the other hand, the wife could demand *yang* from the husband. The emotional expression and physical care of the conjugal relations are often identified as love and companionship. This reveals the intermingling of emotional and economic intentions that is distinctively gendered. It explains why the economic motivations of marriage are so much scrutinised. When a husband is not capable of fully *yang* his wife, potentially the power relation can be reversed. The wife can demand to work out of economic necessity, and her economic contribution will increase her power position.

The marriage between veterans and mainland spouses offers an interesting case on the intersection of two kinds of *yangs*, inter-generational and gendered conjugal. Because the expectation of care-giving to old veterans is clearly articulated, veterans are expected to reciprocate economic *yang* to mainland brides. This gives mainland brides a better power position to negotiate the distribution of economic resources and sexual division of labour. Of course, the power to negotiate is also dependent on individual brides’ ages and life experiences. It is possible to transform the economic dependency of *yang* into love and companionship under certain conditions.

Although this chapter deals primarily with the relations in the kin and community, I also demonstrate that mainland brides actively build their support outside the kin network. However, their marginal and “otherised” status makes these efforts nearly invisible in the public domain. In contrast to and as a result of the images of greedy and morally questionable women in popular discourse, mainland brides are hard-working and docile labour force. They take up the jobs designed to traditional gender roles with much lower pay and less protection than Taiwanese. At the same time they are expected to fulfil the familial obligation of caring family members.

## **Conclusion: Studying gender in the web of relations: gender, family, market and the state**

I have attempted to answer my three research questions by looking at the perspectives of different actors and examining how these perspectives are formed and whether and how they are substantiated. In Chapter 2 I discuss the marital and migratory motivations of the cross-strait couples. In Chapter 3 I analyse the perspectives of the state and media as well as various social actors influencing policy-making and image representation. In Chapter 4 I look at the marriage market, matchmaking practices and marriage transactions. In Chapter 5 I illustrate the power relations between the members of cross-strait families. In this concluding chapter I synthesise my research findings discussed in these chapters and discuss how the positions and actions of these actors are inter-related or contradicting each other. By doing so I will show how my findings contribute to the scholarship in the relevant fields.

### **Why cross-border marriages?**

Both in the conventional migration theory and in the perceptions of the state and the popular representation, economic gains are regarded as the primary motivation for cross-border marriages. The studies of women's labour migration in East and Southeast Asia show that women often migrate not only for the economic benefits of themselves but also for their family. It is argued that Asian women are socialised to be filial daughters and caring mothers sacrificing for their parents, husbands and children. In the case of marriage migration, such economic motivations cause moral uneasiness particularly in feminist scholarship. On the one hand, women who marry in order to alleviate themselves and their family from poverty are considered to be victims either in feudal practices or in the globalisation process. On the other hand, women who marry not out of the economic necessity, but as a choice for better well-being and security, are considered morally questionable. Such a dichotomy exists in the public discourse, academic scholarship as well as in the perceptions of the community in China, Taiwan and elsewhere.

In Chapter 1 I sketched the change of marriage regimes and the ideal of "love marriage" in contemporary China and Taiwan. Love marriage, though what constitutes it and what it means vary at different eras, has become the moral norm and indicator of modernity and civilisation. In contrast, marriage for instrumental and functional reasons are much condemned and seen as "traditional", with a negative connotation of backwardness. Women's organisations and movements in both Taiwan and China are particularly vocal against marriages for economic gains and consider

them a form of subordination of women. Such discourse has affected the policies regulating both local and cross-border marriages.

The perspectives of the cross-strait couples and their family members are more complex than this dichotomous picture. First of all, given the characteristics of the near universality of Chinese marriage, marriage is a natural part of the life cycle for most of the Chinese and Taiwanese men and women. Though there is a growing trend of late marriage and singlehood by choice among educated, urban and middle-age men and women both in Taiwan and China, the social pressure of marriage before a certain age is immense and marital status is intrinsically linked with personhood. Finding a wife for the son is considered to be parents' responsibilities both in the cultural norm and in the practice of matchmaking and paying for the wedding. Therefore a marital decision involves not only two individuals, the prospective bride and bridegroom, but also their respective parents and kin.

Secondly, the custom of physical exogamy (marrying someone from another village/town) in the predominantly patrilocal system means that for many Chinese women marrying afar, marriage itself is migration. They not only physically move to a distant locality but they are also uprooted from their existing kin and social network and have to build a new one after marriage. In view of the regional disparity and the diversity of languages and customs in China, as well as the pattern of increasing long-distance, inter-provincial marriages, Chinese women's experiences of international marriages with Taiwanese or overseas Chinese may not be drastically different from that of the internal marriage migration within China. The difference between internal marriage migration and cross-strait marriages lie in how these women are received by the husband's family and by the Taiwanese society at large.

Existing migration theories often assume that the place of origin of immigrants is the natural place where they fit in and feel cultural affinity – that if one moves one must have been pushed into or pulled out of the place of origin due to political upheavals or economic necessity. This assumption certainly does not fit in with marriage migration in patrilocal societies. As a temporary member of her father's home, a Chinese daughter is socialised in preparing herself for a migration process and for "marrying into" her husband's kinship. She has also learned, probably from her mother and sisters, that it is her husband's community she belongs to and should identify with. Although she will continue to maintain economic and emotional ties with her natal family as much as she can, it will be futile to insist on the national and local identity of her place of origin.

Despite the overriding ideal of the love marriage, the mate choice based on the socio-economic status of two families (the matching-door principle) or of two individuals (assertive mating patterns) is well established and widely practised in

contemporary Taiwan and China. What then is the problem of marrying for economic considerations? To bridge the gap between the normative ideal and practices and solve the moral uneasiness caused by this gap, I propose an approach of looking at the marital and migratory motivations as well as the criteria of the mate choice in the light of the life cycle of the couples and to differentiate between the immediate monetary gains and the long-term opportunities, betterment and security. Cross-strait marriages serve as an excellent empirical object of study to illustrate this approach.

Comparing with local marriages and other cross-border marriages (with Southeast Asian women), two demographic groups of cross-strait marriages stand out: the first group concerns Taiwanese men age above 70 marrying Chinese women at their mid-40s or about 50 years old in average. The second concerns men at their mid-30s and 40s marrying young women at about 20. The former group mainly consists of, but is not limited to, veteran soldiers who had no prior marriage experience and widowed or remarried Chinese women who have children from previous marriages. The second group shares similar demographic features with other cross-border marriages. For mainland Chinese women, two distinctive groups based on age and prior marital experiences possess very different attitudes and approaches towards their marital and migration decisions. For younger woman without prior marriage experience, the decision of or pressure into marriage normally comes first, and the migration choice comes later with the process of mate choice. Their primary motivation for marriage is to find a good and reliable husband who can offer them welfare and security, both materially and emotionally for themselves and for their future children. For the older, widowed or divorced women, the opportunities offered by migration come first in the chain of decisions and marriage is often the means to migration. They also look for reliable men who are willing to offer security and economic support to them and their children from previous marriage(s), however, if the husbands are not economically well-off, they are prepared to work hard and support themselves and their children. In the latter case, the job opportunities and income at the migration destination is the most important consideration. Some of the widowed or divorced women only thought about remarriage after their children grew up and established their own families. Remarriage can offer a degree of autonomy and even a sense of adventure. For divorced and widowed women with younger, school-age children, the well-being of the children is the primary concern. Although both groups seek long-term security, the strategies of achieving it and what they expect from their husbands are different.

At the Taiwanese side, marriage squeeze caused by skewed sex ratio is the main cause of Taiwanese men marrying foreign and mainland Chinese women. The marriage squeeze is a result of various economic and social policies as well as

traditional norms of son preference. First, as a result of son preference and modern reproductive technology of gender-screening, the sex ratio at birth in rural Taiwan is high. Secondly, the industrialisation and export-oriented economy attracts a large number of young women to work in the manufacturing and service sectors in industrialised areas. Thirdly, with women entering the job market and gaining economic independence, the percentages of those with delayed marriage and singletons increase. For lower-rank veteran soldiers, the policy of marriage ban at the initial stage when they first arrived in Taiwan and the lack of social and kin ties are the main causes of their remaining single. The primary motivation for marrying mainland Chinese women and adopting children from wives' previous marriages is their old age care.

The long-term security involves not only economic consideration but also the change of social positioning before and after marriage and along the course of married life. If we look at the long-term betterment as a strategy adopted by both the bride and bridegroom and their families as an "investment", the physical efforts, material conditions, emotion and time they invest in building up and consolidating a marriage are often reciprocal and can be well justified and accepted. This way of analysing migratory and marital motivations carries less moralistic connotations than the dichotomy between instrumental and love aspects of marriage as mentioned earlier.

While the age and marital experiences determine the desirability and the relative position of men and women in the marriage market, their opportunities for long-term security and betterment are limited by the economic development of the community they live in and the state's economic and immigration policies. The industrialisation and export-oriented economy attracts a large number of young women to work in the manufacturing and service sectors in industrialised areas both in Taiwan and China. In Taiwan, this leads to women's labour and marriage migration to cities and causes male marriage squeeze. In China, the restriction of internal migration (the *hukou* system) limits the opportunity of rural population's permanent migration to the urban areas and women's opportunity to marry urban men. This gives incentives to Chinese women to seek opportunities abroad via international marriages. This explains why some Chinese women who are educated and have enjoyed economic independence choose to marry "out" when China experiences booming economic development and shortage of women.

The economic development and the state's regulation of population movement in China apply to both men and women, however, the impact of these structural factors to the marital and migratory decisions are distinctively gendered. Some scholars attempt to explain the pull factors of cross-border marriages from the perspectives of the receiving countries and argue that Taiwan's male marriage

squeeze caused by son preference and unbalanced sex ratio is the major cause of attracting foreign brides. This argument, however, fails to explain why China, sharing the same feature of son preference, higher sex ratio and worse male marriage squeeze, becomes a predominantly sending rather than a receiving end of international marriage migration. A common explanation to this question by scholars is that women become a commodity in the globalised capitalist economy. This framework fails to explain why it is women, not men, who move to marry in view of the same economic opportunities and regulatory measures offered to or limiting both men and women. To answer this question it is necessary to go back to the cultural principles of Chinese family and marriage regimes, particularly the patrilocal system and women's hypergamy (marrying up). These two principles should not be treated as essentialised and unchanging, however, they persist in contemporary Chinese society, particularly in the context of rural-urban disparity and shortage of women. These cultural principles and migration patterns existed before the "globalisation era" despite the fact that the criteria used to measure socio-economic and political status of families and individuals are changing in different periods. These principles are also observed in many Asian societies in terms of the marriage patterns among nationals. To argue that the recent trend of cross-border marriages in Asia is a new phenomenon resulting from the globalisation process would be misleading.

On the aspect of mate choice, the brides' ethnicity has rarely been problematised in the existing scholarship on cross-border marriage migration in Taiwan. Scholars assume the reason why cross-strait marriages constitute 50% of cross-border marriages in Taiwan is due to shared language, culture and ethnicity; and foreign (Southeast Asian) have tremendous difficulties in cultural adaptation due to different language and culture. This assumption has deeply influenced the social policy on mainland and foreign brides, which I will discuss in the next section. My research findings show that only the Hakka community has a distinctive preference for the same (sub)ethnicity while Hokkien families and mainlanders do not. Hakka choose Hakka brides both from Indonesia and Southern China. Although Indonesian brides are categorised as "foreign" brides, their integration into marital kinship is likely to be a smoother process than local Hokkien or mainland women.

The majority of veteran soldiers and second-generation mainlanders choose mainland Chinese women from their native regions in China, however, there is an increase of veterans marrying Chinese women from other provinces, or from the same provinces yet with considerable distance and speaking different dialects. For Hokkien families, some consider that shared language and culture is a key factor for a successful marriage and therefore opt for mainland Chinese women rather than Southeast Asian brides; on the other hand, Vietnamese and Cambodian women are

also increasingly popular. If shared ethnicity, language and culture explain the popularity of mainland Chinese brides, why are there so many Vietnamese and Cambodians of non-Chinese ethnicities? Equally puzzling, why are there so few Filipina and Thai women? The existing theoretical framework of globalisation that places women's labour, marriage migration and trafficking in the same category and influenced by the same socio-economic structural factors, could not explain these mate choice patterns. My approach is to study the meso-level factor, that is, marriage brokerage and matchmaking via social networks. My research findings show that when a Taiwanese man or family has an intention to look for a Southeast Asian or mainland Chinese woman, they do not look around for domestic workers who had already been working in Taiwan. Rather, they go to a matchmaker who they trust and choose brides within the pool of women available at a given time. The matchmaker often has existing social ties with either the bridegroom or his parents. Similarly, Chinese women also enter or are persuaded into matchmaking by relatives, friends or acquaintances. Southeast and mainland Chinese brides who had married earlier increasingly take up the matchmaking role. They play a key role in mate choice and in facilitating travel arrangements, legal registration and marriage rituals and are heavily involved in the transitional period prior and after the marriage.

The meso factor can also explain why bride and bridegroom make a very hasty and risky marital decision. However, the cultural principle of *yuan-fen*, a belief that marriage is destined by fate, also plays a role. The matching of Chinese horoscope is an essential part of matchmaking for both local marriages and cross-border marriages. Nevertheless, this does not imply that brides and bridegrooms leave the decision and negotiations to fate, their parents and matchmakers. They take active steps in preparing themselves for the marital life and in cultivating relationships with other family members. This aspect will be discussed later.

### **Mechanism of social exclusion and otherness**

The second research question addresses how the stereotyped images of mainland brides are shaped to differentiate them from Taiwanese, and the mechanism of their social exclusion as a result of these images in Taiwan. I have dealt with this question in a few interrelated dimensions. The first is the political process in Taiwan that defines mainland spouses' political and social citizenship, including their residential status, rights to work and entitlement of social benefits and protection. The second is the representation of their images in the media, shaped by various government offices as well as other social actors such as medical professionals, academicians and women's movement. The third is the marriage brokerage industry. The last one is the

community where the cross-strait marriages are concentrated. Each of these dimensions constitutes a part of the answer to the question yet none of them offers a complete picture.

I analyse the policies regulating cross-strait marriages in the context of cross-strait political and socio-economic interaction, domestic politics in Taiwan as well as the influx of migrant workers and development of overall immigration policies. Instead of analysing the policies themselves, I am more interested in how the policies are made and justified, and the forces influencing decisions. Therefore I draw from media representations to study the views of various social actors. Cross-strait marriages, Southeast Asian brides and migrant workers are regulated by different sets of policies since the very beginning, and are administrated by different government offices both at the national and local levels. As a result, the statistics concerning them are also compiled and released by different offices, thus constructing mainland brides as a separate demographic category from other foreign spouses and migrant workers. This taxonomy has a very powerful normative effect in policy-making, image-shaping and academic scholarship.

These sets of policies reflect different interests and concerns, and logics of migration management. The policy on cross-strait marriages is drafted by the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), as a part of the AGRPTM, the law regulating the overall interaction between people in Taiwan and mainland China. The enforcement agency is the Immigration Bureau under the National Police Agency, Ministry of Interior. In contrast, the policy on other cross-border marriages is in charge by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and enforced by another department under the National Police Agency; cross-border marriages with nationals from developed countries are not regulated at all. The main concern of the MAC in the early 1990s, during which the AGRPTM was drafted, is national security. Its legal attitude is to discourage cross-strait marriages by setting very restrictive quota, which results in cross-strait couples living apart over decades. The reactions of political factions interestingly reflect their respective positions on Taiwan's national identity by defining who they think "Chinese" are. The pro-independent opposition party advocates for relaxation of restrictive measures and argues that mainland Chinese should be treated equally as other foreign nationals. Nevertheless, by the mid-1990s, the humanistic claim of family reunion (*tienlun*) has overridden the concern on national security and all party factions pressured the MAC to relax the quota constantly. The media are also sympathetic toward cross-strait families and their portrayal of mainland brides is not always negative.

The period 1996-2000 witnesses the rapid increase of Southeast Asian brides, particularly from Vietnam, and a growing marriage brokering industry. Taiwanese



society is alerted by the impact of cross-border marriages to the population quality, mainly concerning the health and education of foreign brides and their children. Mainland brides start to be put in the same social category with Southeast Asian brides in social policies and media representations, although the regulations on their residential status and naturalisation procedure remain distinctive. In this period, organised groups of cross-strait families start to enter the public sphere and demand the rights to work and entitlement to public health care. These social claims do not meet strong resistance from the policy makers, for the reasons that it is to the interests of Taiwanese families and society as a whole that mainland brides receive these social protection so that they would not lower the population quality. However, not all mainland spouses are allowed to work; only those who married to old, sick and poor men are granted right to work on the condition that their husbands are not able to function as the breadwinner and the wives have to support the family. Not all mainland spouses can enjoy health care; only the mother (or mother-to-be) of future Taiwanese citizens are entitled to public health service. The mainland brides of these two categories are also allowed to stay in Taiwan on a long-term basis because they need to care for their husbands and children. The assumption is that the other mainland spouses, the ones married to “normal” and economically well off men as well as the mainland “bridegrooms”, are excluded from these social benefits and relaxed measures because they are not deemed to be the primary caregivers. They are also expected to be taken care of by their husband or by themselves.

The development in these two periods shows that citizenship as membership of a nation is intrinsically linked to membership of a family, the latter being based on women’s gender role and reproductive capacity. This is exemplified in the political and social citizenship. In political citizenship the residential status is based on mainland brides’ need to physically care for their husbands and for mothering the children, where the cultural notions of the patrilocal principle and the family union override the concerns for the national security. In social citizenship that mainland brides’ access to health care is granted and those from low-income families are allowed to work so that they, again, can better care or provide for their family and children; in doing so, protecting the population quality of the nation. The criteria of the political and social inclusion and exclusion are not based on universal equal rights of individuals, but based on the need to promote welfare of the family and the greater good of the nation. The border differentiating mainland brides as “we” or “they” in this period is therefore primarily a gendered one. This finding renders an important insight to the study of immigrants’ citizenship and the study of inter-cultural (mixed ethnicity) transnational families that often attributes racial differences and hierarchy, as well as the cultural and religious differences resulted from those, as the main cause

of social exclusion. The gendered border, as compared with border constructing ethnic or religious differences, is much more flexible – women can be accepted as members of a state and family as long as they fulfil the gendered role as caregivers.

Having said that, this gendered border is constructed along the lines of ethnicity and class. The first line is drawn on the class front. The foreign spouses from first world countries are not subjected to any quota or screening, and they are deemed to have no problem of language and cultural adaptation. Among Southeast Asian and mainland brides who are deemed to threaten population quality, the political exclusion from the state for the mainland brides is greater. In this case, the exclusion is based on ethnic *sameness* rather than ethnic *difference*. This can only be explained by Taiwan's suspicion and distrust toward mainland Chinese. This distrust inherits the legacy of the KMT's propaganda against "communist bandits", and is strengthened by the Taiwanese experiences of economic and social interaction with mainland Chinese since 1990. Nevertheless, the political process of indigenisation (*bentuhua*) in Taiwan plays a crucial role in shaping the public discourse. In search of a common Taiwanese national identity which can reconcile existing ethnic tensions among Taiwanese, political leaders embark on a de-sinicisation process and Taiwanese identity is increasingly viewed by the population as distinctive from and exclusive of being Chinese.

The distrust and hostility towards mainland brides become palpable after the regime change in 2000. A homogenised image of Mainland brides as either being greedy, morally questionable or sexually degrading gradually takes shape. The pro-independent newspapers start to rename mainland brides "Chinese brides", and in the political rally organised by pro-independent groups the Mainland brides are directly called "Chinese whores". The media often juxtaposes the reports on bogus marriage, runaway brides, smuggling, prostitution and domestic violence of cross-strait marriages with political news on cross-strait political tension. These reports of individual stories, in general journalistic practice, would be placed in the pages of local and social news, and there is no indication of its significance other than the editors' decision to create a negative dominant discourse on cross-strait marriages.

The antagonism against mainland brides is expressed not in political hostility but in a gender specific way by questioning their sexuality, morality and gender roles. This results in a new screening system aimed at preventing bogus marriages. I have demonstrated in Chapter 3 that a ratio of bogus cross-strait marriages is decided arbitrarily by the authority without any empirical evidence, and a "quota" of mainland spouses who are deemed to have bogus marriages are screened out upon arrival and denied entry. In the lack of transparent criteria and directives of the screening system, the immigration officers are free to pick up interviewees and to determine whether to

grant them entry based on subjective views. The Mainland spouses of old veterans, handicapped and aboriginal Taiwanese were particularly targeted. The couples with a wide age gap and “young and pretty” Mainland spouses whose physical beauty does not “match” their husbands’ are especially singled out. As discussed earlier, the social policies of rights to work and welfare provisions favour mainland spouses of these socio-economically disadvantaged men and create incentives for them to marry; ironically, they are now hold responsible for either draining Taiwanese welfare resources or having bogus marital motivations. This reflects again the ideal of love marriage that should not be contaminated by economic considerations.

The screening mechanism also imposes a continuous surveillance by extending the “border” to the community where the cross-strait families reside. After passing the interviews upon arrival, mainland brides have to report to the district police station regularly. The local police are given mandate to visit the houses of cross-strait couples to monitor their marriages. Upon arrival during the first screening, a database of the personal records (including the interview questions and answers) and fingerprints of Mainland spouses are compiled and the local police can access the database. As a consequence, all Mainland spouses are treated with suspicion or as potential illegal migrants or prostitutes. Mainland spouses living in the urban areas complain that they are stopped on the street sometimes and treated as prostitutes.

It should be noted that the screening mechanism first targets mainland spouses but later also extends to Southeast Asian spouses. Therefore it should be analysed as a part of the Taiwanese government’s efforts to develop an integrated immigration policy (with the establishment of Immigration Department in 2006) to regulate and contain immigrants. Coupled with the screening mechanism, a gradual process of naturalisation that Mainland spouses’ political rights and social entitlements “grow” at different stages is also implemented. In this process the policy makers, media and some academicians adopting various techniques to develop a discourse of im/migrant threat. A discourse is so powerful that it not only rationalises the governmentality of various policies and mechanisms, justifies the detention and repatriation, it also creates and reproduces social exclusion to those who stay in Taiwan.

How do we understand this janus process of naturalisation and assimilation on the one hand, and social exclusion and stigmatisation on the other? Why is the nationalist sentiment against China and Chinese being translated into a demoralised and sexualised image of mainland Chinese women? My explanation is that once a policy and law are enacted, they take a life on its own, and the public administration in charge has its internal logic that may not be congruent with the current political concerns. Here I refer to the policies regulating residential status and social rights of mainland spouses in the mid-1990s. Because the political and social citizenship of the

mainland spouses has been established in the previous two periods, other mechanisms of “otherising” them have to be found. The criterion of political and social citizenship is based on women’s gender role as the reproducers of the nation and caregivers of Taiwanese families. An effective way of discrediting mainland spouses is to scrutinise their gender roles. If a woman is suspected of, not necessarily proven, not being able to fulfil her gender roles as a good wife, mother and daughter-in-law, there is no need of allowing her to enter Taiwan for family union and care-giving. Scrutinising a woman’s morality and sexual chastity therefore becomes a powerful discourse of their social exclusion. By doing so, the state does not and need not counter the ideology of family union and family welfare. Instead, it continues to play the role of “patriarch” and protectors of its citizens from the threat of evil-intentioned outsiders, in this case, morally and sexually corrupted women.

Other than the political process, the marriage brokering practices also play a role in the social exclusion of mainland brides. In the popular representation, both cross-border and cross-strait marriages are considered problematic because 1) low social and educational backgrounds of both bridegrooms and brides; 2) the age gap between bridegrooms and brides; and 3) the “commercial” connotation of the “trade marriages” in the matchmaking process and the lack of courtship. These problematics are believed to pose a threat to the quality of the marriages, as proven by their high rate of divorce and domestic violence, and a threat to the overall population quality of the nation, as shown in the physical and developmental problems of children from cross-border marriages. However, while the Southeast Asian brides are often portrayed as victims of poverty in their home countries and as filial daughters sacrificing their own happiness to help improving the economic situations of their natal families, the mainland brides are portrayed as morally and sexually questionable women. The differentiated images can be attributed to the political process and nationalism as discussed above.

A stigma commonly shared by cross-strait and cross-border marriages in the media representation is the “commercial” operations in the matchmaking process. The women’s movement and some academicians in Taiwan view brokered marriage as an expression of gender inequality as it would commodify women and marriage. This also applies to the perception and gradual acceptance of international marriages in China. Earlier international marriages in China carried a connotation of trade marriage; later international, or even inter-ethnic marriages are accepted and have become popular as long as the couples are from a similar socio-economic and educational background, and the marriage union is based on love. These views conflate commercially arranged marriage as a violation of human rights and subordination of women that bring shame to the nation. This view is in line with the discourse of

trafficking in women applied by the international community. Those who hold this view mainly point their fingers at the marriage brokers, although the husband and his family are also held responsible.

Marriage brokers/matchmakers and the men/family who opt for cross-border marriages via matchmakers clearly do not share this view. A close look at the matchmaking operations, commercial or not, shows that the trade marriages (*maimai hunyin*) is perceived to be a more vulnerable form of marriage, yet it is accepted and it is possible to develop a successful marriage as long as the couples and family members are committed to it. The vulnerability does not come from the commercial elements itself but mainly from perceived disparity between the husbands and wives in terms of age, physical attractiveness and socio-economic status as well as the lack of courtship prior to marriage. The commercial exchange in the form of marriage transaction and go-betweens are perceived to be a common practice among the locals. The matchmakers in most of the cases are from the existing social network of both brides and bridegrooms.

In other words, what makes the commercially arranged marriages deviant from the traditional matchmaking practices is the gaps of age and social and economic status between the bride and their bridegroom. The gap of socio-economic status in cross-border and cross-strait marriages is defined not only by the individuals' and families' status in their respective societies but also by the hierarchical position of the country in the perceived world order. In the 1990s Taiwan is more advanced in economic development and therefore considers itself superior in social and cultural development compared to China and Southeast Asia. The brides from China and Southeast Asia are considered to be from lower socio-economic status despite the fact that their education level may be higher than their husbands'. The cross-border and cross-strait marriages do not follow the matching-door principles and therefore are considered to be inferior. This explains why other international marriages, such as the ones between Taiwan and Japan or the West, do not share the same stigma and problematics. Nevertheless, the marriages between women from considerably lower status and men from higher status are still accepted in contemporary China and Taiwan as it follows the principle of women's hypergamy, although these women's position in the husband's kinship and in the receiving societies are weaker.

The principle of hypergamy may be sanctioned among local marriages, hypergamy in cross-border and cross-strait marriages are considered to be inferior and vulnerable. The Taiwanese family who opt for foreign and mainland brides are considered to be traditional, which carries a connotation of cultural backwardness. This is partly due to the media representation and academic scholarship as mentioned earlier; and partly due to the images of foreign and mainland brides as submissive,

obedient, hardworking and feminine as presented by the marriage brokers/matchmakers as their business strategy. These traits are considered favourable for the husbands and parents-in-law because they think foreign and mainland brides are less likely to demand and negotiate for fairer power relations as Taiwanese women do. However, those who hold this view and opt for cross-border and cross-strait marriages are considered by Taiwanese society as socially and economically backward. In the developments of marriage regimes in both Taiwan and China, the gender equality and consciousness become a measurement of modernity and progressiveness. The husbands and parents-in-law who follow the traditional gender roles experience a cultural exclusion. Ironically, the “enlightened” modern state itself also follows the same gender ideology in the formation of political, social and cultural exclusion toward cross-border and cross-strait families.

### **Negotiation of gender and inter-generational relations**

I have established that mainland brides’ marital and migratory motivations based on long-term security and betterment and their membership to the nation and to the kinship are built upon their gender roles. I have also demonstrated that the criteria of exclusion are not static and that the border can be crossed by playing the expected gender roles. Mainland brides’ strategies of gaining acceptance and building social support despite the mechanisms of exclusion employed by the state, the media and the members of their community and family are also centred on their gender roles primarily in the private domain.

I adopt the concept of gender geometry to analyse the social positioning and power relations of different members of cross-strait families prior to and after marriage migration (Massey, 1994). In addition, I analyse the power relations at different stages of marriage life shaped both by the residential status defined by the state’s policies and the life course of family members. Although both Taiwanese and Chinese women among local marriages experience difficulties in integrating in their husband kinship and it takes some time for a bride to become a full member of the kinship and community, the mainland brides experience a much weaker power position in the family compared with Taiwanese women; and their initial stage of integration takes a very long time. As the term “mainland brides” adopted by the media aptly reveals, mainland brides stay as “brides” after years of marriage. This is due to multiple layers of mechanisms of exclusion set by the screening mechanism upon entry, limited rights during the periods of temporary stay, stigmatised images, the community and family’s control and lack of social support both within and outside kinship. Their social positioning is likely to be lower than prior to marriage. For most

of the brides the marriage does not bring immediate economic or social advantage to them, although their natal family or children (from previous marriages) in China may profit financially and socially.

Despite the vulnerability and difficulties, cross-strait families, particular the brides and bridegrooms themselves, take active and conscious steps to consolidate their relationships. This includes both developing emotional bonding and building a material base for a future life. This consolidation process can start as early as during the matchmaking process, in the period of waiting for the approval of visas and living apart across the strait. It also includes negotiation of marriage transactions, clarifying expectations and responsibilities and developing their capacity for future economic opportunities. In the pragmatic marriages between veteran soldiers and older mainland brides, these negotiations involve explicit monetary transfers, division of labour and income distribution as well as care responsibility. These efforts can well reduce the risks of hasty marital decisions and lack of pre-marital courtship. Similar to local marriages among Taiwanese and Chinese, the establishment of a new *fang* and the conjugal bonding create tension within the kin group and inter-generational bond, as any new bride poses a potential threat to the unity of the family. However, due to the existing stigmatised images, mainland brides may cause more suspicion and their attempts of maintaining ties with natal families in China, especially when involving monetary transfers, are considered treacherous to both Taiwanese families and the nation. In contrast, Southeast Asian women's remittances to their natal families are tolerated as they are considered victims of poverty and their act interpreted as self-sacrificing and caring.

Mainland brides earn gradually formal political and social rights after the first two years marriage. They also gradually build their support network in Taiwan and gain trust and acceptance from family members. A turning point of recognition both from the legal perspective and from the family's perspective is pregnancy and childbearing. In this respect mainland brides' experiences and strategies in the family life may not be too different from that of traditional rural Chinese women, except that they may be able to draw limited support from existing social ties with fellow mainland brides who have also married Taiwanese. Gradually they are able to build social support outside kinship network through work, contacts with organisations offering assistance to them and social and political participation of their activities.

Work is an important aspect of mainland Chinese women's life in Taiwan and almost all of them desire to work for different reasons; some out of economic necessity to support themselves and their families both in Taiwan and China. For others the income they earn enhances their autonomy and increases their power position in the family whether they use the income for themselves or for the

household. Some considers work as an important means to build contacts and social network outside kinship, which also increases the degree of autonomy and self-esteem. The desire to work does not always derive from economic motivation.

However, in the public discourse both in policies and in media representation, mainland brides' motivations for work are interpreted as a proof of their questionable marital motivations (marrying for money). Intention to work is associated with bogus marriage as a disguised form of labour migration. The assumption that the marital motivation and intention to work is incompatible is again an expression of the state's policy based on migrant women's gender roles in the domestic domain and men as primary breadwinners. As a result only the women from low-income families are allowed to work.

Despite the public discourse associating mainland brides' work with bogus marriage, Taiwanese society has much to gain from their labour. Mainland brides fill the shortage of reproductive (care) and productive labour left by the limited quota of guest workers from Southeast Asia both in the domestic service and in manufacturing sectors. Most of the jobs available to them are below their educational qualifications and are linked with their gender roles as care givers. These jobs, due to their gendered nature, have already been underpaid. Yet mainland brides are even paid much less than Taiwanese and enjoy a limited labour protection. Their family also benefits from the income they earn.

### **Inter-generational and gendered *yang* and care**

One major contribution of this thesis is to bring the concept of social relatedness developed in anthropology into the study of migration. For this I draw upon Stafford's study of the concept "*yang*" and develop it further by bringing in gender analysis. Compared with the concept of filial piety (*hsiao* 孝), *yang* (養) can better capture the dynamic and reciprocal nature of inter-generational relations in the life course. *Hsiao*, a concept central to Confucian ideas stresses one-dimensional, children-to-parent obligation and obedience. By stressing the unconditional authority of the parents and elders, the concept of *hsiao* takes authority as given, and overlooks the parents', particular the mother's strategy to establish their authority and to ensure that they are cared for. *Yang*, on the other hand, explains the complexity of the cycle of reciprocal care obligation. It is particularly useful in explaining a woman's obligation in her husband's family where her membership in kinship is not biologically given, rather it comes with nurturing for children and respect and physical care to parents-in-law. In other words, her relations with the family members need to be fostered or cultivated. Mainland women can actively give *yang* to in-laws and other kinship members, which



can be in the form of physical caring tasks, emotional bonds or economic contributions. By doing so they gain protection and support from them. In many cases mainland brides' *yang* to parents-in-law is much appreciated and they become an indispensable part of family because their *yang* is much needed.

The same word "*yang*" (養) is also used to describe the material support in conjugal relations. It is different from what the inter-generational, children-parents *yang* characterised by its reciprocity. The *yang* between husband and wife, or even between man and his mistresses, has a clear connotation of unbalanced power relations and economic dependency. The emotional expression and physical care of the conjugal relations are often identified as love and companionship. This reveals the incompatibility of emotional and economic intentions in marriages that is distinctively gendered and, thus explains why economic gains in marital motivation, intention to work and commercial elements in matchmaking operation and marriage transaction are so scrutinised.

One of the motivations for men from lower social background to marry mainland and Southeast Asian women is that they are not able to *yang* a Taiwanese woman, who or whose family expects a higher *yang* capacity. Therefore the ability to economically *yang* a wife is embedded in a husband's masculinity. A wife could demand *yang* from her husband, and if he is incapable of doing so, the wife is in principle in a better power relation to negotiate and enjoy more autonomy. As some cases show, some cross-strait marriages have more equal gender relations; in some cases the normative sexual division of labour, that of men as breadwinners and women as care givers, is reversed due to husband's unemployment. As a result, a higher inter-dependency among the couples and family members is observed and appreciated. In Minnan and Hakka communities, this often threatens men's masculinity and can lead to domestic violence or tightened control of wife's movement from the husband. Contrary to popular representation, the husbands of cross-border and cross-strait marriages are not necessarily *by nature* violent or chauvinistic because of their low socio-economic status or lower education attainment. The high divorce rate and domestic violence should be analysed in light of unbalanced gender relations.

The concept *yang* sheds light on different understandings and evaluation of migratory and marital motivation, the flexible nature of border construction and mechanism of exclusion, and dynamics of relations between different members of cross-strait family and mainland brides' niche in the labour market as care givers.

## **Cultural notions, social relations and the state's policy: toward a new framework of studying gender and migration**

A major contribution of this thesis is to analyse migrant's experiences in the web of relations in the receiving society, i.e. the interplay of the impacts of state's policies and administrative regulatory mechanisms, the interests of the market that includes marriage brokerage and the labour market, as well as relations with family members and other social network. I have also analysed how cultural notions are embedded in these processes and how they influence each other. The notions of *yuenfen* and *ming* (fate) help explain the irrationality of marital and migratory motivations and risks taken. I have also argued extensively that women's gender roles as biological and social reproducers and care givers in the domestic sphere are embedded in the policy-making, popular representation, availability and value of their labour, and in the mechanism of exclusion and inclusion. The concept of *yang* places social relatedness at the centre of migratory experiences and provides a framework of understanding marriage migration as a long-term, reciprocal yet highly gendered process. These cultural principles are developed in specific political and socio-economic conditions in certain historical periods and are by no means fixed and unchanging. The development of modern marriage and family regimes in China and Taiwan serves as a good example of how political and economic forces shape and change the cultural notions and practices. Nevertheless, they constitute powerful norms in judging immigrants' motivations and behaviours. Emphasis on these shared cultural practices can also challenge the public discourse that views immigrants as essentially different from the local population.

Mainland spouses are not passive victims of all forms of political, social and cultural exclusion. However, migrants' strategies of adopting the new life in the hosting society and kin network are also informed and limited by the embedded cultural notions. Mainland women fulfil their expected gender roles and actively provide *yang* and cultivate relations with kin members in order to gain support from them. It is reflected in the individual and collective action of mainland spouses and cross-strait families during protests and public hearings where they constantly advocate for their being accepted as "Taiwanese daughters-in-law" or "mothers of Taiwanese sons" rather than "mainland brides" or individual citizens. By doing so they not only reinforce the existing gender roles but also weaken their public voices. Most of the mainland women I encountered, no matter how brave and resourceful they are, place their dreams and future security largely on their husbands and children. The limits of gendered roles are experienced by generations of Taiwanese and Chinese women, and women's movements in Taiwan and China alike have been

striving to emancipate women from them. While Taiwanese middle class women have gained a certain momentum in this emancipation project, migrant domestic workers and wives from Southeast Asia and China are brought in to fulfil the “traditional” gender roles. Instead of sympathising with migrant women, women’s organisations in Taiwan and China alike criticise cross-border marriages for commodification of marriage and domestic violence. Mainland and foreign spouses have very few alliances in the public sphere both at their home and host societies. Their strategies of negotiation and gaining recognition remain in the private domain.

Earlier cross-strait marriages in rural Taiwan show that mainland brides are discouraged to maintain ties with their natal families in China and the lack of social support and isolation is to the advantage of husbands and their kin. This seems to change gradually. With the increasing cross-strait economic interaction and integration of regional economy in the greater China, many cross-strait families develop their future economic strategies both in and across Taiwan and China. In my fieldwork I have observed a pattern of bridegrooms actively maintaining contacts with wives’ natal families and business contacts as an investment of social capital in preparation for potential business and job opportunities in China in the future. In some cases, the business prospects and networks go beyond Taiwan and China and involve relatives in other countries. Such efforts often cause tension between the couples and other Taiwanese kin and mainland brides are often held responsible for taking the sons and the family resources away. For the couples and particularly mainland brides, this offers them opportunities to escape the control of kin members and restrictive state policies. How the couples develop the “transnational” ties and whether or how they meet the resistance from Taiwanese families and society remain to be studied.

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2000.12.20	6 <sup>th</sup> revision
2001.2.16	7 <sup>th</sup> revision
2002.4.14	8 <sup>th</sup> revision
2003.10.29	9 <sup>th</sup> revision

\*date according promulgation by the President Office

1993 1.21 White paper on the Foreign Policy issued by Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
外交部外交政策白皮書

1993.4.29 Joint statement and three agreements of Koo-Wang Talk 辜汪會談協議

1995.4.8. 李六條

1999.7.9 “Special State-to-State Relations” in Deutsche Welle’s interview with Lee  
Teng-hui’s, Taipei 特殊國與國關係

## Glossary of Chinese terms

baoban hunyin	包辦婚姻	blind marriage or arranged marriage
bao er nai	包二奶	keeping mistresses
baomu	保母	nanny in Taiwan; carer in China
bazi	八字	Chinese birth sign or horoscope
benshengren	本省人	Taiwanese; literally means “local provincial people”; see waishengren
bentuhua	本土化	indigenisation; Taiwanisation
cha xu ge ju	差序格局	Fei Hsiao-tung’s theory of differential order that characterises human relations in the Chinese society
chengqun jiedang	成群結黨	go everywhere as a group
chiku nailao	吃苦耐勞	endure hardship and work hard
chujia	出嫁	(women) marry out (from the natal family)
cong tou jiao qi	從頭教起	teach [the brides] the basics; implying that foreign and mainland brides are ignorant and backward
cun	村	village, an administrative unit under xiang 鄉 or township 鎮
dalumei	大陸妹	a term used in Taiwan to refer to all mainland Chinese women with negative connotations
dalun xinniang	大陸新娘	mainland brides
dalun peiou	大陸配偶	mainland spouses
dagongmei	打工妹	young working girls in the cities
danwei	單位	work-unit affiliation
hangqing	行情	common practice; market price
hongbao	紅包	red envelop; gift money wrapped in a red envelop given at the wedding, new year or other occasions as a sign of gratitude
hsiao	孝	filial piety
huji zhidu; hukou	戶籍制度, 戶口	household registration system in the PRC
FATS	兩岸婚姻協 調促進會	association of cross-strait families
fudao or fude	婦道, 婦德	women’s virtues
fuqi tongxin	夫妻同心	married couples build a family with one heart
fuxujin	撫恤金	the money Taiwanese government gives to the widows and children of the civil servants and veteran soldiers to provide them social security
gan bu shang shidai	趕不上時代	lag behind the modern development
ganqing	感情	feelings or affection
gongfei	共匪	Taiwanese refers to Chinese communists as Communist bandits
guai	乖	submissive; virtue normally ascribed to women and children
guan	管	to take control; to discipline
guangxi	關係	human relations; relatedness

guluannian	孤鸞年	the years in Chinese lunar calendar believed to be not suitable for marriage
jia	家	general term for family and kinship
- jiahu	家戶	household
- fang	房	a sub-unit of <i>jia</i> composed of a son, his wife and their children, as well as all their male descents and their wives
- fenjia	分家	division of family
- zongzu	宗族	lineage; clan
jiaguolai	嫁過來	marry into (husband's kinship) over here (to Taiwan)
jiajiehun	假結婚	bogus marriage
- jiajiehun zhendagong	假結婚真打工	bogus marriage, real labour
- jiajiehun zhenmaiying	假結婚真賣淫	bogus marriage, real prostitution
- jiajiehun zhenyimin	假結婚真移民	bogus marriage, real immigration (for citizenship)
jiazhuang	嫁妝	dowry
jingyin	精英	elite
juancun	眷村	veteran's settlements
juliu congyian,	居留從嚴, 停	harsh on long-term residentship,
tingliu congkuan;	留從寬;	relax [the measures for] short-term stay;
shenghuo congkuan,	生活從寬,	relax [the measures for] livelihood,
shenfen congyian	身份從嚴	harsh on status;
kaonanren	靠男人	two principles regulating mainland spouses since 1997
laoban	老伴	depending on men
laofu shaoqi	老夫少妻	a companion or partner to spend the old age together. It does not necessarily refer to elders.
laoqi shaofu	老妻少夫	People who marry young with the intention to find a life-long companion can use the term
laoshi	老實	old husband marrying young wife
liangjia funu	良家婦女	old women marrying young men
lien ai hunyin	戀愛婚姻	honest and loyal
Lifayuan gongbao	立法院公報	good woman who follow women's virtues
liudong renko	流動人口	love marriage
luoyie guigen	落葉歸根	gazette of the Legislative Yuan, ROC
maimai hunyin	買賣婚姻	floating population (rural migrants) without urban hukou in the PRC; migration population with temporary registration in Taiwan
- shangpinhua hunyin	商品化婚姻	a Chinese saying literally translated as "the tree leave falls to the ground and returns to its root", which is often used to indicate the natural longings of returning to homeland where ancestors dwell
maiying, maichun	賣淫, 賣春	trade marriage; commercially arranged marriage
mangliu	盲流	commodified marriage
		sex work
		"blind flow", floating population; see liudong renko

meiren	媒人	marriage matchmaker, a term used in Taiwan (or mueilang in Fokkienese)
- hongniang	紅娘	marriage matchmaker, a term used in the PRC
- zhongjie	仲介	brokers, not limited to marriage brokers
- jieshoren	介紹人	introducer/matchmaker of potential couples
mendang hudui	門當戶對	matching-door principle of mate choice and matchmaking
ming; mingyun	命, 命運	fate
- haoming	好命	a good fate
mingyun gongtong ti	命運共同體	common-fate community (also shengming gongtong ti)
minzuzhuyi	民族主義	nationalism
niulang jinu	牛郎織女	a Chinese folklore of two lovers who were forced to be separated and allowed to reunite only one day a year. See qisi.
pinjin	聘金	brideprice
qisi	七夕	Chinese Valentine day, the day that niulang jinu reunite.
renkou pinzhe	人口品質	population quality
renli paiqien jie	人力派遣業	human resource agency
renlun	人倫	Confucian idea of the order between human relations
renming	認命	accept fate or resign oneself to fate
renqing	人情	moral norms and human feelings
renshe	人蛇	snake-head; human smugglers
ruji	入籍	register in the household registration in Taiwan
sandaitongtang	三代同堂	cohabitation or common household of three generations
Shangchuang yiqi, xialechuang geguan gede	上床一起, 下了床各管各的	[we are] together in bed, outside bed I am on my own
shaonainai	少奶奶	women who marry into rich families and enjoy a luxurious lifestyle, and does not have to work or do any domestic chores
shengji	省籍	provincial identity
shewai hunyin	涉外婚姻	marriages of PRC citizens with foreign (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) nationals
sifangqian	私房錢	private pocket money
simpua	童養媳	daughters-in-law of minor marriages
shoujie	守節	widowed women's chastity after husbands' death
Taiwan xifu	台灣媳婦	Taiwanese daughters-in-law
Taiwan xinzhumin	台灣新住民	new residents/immigrants, mainly referring to foreign and mainland brides
Taiwan zhizi	台灣之子	sons/children of Taiwanese (from cross-border marriages)
tien zuo zhi he	天作之合	union made by Heaven



tongzhan	統戰	united front. For the Communist Party of the PRC, it refers to the formation of strategic alliance with different class and political forces in order to achieve liberation of the proletariat. In Taiwan this term refers to the communists' tactics of annexing Taiwan.
waishengren	外省人	mainlanders. Literally means people from other provinces. The people who migrated to Taiwan from all parts of Mainland China during or right after the civil war in 1949 and their second and third generation born in Taiwan. See benshengren
wuqinwugu	無親無故	lack of friends and relatives; no social support
wuzhu gonghe	五族共和	five races under one union
xuanguizhi	雙軌制	double-track system of mainland spouses' naturalisation in 2002
yang	養	to care for
- fengyang	奉養	respectfully care for (parents or elders)
- yang bu qi	養不起	not able to support (financially)
- yang'er fanglao	養兒防老	bring up children in anticipation of old age
- yang laopo	養老婆	(a man) economically supports his wife
- zhaogu	照顧	care
yuan, yuanfen	緣, 緣分	destined bond or affinity between two persons or between a person and a object/place
- yinyuan	姻緣	marital yuan
- yuanjin	緣盡	a yuan ends; seperation
yuanzhumin	原住民	aborigines
zhai	債	debt, both monetary and emotion
- qianzhai	欠債	indebted
- huanzhai	還債	pay the debt
Zhengmin yundong	正名運動	movement for rectification of names for Taiwan
zhong	忠	obedience and loyalty to the nation
zhongguo xinniang	中國新娘	Chinese brides; the term adopted by the pro-pan-green media after 2002; see mainland brides.
zijiren	自己人	our own people (of the same nation or kinship)
zuoyuezi	坐月子	post-natal resting period and care

### **Terminologies of residential status**

tinliu	停留	temporary visiting visa (pre-2002)
juliu	居留	long-term residential permit (pre-2002)
dinju	定居	permanent residentialship and citizenship
tuanju	團聚	temporary visa for visiting family members (after 2002)
tanbing	探病	temporary visa for visiting sick family members (after 2002)
yiqinjuliu	依親居留	family reunion permit (after 2002)

Names of fieldwork sites:

Baihe town, Tainan county, Taiwan 台灣台南縣白河鎮

Zhongxing village, Hukou xiang, Hsinchu county, Taiwan 台灣新竹縣湖口鄉中興村

Humei village, Fuqing, Fujian province, PRC 中國福建省福清市湖美村



## Summary

This thesis investigates the highly complex issue of cross-border marriages between Mainland China and Taiwan in the period from early 1990 to 2004. The objectives of this research is to investigate three aspects of cross-border marriage migration: 1) factors and motivations for cross-border marriage, that is, Why do mainland Chinese women choose to leave China and to come to Taiwan and why do Taiwanese men marry mainland Chinese women? 2) formation and justification of borders of exclusion, that is, Why and how are mainland brides constructed as “others”? 3) negotiation of gender and intra-familial relations among members of cross-border families. These questions are answered by looking at the perspectives of different actors and by examining how these perspectives are formed and whether and how they are substantiated. These actors include the state and the media, the marriage brokerage industry, and cross-strait couples and family members. Multiple research methodologies and sources of data are used, including ethnography, discourse analysis of policy and media representation and participant observation.

Chapter 1 discusses the cultural principles and practices of marriage and family in the Chinese society, which serves a reference for studying how cross-strait marriages are similar or deviant from the norms of local marriages. Chinese family is conceptualised as the basis of social organisation in Chinese society. Studying what marriage and related practices mean in this conceptualisation provide the foundation of understanding the responsibilities and obligations of different members of the family, particularly the position of a new bride in her husband’s family. In this chapter I also demonstrate how contemporary developments of marriage and family regimes in China and Taiwan are shaped by political and socio-economic conditions and legal intervention over time. In the last part of this chapter I explore a new conceptual framework in understanding human relatedness within Chinese society that challenges the dominant view that patrilineal characteristics are the fundamental elements in Chinese kinship and society.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of internal and international migration in China and Taiwan from a gender perspective. In conventional migration theory, economic gains are regarded as the primary motivations for cross-border marriages. It is argued that Asian women are socialized to be filial daughters and caring mothers and marriage is a strategy of survival or social mobility for the whole family. Marriage migration is often conflated with women’s labour migration, and more specifically, commercially arranged marriages are compared with sex trafficking. Such scholarship often places women as victims of globalisation process. This chapter sets out to examine whether marriage migration shares the same context of political economy

that causes women's labour migration by analysing the demographic data, migration flows and individual and familial migration motivations. In this chapter I also present demographic profiles of the cross-strait couples in comparison to couples of local marriages and other cross-border marriages in Taiwan.

Chapter 3 studies the political and social citizenship and exclusion of marriage migrants in the context of cross-strait interaction, changing national identity and the influx of migrant workers and wives in Taiwan. I analyse the construction of images of cross-strait marriages and mainland spouses in the media and the political debates during the legislative process as well as positions of various political and non-governmental social actors. The debates before the mid-1990s show that the cultural concept of the family union overrides the concerns for national security and identity. In the later part of the 1990s the dominant concerns are the social integration and social rights of mainland spouses. However, since 2000, the popular images of mainland spouses have taken a negative turn. In the midst of the political hostility against China and growing Taiwanese nationalism, mainland Chinese spouses are not treated as the "enemy others", rather they are increasingly associated with prostitution and bogus marriage. I argue that the criteria of the mainland spouses' citizenship are based on their gender roles as mothers, daughters-in-law and care-givers; hence the image of bad women is used to discredit them. Mainland spouses and cross-strait families also actively adopt these gender roles to win the acceptance of Taiwanese society in their collective action.

As the first ethnographic study on the marriage brokerage operations in cross-border marriages, Chapter 4 looks at the matchmaking practices, mate choice and money transactions of cross-border strait marriages in order to investigate the role of brokers/matchmakers in cross-border marriages and by so doing, questions what commercialisation of marriage means and why is it a less sanctioned form of marriage. Two flows of reasoning are laid out: the first is to examine the similarity and deviation of matchmaking practices and money transactions in cross-border marriages as compared to those of "normal" marriages; the second is to challenge current feminist scholarship, both western and indigenous, the claims of women's movements and established international conventions on trafficking and trade in women, which set the universal moral standard of modern marriage regimes and have profound impacts on how the commercially arranged marriages are understood. I argue that commercially arranged marriage does not necessarily make women traded commodities, yet the departure of commercially arranged marriage from "normal" matchmaking practices indeed alters the meaning and perceptions of economic transaction between brides' and bridegroom's families.

Chapter 5 is an ethnographic account of daily life experiences and the interaction among the members of cross-strait families along the course of marriage life as well as the strategies these members employ to cultivate their relations. Social positioning of and power relations between members of cross-strait families in the migratory process and marriage life course explain not only why these family members opt for cross-strait marriages, they also answer the question why the stream of cross-strait marriage migration is sustained despite exclusion mechanisms and social stigma. I discuss different dimensions of these strategies, includes manoeuvring among different kinship members, the economic and social capital secured outside the kinship network, the meaning of paid work and financial autonomy. The rationales for borders of exclusion based on gender, ethnicity and patrilineal kinship at times provide openings for marriage migrants, who exercise their agency and develop various strategies to win acceptance by fulfilling their gender roles as care-givers. This role is reinforced in the public sphere in policies and labour market.



## Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt het zeer complexe onderwerp van huwelijken over de Straat van Taiwan tussen vasteland China en Taiwan in de periode van 1990 tot 2004. De doelstelling van dit onderzoek is om drie aspecten van huwelijksmigratie over de Straat van Taiwan te bestuderen: 1) factoren en motivaties voor huwelijksmigratie over de Straat, dat wil zeggen, waarom kiezen vasteland Chinese vrouwen ervoor om China te verlaten en naar Taiwan te komen en waarom trouwen Taiwanese mannen met vasteland Chinese vrouwen? 2) vorming en rechtvaardiging van uitsluitende grenzen, dat wil zeggen, waarom en hoe worden vastelandbruiden geconstrueerd als “anderen”? 3) onderhandeling over gender- en intrafamiliaire relaties tussen leden van Chinees-Taiwanese families. Deze vragen worden beantwoord door de perspectieven van diverse actoren te bestuderen en te beoordelen hoe deze perspectieven gevormd worden evenals of en hoe ze onderbouwd worden. Deze actoren omvatten de staat en de media, de huwelijksmakelaarsindustrie, en Chinees-Taiwanese paren en familieleden. Veelvoudige onderzoeksmethodologieën en gegevensbronnen worden gebruikt, waaronder etnografie, discoursanalyse van beleid en mediarepresentatie en participerende observatie.

Hoofdstuk 1 behandelt de culturele principes en praktijken met betrekking tot huwelijk en familie in de Chinese samenleving, wat dient als referentiekader voor de studie hoe Chinees-Taiwanese huwelijken (aan weerszijden van de Straat van Taiwan; “cross-strait”) gelijk zijn aan of afwijken van de normen van lokale huwelijken. De Chinese familie wordt geconceptualiseerd als de basis van sociale organisatie in de Chinese samenleving. De studie van wat van huwelijk en gerelateerde praktijken betekenen in deze conceptualisering verschaft de grond voor het begrijpen van de verantwoordelijkheden en verplichtingen van verschillende leden van de familie, in het bijzonder de positie van een nieuwe bruid in de familie van haar echtgenoot. In dit hoofdstuk laat ik ook zien hoe huidige ontwikkelingen van huwelijks- en familieregimes in China en Taiwan worden gevormd door politieke en sociaaleconomische voorwaarden en juridische interventie met het verstrijken van de tijd. In het laatste deel van dit hoofdstuk onderzoek ik een nieuw conceptueel kader voor het begrijpen van menselijke betrekkingen binnen de Chinese samenleving dat de dominante visie ter discussie stelt dat patrilineaire eigenschappen de fundamentele elementen in de Chinese verwantschap en maatschappij zijn.

Hoofdstuk 2 geeft een overzicht van interne en internationale migratie in China en Taiwan vanuit een genderperspectief. In conventionele migratietheorie worden economische voordelen beschouwd als de primaire motivaties voor huwelijken over grenzen. Men betoogt dat Aziatische vrouwen worden gesocialiseerd



om eerbiedige dochters en zorgzame moeders te zijn en het huwelijk is een strategie voor overleving of sociale mobiliteit voor de hele familie. Huwelijksmigratie wordt vaak samengevoegd met arbeidsmigratie van vrouwen, en meer specifiek worden commercieel gearrangeerde huwelijken vergeleken met sekshandel. Zo'n benadering classificeert vrouwen vaak als slachtoffers van het globaliseringsproces. Dit hoofdstuk stelt zich ten doel te onderzoeken of huwelijksmigratie dezelfde politiek-economische context deelt die de arbeidsmigratie van vrouwen veroorzaakt door het analyseren van de demografische gegevens, migratiestromen en migratiemotieven van individuen en families. In dit hoofdstuk presenteer ik ook demografische profielen van de Chinees-Taiwanese paren in vergelijking met paren van lokale huwelijken en andere huwelijken over de grens in Taiwan.

Hoofdstuk 3 bestudeert politiek en sociaal burgerschap en uitsluiting van huwelijksmigranten in de context van interactie aan beide zijden van de Straat van Taiwan, veranderende nationale identiteit en de instroming van migrantarbeiders en echtgenotes in Taiwan. Ik analyseer de beeldvorming van Chinees-Taiwanese huwelijken en vastelandechtgenotes in de media en de politieke debatten gedurende het wetgevende proces alsook de posities van diverse politieke en niet-gouvernementele sociale actoren. De debatten voor het midden van de jaren negentig laten zien dat het culturele concept van de familie-eenheid de zorgen omtrent nationale veiligheid en identiteit overstijgt. In het latere deel van de jaren negentig zijn de voornaamste bezorgdheden de sociale integratie en de sociale rechten van vastelandechtgenotes. Sinds 2000 echter hebben de populaire verbeeldingen van vastelandechtgenotes een negatieve wending genomen. Temidden van de politieke vijandschap ten opzichte van China en groeiend Taiwanees nationalisme worden Chinese vastelandechtgenotes niet behandeld als "vijandige anderen", maar meer in toenemende mate geassocieerd met prostitutie en schijnhuwelijken. Ik betoog dat de criteria van het burgerschap van vastelandechtgenotes gebaseerd zijn op hun genderrollen als moeders, schoondochters en zorgverleners; het beeld van slechte vrouwen wordt daarom gebruikt om ze in diskrediet te brengen. Vastelandechtgenotes en Chinees-Taiwanese families nemen deze genderrollen ook actief over om door de Taiwanese samenleving geaccepteerd te worden in hun gezamenlijke optreden.

Als eerste etnografische studie over huwelijksmakelaarspraktijken in huwelijken over de grens, beschouwt hoofdstuk 4 de koppelgebruiken, partnerkeuze en geldelijke transacties van Chinees-Taiwanese huwelijken en stelt al doende ter discussie wat commercialisering van het huwelijk betekent en waarom het een minder gesanctioneerde huwelijksvorm is. Twee argumentatielijnen worden ontwikkeld: de eerste is de overeenkomsten en verschillen te onderzoeken van geldelijke transacties in huwelijken over de grens in vergelijking met die van "normale" huwelijken; de

tweede is in debat te treden met de huidige feministische theorievorming, zowel westers als inheems, de stellingnames van vrouwenbewegingen en gevestigde internationale conventies inzake smokkel van en handel in vrouwen, die de universele morele standaard voor moderne huwelijksregimes zetten en een diepgaande invloed hebben op hoe de commercieel gearrangeerde huwelijken begrepen worden. Ik betoog dat commercieel gearrangeerde huwelijken niet noodzakelijkerwijs vrouwen tot verhandelde objecten maken, maar dat de afwijking van commercieel gearrangeerde huwelijken van “normale” koppelgebruiken inderdaad de betekenis en perceptie van economische transacties tussen de families van bruiden en bruidegommen verandert.

Hoofdstuk 5 is een etnografisch verslag van ervaringen in het dagelijkse leven en de interactie tussen leden van Chinees-Taiwanese families gedurende het huwelijksleven alsook de strategieën die deze leden inzetten om hun relaties te onderhouden. De sociale positionering van en de machtsrelaties tussen leden van Chinees-Taiwanese families in het migratieproces en huwelijksleven verklaren niet alleen waarom deze familieleden voor huwelijken over de Straat van Taiwan opteren, zij beantwoorden ook de vraag waarom de stroom van huwelijksmigratie over de Straat van Taiwan in stand blijft ondanks mechanismen van uitsluiting en sociale stigmatisering. Ik behandel verschillende dimensies van deze strategieën, waaronder het manoeuvreren tussen verschillende familieleden, het economische en sociale kapitaal dat veiliggesteld wordt buiten het familienetwerk, de betekenis van betaald werk en financiële autonomie. De motivaties voor uitsluitende grenzen gebaseerd op gender, etniciteit en patrilineaire verwantschap voorzien soms in openingen voor huwelijksmigranten, die hun handelsbekwaamheid uitoefenen en diverse strategieën ontwikkelen om acceptatie te verkrijgen door hun genderrol als verzorgers te vervullen. Deze rol wordt versterkt in de publieke sfeer in politieke beleidslijnen en de arbeidsmarkt.



## Curriculum Vitae

Melody Chia-Wen Lu (呂家玟) was born in Chuanghua, Taiwan in 1969. She received her BA in Foreign Language and Literature from the National Taiwan University in Taiwan in 1992 and her MA in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), the Netherlands in 1997. In 2001, she obtained her second MA from the Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies (CNWS), Leiden University, and continued her PhD study in the same institute. She has published several articles and co-edited a book *Cross-border marriage migration in East and Southeast Asia: socio-demographic patterns and issues* (forthcoming, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press). Currently, she is an affiliated fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), the Netherlands and coordinates a research programme *Cross-border Marriages in East and Southeast Asia* since 2006. Prior to her academic involvement she worked at various social movements and NGOs in Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Philippines on the issues of student activism, gender, migration and sex work in the Asia-Pacific region.

Melody Chia-Wen Lu (呂家玟) werd geboren in Chuanghua, Taiwan in 1969. Zij behaalde haar BA in Buitenlandse Taal- en Letterkunde aan de Nationale Taiwan Universiteit in Taipei in 1992 en haar MA in Ontwikkelingsstudies aan het Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in Den Haag in 1997. In 2001 behaalde zij haar tweede MA aan het Onderzoeksinstituut voor Aziatische, Afrikaanse en Amerindische Studies (CNWS) van de Universiteit Leiden en vervolgde met haar promotiestudie aan hetzelfde instituut. Zij heeft verscheidene artikelen gepubliceerd en was mederedacteur van een boek getiteld *Cross-border marriage migration in East and Southeast Asia: socio-demographic patterns and issues* (te verschijnen, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press). Op dit moment is zij een *affiliated fellow* aan het International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) en coördineert zij sinds 2006 een onderzoeksprogramma getiteld *Cross-border Marriages in East and Southeast Asia*. Voor haar academische betrekkingen werkte zij bij verschillende sociale bewegingen en NGO's in Taiwan, Hong Kong en de Filipijnen met betrekking tot de onderwerpen studentenactivisme, gender, migratie en sexwerk in de Aziatisch-Pacifische regio.