

Prospects and Impass of Multicultural Citizenship in the Era of Globalization: The Case of Immigrant Movement in Taiwan

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May's Longing for Taiwanese Citizenship

May has lived in Taiwan for sixteen years. Her biggest fear has been her lack of a Taiwanese ID. She has been caught by the police three times at the construction site where she used to work, though the policemen let her go after witnessing her situation. May was told by a Chinese-Indonesian marriage broker that she could easily become a Taiwanese citizen once she married a Taiwanese man. She came to Taiwan on a tourist visa at the behest of this broker who introduced her to her husband, a fisherman living in northern Taiwan. Contrary to the promises of the broker, May was not able to become a Taiwanese citizen and May's husband died three years after her daughter was born. Becoming an illegal migrant upon her husband's death, she has confined herself to home and workplace for the fear of being caught and expatriated. She has not been able to visit her family in Indonesia for the fear that she will not be able to come back to Taiwan to take care of her daughter and parents-in-law. Her family resents her for being "heartless" since May never returns for a visit. May has not told them the truth because she does not want them to be worried. She prefers to socialize with other Indonesian-Chinese women because she fears that Taiwanese would report her illegal status to the police.

Despite obvious constraints, May has not been a passive victim. She has been trying to find ways to apply for citizenship. When caught by the police, she tactfully convinces the policemen to take her home so that the police would be able to understand and sympathize with her situations. To protect herself, she has introduced other Indonesian Chinese with proper documentation to work with her at the construction sites so she would be more aware if Taiwanese co-workers plan to report her. Not being able to read Chinese and being lacking social capital, May still has not been able to locate resourceful persons to help

her with citizenship. She is worried that her only daughter's rights to inherit property would be relinquished because her daughter has been legally adopted by her husband's brother given May's illegal status.

May's story is not an isolated case in Taiwan. Although we cannot be certain of the number of similar cases, her case vividly points out the essential need that immigrant women in Taiwan have to obtain citizenship.

The Problematique

Citizenship in the Globalization Era

Discussion of citizenship in the modern era has traditionally centered on acquisition of rights and the exercise of obligations, and how rights served to forge attachment to a particular society. Liberal and civic republican are the two dominant traditions of discourse. In both traditions the attendant rights and obligations of citizenship were contained within the nation-state, which was itself conceptualized as culturally and morally homogenous. These approaches paid little attention to issues arising from the admission of outsiders to a society and how these immigrants might alter the basis of citizenship as membership of a bounded community expands and new potential members enter. As the world becomes increasingly globalized, recent writing has sought to decouple citizenship from its traditionally close association with the nation-state.

Some literature on migration claims that national citizenship has lost its importance in the present era of globalization (Soysal 1994; Sassen, 1996) and suggests that citizenship rights are irrelevant and labor rights take precedence (Harris 1995). Evidence from much of the migratory experience of women, however, shows that this is not correct (e.g. Parnas 2001; Piper and Roces 2003). Piper and Roces (2003) point out that Soysal's theory of post-national citizenship is derived from the European Union context and is based on the acquisition of economic and social rights linked to long-term residence as well as on the emergence of an international regime of rights for migrants.

The exclusionary practices of citizenship have been recognized as being ill-equipped to deal with an age of large-scale and heterogeneous migratory movements. The hope was that international human rights law would "provide a tool for sculpting a more inclusionary model of citizenship" (Lister 1997: 60) transcending nation-state boundaries. Despite the proliferation of international conventions and human rights instruments, however, citizenship still to a large extent determines the

rights that different categories of migrants are able to exercise (Kofman et al. 2000). The importance of international pressure in securing rights for immigrants appears overemphasized in these works, as remarked upon by Castles and Davidson (2000). In practice this international regime of rights is weak and nonexistent outside of Europe (where migrant rights are also limited) (Ghai 1999) (c.f. Piper and Roces, 2003).

In the era of globalization, citizenship has thus become the touchstone for the virtues of liberalism and democracy. As Silverman (1992:15) forcefully argues, “Immigration can represent both the liberal republic and the threat to the liberal republic; it is the embodiment of France’s capacity for assimilation and proof of a break-down in assimilation; it is the embodiment of pluralism and proof of the impossibility of pluralism.”

Citizenship and Immigrant Women

Immigration regulations are gendered in that they often do not accord female immigrants with their own legal status but rather assume them to be dependents of men (Espiritu 1997). Not just gendered, immigration legislature is also based on certain notions of the family, especially within the institutional setting of marriage. Marriage and migration are thus linked to citizenship and to relations of power created and sustained by the law. For example, many migrant-receiving countries do not grant foreign women citizenship in their own rights, but mediate their rights through their status of wife.

Feminist engagement with citizenship debates has tended to focus on the gendered nature of access to economic, social, civil, and political rights associated with citizenship. In addition to studies on the constraints women encounter in their experience of migration, much of the feminist literature on citizenship both points out that women are not merely passive victims of unequal characters of citizenship and highlights the subjectivity and resistance of these women. Piper and Roces ’s (2003) edited volume on Asian women and migration shows that apart from acting as mothers, wives, and workers, these women also act as citizens—although not yet so acknowledged in much of the public discourse about them. Despite language and cultural differences posing a major obstacle toward integration as new citizens, immigrant women’s participation in civic work can in fact be a way of performing citizenship. Citizenship potentially increases immigrant women’s agency and broadens their choices.

Formal vs. Substantive Citizenship

Nevertheless, acquisition of citizenship itself does not necessarily mean that

these women would cease to be categorized as “other” because citizenship does not magically eliminate discrimination (Piper and Roces 2003). Scholars often tend to concentrate on the extension of formal rights, but do not adequately consider the significance of various forms of discrimination; such an oversight could undermine their grasp of substantive reality. Discrimination may even be sanctioned by the state. Piper (1998) points out that there is a distinction between formal and substantive citizenship rights, an issue which is of particular relevance to women in general, ethnic minorities, and migrants. Formal citizenship refers to legal matters (such as residential, civil, political, and labor rights), while substantive citizenship covers social aspects (such as discrimination).

Often without formal citizenship (at least initially), migrant women find themselves in a much more precarious situation. Marriage does not pose an immediate remedy. In most countries, international couples have to be married for a certain number of years until the foreign spouse gains full residential rights independent from the local marriage partner. If problems such as domestic violence occur prior to the end of this period and the foreign woman seeks divorce, she risks deportation to her country of origin. As wives to local men, foreign women lack some basic attributes of autonomous legal agency; this can be improved when they gain proper formal citizenship rights. Even with secure residential permits, however, the language barriers and lack of accreditation often ensure that migrant women remain ossified in specific niches, such as domestic work or the sex industry.

Changes have come about in this regard in the regulations of receiving countries. Such improvements often occur as a result of NGO advocacy work and/or self-organization of the migrant women (Piper and Roces, 2003). This, however, still leaves the issue of substantive citizenship. There is, moreover, plenty of evidence for discrimination and stigmatization of immigrants in general, and Asian women in particular.

Models of Incorporation

There are various ways in which migrants and minorities are treated in relation to the wider society. The degree to which the identity of groups is recognized also varies. Kofman et al. (2000) identify four models of incorporations—including imperial, ethnic, republican, and multicultural models.

- The objective under the imperial model was to bring together ethnically and racially differentiated subjects of an Empire. Though no longer operative, this model has left a mark on several European societies.

- The ethnic model is one in which the national community is passed on by descent, thereby excluding new minorities from citizenship but allowing automatic access to those with cultural links who live outside state borders. Citizenship in the ethnic model is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* and is consequently difficult to acquire. It requires a relatively long period of residence, demonstration of a degree of assimilation, and language proficiency.
- The republican model is one in which the nation is defined as a political community. Newcomers may be admitted providing that they accept the political norms and national culture. In principle this model does not recognize the right of minorities to make claims either cultural recognition or social rights on the basis of their group identity.
- The multicultural model is based on the idea that the nation-state contains a degree of plurality that allows migrants to retain their cultural identity provided that they adhere to the appropriate political norms. This pluralism does not negate the existence of a dominant culture. Multiculturalism has a number of aspects so that policies may shift over time. Multiculturalism may involve the recognition of cultural pluralism, or provision for the specific economic and social needs of ethnic and national groups that may themselves take on the responsibilities for the welfare of their communities. Multiculturalism may also include the demand for the economic and social equality between migrants and the wider society, thus leading to the establishment of anti-discrimination policies accompanied by sanctions (Kofman et al. 2000).

As part of this last model, multicultural citizenship is an alternative proposed by scholars recognizing both the importance and limits of citizenship. The model is based on the idea that nation-state contains a degree of plurality that allows migrants and immigrants to retain their cultural identity provided they adhere to the political norms. For instance, Kymlicka (1995:5) has proposed the following theory of minority rights: “A comprehensive theory of justice in a multicultural state will include both universal rights, assigned to individuals regardless of their group membership, and certain group-differentiated rights or ‘special status’ for minority cultures.”

Though multicultural citizenship seems to be a more inclusionary model of incorporation and thus ideal for the current era of globalization, various critics have

pointed out that, among other problems, it essentializes cultures and silences more radical forms of resistance (e.g. Kofman et al. 2000). Being aware of the model's faults, this paper will show how the concept of multicultural citizenship can be employed to bring about a gradual change in the traditionally exclusionary model of incorporation. As globalization intensifies, transborder migration has greatly challenged the boundaries of nation-states and thus the concept of citizenship. Immigrant women are particularly influenced by formal and substantive citizenship. This essay will illustrate how immigrant women in Taiwan are constrained by exclusionary practices of citizenship, how they are working with NGOs to gradually transform their situations, and how the rhetoric of "multicultural citizenship" can be used in the process of transformation.

Immigrant Women in Taiwan

Since the mid-1980s, Taiwan has moved from the "periphery" to the "semi-periphery" in the world system. As a result, Taiwan has become a host country for many migrants in the region. According to official statistics, one of every four new marriages in Taiwan is between a citizen and foreigner. The majority of the foreign spouses are the "foreign brides"¹ and "Mainland brides" of Taiwanese men. In addition to marriage migration, migrants also come to Taiwan for work. The rapid increase in foreign-born residents has led the Taiwanese media, public, and government to realize that the country has lacked a comprehensive immigration policy. Numerous issues that migrants and immigrants encounter—such as language barriers, cultural adjustment, medical care, education, and legal disputes—are all posing new challenges to most Taiwanese.

Root Causes of Marriage Migration: Globalization and Unequal Development

"Foreign brides," "Mainland brides," and "foreign workers" are the three major categories of foreign-born residents in Taiwan. They face many similar situations (such as discrimination and restrictive regulations), but also have some differences. This section focuses on "foreign brides," specifically Southeast Asian women married to Taiwanese men, as an example to illustrate the citizenship issues in Taiwan.

Against the backdrop of threat imposed by the GATT and WTO to the agricultural economy and the exodus of labor-intensive industry, thousands of

¹ The word "foreign bride" is common parlance in Taiwan, and reflects the discrimination against Third World women. I use the term in quotes to remind readers that the term is ideologically charged.

Taiwanese peasants and working-class men have, in recent years, been leaving the countryside in search of brides. Led by marriage brokers, these men are transported to modern international airports, where they are faced with a combination of luxurious lounges, complex and wordy immigration forms, and expressionless customs bureaucrats. Meanwhile, across the South Pacific, marriage brokers and matchmakers weave in and out of communities on the margins of cities and rural areas in Indonesia, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries, encouraging young women to become such a “foreign bride.” During these meetings, the men cast anxious, searching glances; the women act shyly; and the matchmakers confidently try to unite the two together as a couple. Days later, the engagement ceremony is held. The men return to Taiwan to wait for up to a year for their “foreign brides” to arrive. Transnational marriages of this type require a large sum of money, many times half of the savings of a family from rural Taiwan. If a man successfully marries a woman, he must pay the broker a sum between US\$10,000-\$15,000, only 10% of which goes to the bride’s family as a dowry. Still, a dowry of this size is a considerable sum to families in Southeast Asian nations where wages are low.

This is not a new phenomenon. Beginning in the early 1980s, men from rural areas in Taiwan began marrying brides from Thailand and the Philippines. By the end of that decade, the Taiwanese government stopped issuing visas to single women from Southeast Asia because several women were caught engaging in prostitution after coming to Taiwan on tourist visas. Since then, Taiwanese men who want to marry “foreign brides” must travel to Southeast Asia. Since the early 1990s Indonesia has become the primary source of “foreign brides” in Taiwan. For each of the past few years, more than 2,000 women from Indonesia have left their homes for their imagined “prosperous paradise”—Taiwan. In order to reduce the number of Indonesian brides, the Taipei Economic and Trade Office in Indonesia slowed down its processing visas for the women. Many Indonesian brokers became impatient with the slow pace of the Taiwan government and turned to matching Indonesian women with Hong Kong men; Taiwanese brokers have begun looking for women in Vietnam, Cambodia, and other countries. According to a newly released study by the Ministry of Interior, there are 240,837 foreign spouses (42.2% of who are from Southeast Asia and 57.8% of who are from Mainland China), who entered Taiwan between January 1st of 1987 to August 31 of 2003. Ninety-three percent of these foreign spouses are women. Among the women from Southeast Asia, 57.5% are from Vietnam, 23.2% from Indonesia, 5.3% from Thailand, and another 5.3% from the Philippines.

Many Southeast Asian women decide to marry Taiwanese out of a hope to escape poverty, which globalization has intensified in their home countries. Globalization entails privatization, deregulation, and liberalization, all of which lead to

unemployment, hunger and disease, and therefore pose a threat to survival for the vast majority of laborers. The World Bank and IMF have driven hundreds of millions of people into poverty—accomplished under the guise of offering loans to developing countries and promising a boost in development by carrying out **SAPS** (Structural Adjustment Programs) (for further analysis, please refer to Hsia 2004). Under the sway of distorted development, farmers and workers in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries have increasingly been marginalized economically and forced to find work abroad. For women in Southeast Asia, they can choose to find work outside of their native countries or escape their economic plight through transnational marriages.

Stressed Economic Conditions

The Taiwanese men whom Southeast Asian women marry are mostly farmers and laborers. Taiwan began to take on the characteristics of a semi-peripheral country after becoming increasingly incorporated in the world capitalist system in the 1980s; this is when Taiwan began to exploit Southeast Asia and other peripheral countries. At the same time globalization began to push liberalization, privatization, and deregulation, not only resulting in distorted development in Southeast Asian countries but also placing a great number of agricultural and industrial laborers in distress. The poverty created by globalization was not as serious in Taiwan as in Southeast Asian countries, but agriculture in Taiwan was clearly hollowed out by the twin forces of continued urbanization and industrialization, as well as by international pressure on agriculture. Low-skilled workers were also—and have still been—affected by the increasing threats of liberalization. These low-skilled agricultural and industrial laborers have thus found themselves in an extremely disadvantaged position in Taiwan's domestic marriage market.

Under these circumstances, the economic situation of Southeast Asian women in Taiwan tends to be bleak. According to a recent survey, 31.3% of interviewed women said that their family expenses are higher than family income, 48.9% just manage to make ends meet, and only 2.7% have an income higher than expenses. A full 78.5% of the families of Southeast Asian women rely on their husband's income and 7% of the women are the primary earner. 40% of the Taiwanese husbands are working-class and 65% of the interviewed foreign spouses from Southeast Asia make less than 2,0000 NT (about US\$588)(許雅惠 2004).

Since the Taiwanese husbands are mostly working-class, most foreign spouses need to take on jobs in order to supplement family income. They face many obstacles, however, while searching for jobs. For example, due to language barriers and isolation in the household, they do not have adequate access to necessary information and

resources. Furthermore, some employers mistreat these foreign spouses, who often are unaware of their legal rights and lack social support.

Lack of Social Network and Support

Since these “foreign brides” come to Taiwan alone, they lack a social network to serve as effective social support after they are married. Most of the immigrant women from Southeast Asia cannot speak and read Chinese, especially Mandarin. This language barrier makes it even more difficult for them to build new social network in Taiwan. Yi-Ching from Thailand has described some of the difficulties she has faced:

I was both happy and afraid when I arrived in Taiwan the first day. I told myself that, no matter what happens, it's my destiny. I didn't realize that because of language barriers my mother-in-law and I would have many misunderstandings and problems. At that time, I didn't have any friends to talk to and didn't know what to do. I cried alone in my room everyday ... Now when I look back, I see that it is not that they didn't treat me well, but rather that I thought they were being mean to me because I didn't understand what they were saying.

Although Taiwan has passed a law against domestic violence and provided various services, such efforts are of no real assistance to immigrant women due to (1) language barriers and the resulting lack of access to information and (2) the fact social workers and other service employees are not properly trained to handle multicultural issues.

Prejudice and Discrimination

“Foreign brides” have been commonly construed by the governmental agencies, media, and general public as a “social problem” and often attached to such terms as “fake marriage, real prostitution” and “the deteriorating quality of the next generation.” Elsewhere I have analyzed how these images are constructed by the media and governmental agencies without any substantial data (Hsia 1997; 夏曉鵬 2001). It is sufficient to say that governmental agencies and media have become what Becker called a “moral entrepreneur,” and their definitional work of the transnational marriages and those involved become the dominant discourse, in which immigrant women, their husbands and families are constructed as “inferior other”.

The most recent illustration is the discourse on the “the new Taiwan children” (新台灣之子). The rising number of children born to immigrant women has spurred media reports that claim a propensity among immigrant children to delayed development. Many governmental projects have in fact aimed to solve such

“problems.” Not supported by reliable data (夏曉鵬 2004), these claims are instead based on the assumption that since the immigrant women are from the developing countries, they therefore lack the skills necessary to educate their own children—an argument which clearly has racist and class overtones.

This social construction by the media and government has a strong impact on the public perception of immigrant women. A national survey released in November, 2003, reveals that 60% of those interviewed believed that the government should restrict the number of immigrant women and 20% felt that equal treatment did not need to be given to either “foreign brides” or “Mainland brides.”

This unfriendly environment has left a cloud over transnational marriages. For instance, during the earlier stage of the marriage, the family of the groom often worries that the bride will run away or steal money. This fear was heightened given that Taiwan’s immigration rules used to state that foreign brides must leave Taiwan after their first six months of residence in Taiwan. The women often used this opportunity to return to their home countries—sometimes posing a crucial test of the transnational marriage. Before returning home to Indonesia, Shei-Fen’s mother-in-law reminded her, “You should hurry back, otherwise people will begin to talk about you.” Although she only went home for a week, neighbors began to ask, “Has your daughter-in-law come back?” The mother-in-law was angry: “It was like they were watching some kind of play, just waiting to laugh at us!” Also worried that the new bride would run away (as many people had warned), the mother-in-law sighed, “It’s hard to have a foreign bride as a daughter-in-law. You don’t know if she’s sincere or not. What if she runs away?” Whenever the foreign bride wishes to leave home or remit money to her family abroad, it strengthens the stereotype of “foreign brides” popularized by the media. Shu-Hsien’s first husband died, and she then married her Taiwanese husband. Soon thereafter she started to send money back to Vietnam to help support her child from the previous marriage. This led to a long-standing argument with her husband. Shu-Hsien later decided to return to Vietnam, and did not contact her husband in Taiwan. Her husband and his family and friends concluded this problem, “You see, it’s just like what they say in the papers! She just came to Taiwan for money.” (Hsia, 2004; 夏曉鵬, 2002)

Even if the “foreign brides” live up to the expectations placed upon them, they still cannot change popular preconceptions. One happily married man said, “My wife is great, and she gets along well with my family. But other people might not have the same luck [with foreign brides]. I’ve heard stories about women who run away.” The force of real experiences with “foreign brides” is not enough to overpower the image of “foreign brides” created by the media.

There is often friction in transnational marriages that leads to conflict, which in

turn strengthens discrimination against Third World countries. For instance, when questioned about high fees, a matchmaker retorted by saying that, “There are a lot of procedures and you have to give ‘red envelopes’ to [bribe] officials if you want to hurry things up. You know how it is in underdeveloped countries. Everyone wants money. Ha!” In addition, “foreign brides” often send money home, which can be a burden to the agricultural and working class families of their husbands, which are not wealthy to begin with. This is often a source of conflict. I have met many husbands of “foreign brides” who do not view their wives’ desire to send money home as a result of Third World poverty. Instead, they blame the women: “You see, they just come to Taiwan for money.”

I have accompanied Taiwanese men and their families numerous times to Indonesia and Vietnam to meet prospective brides or visit the families of their wives. Often times the men and families reveal their explanation of the poverty of Southeast Asian countries through casual comments. During one such trip in Jakarta, the family and I visited a park with a large lawn. The mother of the Taiwanese man cried out, “What a waste of land! If this were in Taiwan, someone would have planted crops on that land long ago.” The other companions from Taiwan all agreed, and someone else added, “When I arrived at my wife’s home, the living room was empty, without even a chair. If it were Taiwan, even if the family didn’t have money for furniture, they would have piled some stones up to make a chair.” Another added, “The people here are poor because they’re lazy. The land here is so fertile, how can they not make money?” The minute differences perceived by people from the “core” countries are interpreted as problems resulted from the essence of people from the periphery. Even things as minute as taking a shower can often become issues that lead to conflicts. Many husbands and families of the “foreign brides” complain that the women take showers three times a day: “They just don’t know how to save money. No wonder they are so undeveloped.”

This essentialism is thus used to explain the underdevelopment of the periphery, ignoring the historical and dynamic relationship between the periphery and capitalism. Guided by this framework, the unequal division of labor between core/semi-periphery and periphery constructs the personal and gender relations among those involved in the transnational marriages, that is, the personalization and engendering of the international division of labor (ibid).

Immigrant women therefore have constantly encountered prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives. Katy from Cambodia once tearfully shared her feelings about the tremendous pressure:

We foreign mothers can only get 50 points [out of 100 perfect points] no matter

how hard we try ... We are also pregnant for 10 months and since the very first day our children saw sunlight [when they were born] I have been worried about them. How can I not take good care of them and teach them?! But no matter how hard we try, whenever the grandparents hear babies cry, they say we don't care enough for them! People think we don't know how to teach our children. Should anything happen to the children, they blame it on us!"

Some scholars contend that the influx of a large number of “foreign brides” has contributed to a more multicultural society in Taiwan, turning the island into a “global village.” These transnational marriages do not, however, lead to “local internationalization,” as transnational marriages crystallize an unequal international division of labor into personal relationships. We can therefore boldly assert that transnational marriages are the deepest state of capital internationalization. These commodified transnational marriages link together the men and women most seriously affected by unequal development. The marriages are the flip side of capital internationalization. These transnational marriages also add an understanding and acceptance of the international division of labor into people’s stock of knowledge, and among interpersonal relationships.

“Local internationalization” as romanticized by some scholars will only come about as a result of the purposeful mass consciousness-raising performed by a social movement. Furthermore, this social movement cannot be achieved merely by emphasizing the importance of “multiculturalism.” It needs to be enlightened by political economic analyses to pinpoint the formation process of unequal status and treatment among different cultures (夏曉鵬，2002; Hsia, 2004).

Constraints imposed by Laws and Regulations

All countries today allow the incorporation of immigrants into their citizenry through naturalization, although the criteria they use vary. Three principles describe extant practices: descent (*jus sanguinis*), place of birth (*jus soli*), and place of residence (*jus domicile*) (Faist 2000). Taiwan’s policy of incorporation has been based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, which is inclusive of people who can claim a common ancestral origin, real or imagined, and somewhat exclusive of people who do not share that commonality. The coupling of national identity and the political unit that was established nearly a century ago by Sun Yat-Sen, the founder of the Republic of China (ROC), reflects a traditional Chinese emphasis on lineage and ancestry in the context of Manchurian minority rule and foreign imperialism.

Taiwan’s rapid economic growth and slow but impressive democratization have raised skepticism concerning the nationalist ideology, and have led to a variety of

alternative conceptualization vying for dominance in a new nation-state building project currently in progress (Cheng 2002). Despite recent changes in the Nationality Law, however, it remains extremely difficult for those excluded from nationality to become citizens of Taiwan, except for spouses and children of Taiwanese citizens (Cheng 2002; Tseng 2004). Prior to the changes in the Nationality Law that occurred in the 1990s, foreigners could not be naturalized as Taiwanese citizens except for women married to Taiwanese men. Foreign women are seen as “naturalizable” because of their ability to continue Taiwanese “blood.” As the number of immigrant women from Southeast Asia and Mainland China increases, the worry about the “deterioration of the quality of next generation” has led the government to add “proof of financial security” (財力證明) as new requirements for those women to be naturalized. This traditional view of immigrant women is reflected in the fact that among all the projects aiming at “improving” the quality of immigrant women and their children, none has targeted immigrant women from developed countries, such as the United States and Japan.

Moreover, the welfare system in Taiwan is based on household units and identification cards (proof of citizenship). Consequently, immigrant women who have not obtained Taiwanese citizenship are often illegible for social services and welfare benefits (潘淑滿, 2004; 趙彥寧, 2004). Battered immigrant women without Taiwanese citizenship are deported if they get divorced; given that custody of the children is often granted to the Taiwanese fathers, this deportation would make them unable to return to Taiwan to visit their children. Consequently, battered immigrant women often decide to endure domestic violence for the sake of their children. The husband’s power over immigrant women is thus sanctioned by the state. The Taiwan government does not grant citizenship to foreign women as an inalienable right, but rather preconditions citizenship on their status as wife of a Taiwanese man.

Prospects for Multicultural Citizenship

The Struggle for Formal Citizenship Rights

As Piper and Roces (2003) point out, NGO advocacy work plays a crucial role in changing the immigration regulations in receiving countries. This effect is observable in Taiwan. Several NGOs in Taiwan had worked individually on immigrant and migrant issues for a few years. Things have changed, however, with the government’s proposal to establish a Bureau of Immigration. NGOs labeled this proposal xenophobic because its main functions were to police, investigate, and deport migrants and immigrants whom Bureau officials deemed illegal or dangerous.

Moreover, the legal grounds for deportation—such as “threatening national security” and “violating the public interest”—are vague articulations subject to manipulation. This proposed bureau does not provide any channels for migrants and immigrants to protect their rights. In order to promote both the human rights of immigrants and migrants, as well as the development of a healthy, pluralist society, a group of organizations concerned with human rights, immigration policy, foreign labor, and democracy have joined with lawyers and scholars with long-term interest in these issues to form the Alliance for Human Rights Legislation for Immigrants and Migrants (AHRLIM) in December, 2003.

The AHRLIM initiated a signature campaign to halt the deliberation on the amendments proposed by the Executive Yuan (Taiwan’s executive branch). After intense rounds of lobbying at the Legislative Yuan, the proposal was defeated. The Alliance stated its position clearly during their signature drive:

Every individual enjoys basic human rights, regardless of race, color, gender, language, religion, political or other creed, nationality, social status, wealth, place of birth, or any other social distinction. We support plural social development and the promotion of social dialogue designed to eradicate discrimination.

Based on this position, AHRLIM first spelled out three demands:

- 1) The “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” clearly states that national policies must not infringe upon the basic rights of the individual for reasons of race, nationality, gender, and so forth. Although Taiwan has signed this Declaration, the Executive Yuan’s plans for a Bureau of Immigration combine police, investigative, and judicial functions in a single body and make immigrants and migrants into a population of suspected criminals. The proposed Bureau would focus on preventive control, in effect covering up human rights’ violations in the name of security. We ask for an immediate halt to deliberation on the amendments proposed by the Executive Yuan and propose that public discussion of immigration policy be allowed to return to its basis in human rights.
- 2) Given that immigration policy in itself requires comprehensive planning, and given the need to prevent abuse of authority, we suggest related laws be reviewed. The draft governing the organization of the Bureau of Immigration proposed by the Executive Yuan is part of an organizational law that should be amended at the same time amendments are made to the related functional codes—i.e., the

Immigration and Entry and Exit Law—in order to establish the terms of concrete norms for a comprehensive immigration policy. Such a policy would address such issues as the specific tasks to be assumed by the Bureau of Immigration, channels for supervision of the Bureau and the handling of complaints, and jurisdictional divisions with other departments.

- 3) The draft proposal presented by the Executive Yuan for the organization of a Bureau of Immigration and related immigration codes are measures that directly affect the future of Taiwan’s immigration policy, including the organization and authority accorded to the actual administrative organs concerned. As such, it forms a crucial link in national immigration policy, affecting the rights of immigrants and migrants. National immigration policy further contains implicit ideas about social organization that will directly affect the way Taiwanese people imagine “citizenship” and identity. Hence, we ask that public debate on such an important matter be expanded such that immigrants, migrants, their families, and society-at-large may have a greater chance to participate in, and understand the stakes of making, such policy.

Since the government’s proposal was temporarily halted, the AHRLIM has been working on efforts to examine the government’s proposed amendments to the Immigration and Entry and Exit Law and draft the Alliance’s own proposal in order to establish acceptable norms for a comprehensive immigration policy. To this end the Alliance has held several rounds of public hearings at which they have invited NGOs, concerned citizens, and others to discuss the current immigration policy and related issues, including the principals of the Alliance’s draft on the amendments to the Immigration Law.

In addition to drafting the amendments to the Immigration Law, the AHRLIM has taken on several issues—such as condemning the official of Ministry of Education, who publicly said that immigrant women should not have too many children because of their “ill quality,” which is not at all supported by any solid research and reflects sheer prejudice and discrimination—in order to raise the public consciousness of the human rights issues of immigrants and migrants.

The Alliance has purposefully used such international conventions as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to push for a more inclusionary immigration policy. Since the ROC is not recognized by most international organizations, it has been the primary national anxiety to prove to the world that Taiwan has achieved the international standards on all grounds hoping to gain more support from international community for Taiwan to be recognized as an independent state. The AHRLIM’s

strategy is thus to radicalize all seemingly progressive political rhetoric—such as democracy, human rights, and multiculturalism—in order to challenge the *san juanis* tradition of incorporation as well as the sexism and racism embedded in many of Taiwan’s immigration laws and regulations.

As the result of long-term tension between the Taiwan and China, the DPP government has made great efforts to differentiate Taiwan as a state independent from China, not only politically but also culturally. Long before emerging victorious in the 2000 presidential election, the DPP had launched increasingly tense campaigns against the KMT government, using criticism of the “national language policy” as a quite effective means to weaken the legitimacy of KMT governance. Revitalization of ethnic languages has become a commonly accepted rhetoric, helping to in turn spread the concept of “multiculturalism.” The DPP government has carefully employed the concept of multiculturalism to portray its governance as being more democratic and progressive. For example, in his speech after winning a second presidential term Chen Shui-bian announced that Taiwan was a truly democratic and multicultural society, where “everyone is equal--whether you are from Tainan (his home county) or Vietnam.” To radicalize this politically correct rhetoric of multiculturalism, AHRLIM has argued that the mother tongues and cultures of these immigrant women should also be respected, the immigration policy should not be based on assimilation, and thus the *san juanis* tradition of incorporation should be changed.

The Struggle for Substantive Citizenship Rights

As mentioned previously, formal citizenship rights do not automatically guarantee substantive citizenship rights. NGO’s advocacy work is not sufficient to enhance the participation of immigrant women or to eradicate prejudice and discrimination.

For the immigrant women from Southeast Asia, language barriers are the first and foremost obstacles to their active participation in Taiwanese society. Looking to provide a tool to increase participation in Taiwan societies, a Chinese Literacy Program for the “foreign brides” was initiated on July 30, 1995. Inspired by Paulo Freire’s (1970) “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” and Augusto Boal’s (1979) “Theater of the Oppressed,” community efforts have sought to empower these immigrant women (Hsia 2006; 夏曉鵬 2003). In December 2003, in collaboration with local women these immigrant women have officially founded a national organization, TransAsia Sisters Association, Taiwan (TASAT, 南洋台灣姊妹會).

As the first step in a process of empowering immigrant women, offering Chinese courses does not always proceed smoothly. On the contrary, there can even be resentment among the immigrant women themselves. Freire (1970) has pointed out

the duality of the oppressed, meaning that the oppressed often internalize the oppressor consciousness. A few examples are illustrative: immigrant women married Taiwanese men are sometimes prejudiced against migrant women who work in Taiwan on contracts, women of one nationality resent women from another nationality, or women from one ethnic group resent women from another ethnic group of the same nationality. Similarly, the Taiwanese women volunteering to assist and help organize immigrant women also can face resentment, and even have their own prejudices against immigrant women (夏曉鵬 2004, 2005).

Generally speaking, however, learning Chinese has gradually enhanced the civic participation of immigrant women, making them better able to communicate with local Taiwanese and to create a network among themselves. The involvement of local Taiwanese volunteers also has helped create a more friendly environment for the immigrant women. At the first protest initiated by AHRLIM, immigrant women organized by TASAT were at the front line voicing their dissent by performing a short play in front of the Legislative Yuan. The immigrant women of TASAT have become significantly more active after their first protest, often participating in AHRLIM activities, speaking at protests or press conferences, and sharing their experiences and opinions at various activities.

In addition to empowering immigrant women and Taiwanese volunteers, TASAT has also made efforts to change the public perceptions of immigrant women. Through such methods as seminars, writings, and films TASAT and her members constantly strive to create a sense of *betweenness* among Taiwanese and the immigrants. This is done in part by pointing out the similarities that exist between the biographies of both. Stories used to create empathy include the facts that most Taiwanese citizens are descendents of immigrants who arrived at different times in Taiwan's history and that many Taiwanese citizens have experienced prejudice and discrimination migrating to first-world countries.

The voices of immigrant women often are able to help subvert the public image of immigrant women as submissive, problematic, and incompetent. Via theater, paintings, writings, and other types of sharing at various forums and activities, immigrant women have changed many Taiwanese's stereotypes (Hsia 2004). Another more recent effort to change public perceptions is TASAT's offering of public language and cultural courses on Southeast Asia that are taught by the immigrant women themselves. In September 2005, the first book of a collection of writings, paintings, and pictures of immigrant women was published. Entitled "Don't Call Me a Foreign Bride" (不要叫我外籍新娘), the book has caught public attention (The first print was sold out in less than a month). As the editor of this book, I have noticed that one of the most common responses from readers has been amazement over how

talented immigrant women are, and how the book has made many readers so much more appreciative of multiculturalism and aware of their own prejudices.

The Impasse of Multicultural Citizenship

As Faulks (2003) has pointed out, values of capitalism, and liberal and republican citizenship are in contradiction. As market values become more dominant, values of citizenship are often forced to take the backseats. Globalization further intensifies this contradiction and immigrant/migrant issues have become symptoms of this contradiction.

Although multicultural citizenship has been viewed by many as the ideal to which we should struggle, as Kofman et al. (2000) point out, multiculturalism is not always an entirely positive development. In practice, multiculturalism may encourage and fix essentialist and static views of migrant identities. To take Sweden as an example, although associations are generously funded, the government determines which ones are worth being funded and is thus able to exert considerable social control. It tends to encourage organizations based on ethnicity at the local level, thus making it difficult to build bridges and migrant political alliances across these differences. Alund and Schierup (1993: 140) thus speak of “prescribed multiculturalism” whereby immigrants and ethnic organizations are co-opted into the corporatist state and are politically marginalized. While seemingly supportive of multiculturalism by financing certain immigrant and ethnic NGOs, it took many years for Sweden to pass legislation specifically banning ethnic discrimination.

Critics point out that an excessive emphasis on difference leads to short-shrift of problems that are shared, and to a more combative anti-racist stance. Such criticism has appeared in several countries, such as Netherlands and Sweden. The Netherlands Minorities Policy was altered in response to criticism of the government’s emphasis on culture. Just as in other models of incorporation, official rhetoric does not necessarily correspond to the reality of migrants’ lives. Nor does it always correspond to any acceptance of these migrants by the wider society, which may demand a high degree of conformity to dominant values. Such has been an increasingly vociferous critique of and disillusionment with Swedish multiculturalism, which has left migrants with unequal rights and leading segregated existences (Alund 1998).

Multicultural citizenship runs the risk of essentializing and freezing timeless cultural differences within the boundaries of homogeneous ethnic groups. Feminists, in particular, have leveled critiques against the patriarchal nature of multicultural policies that support male leadership and the persistence of traditional values. These

critics seek to force us to ask ourselves who is really empowered to interpret and impose cultural norms. State and other institutions may accept cultural norms that communities have transplanted from their home society (such as the conduct of women in private and public) without any real considerations of the changes in the economic and social environment in which a custom is put into practice. Multiculturalism may represent a more liberal tolerance of what goes on in the private sphere of different migrant groups; this can, however, still leave intact gender inequalities and repressive practices towards women. The case of domestic violence exemplifies the tolerance of practices in the private sphere on grounds of non-intervention in the customs of others.

These critiques of multicultural citizenship are also valid in Taiwan. Although the government cannot negate the demands for multiculturalism, it has taken the concept in another direction. By various cultural activities such as “traditional” Southeast Asian dances and songs, the government aims at projecting itself as appreciating multiculturalism. A few instances, however, indicate that a more radical version of multiculturalism has been hindered. Recently, Council of Cultural Development (文建會) organized several multicultural activities and invited TASAT to perform. When I informed the council’s contact persons that TASAT can sing a song and perform a play, they were very pleased. Upon hearing, however, that the song and the play were about the lives and experiences of immigrants—including isolation and discrimination they face in Taiwan, they immediately asked if TASAT could perform traditional songs and dances instead. The council eventually decided not to include TASAT in the program. Similar incidences occurred when other governmental agencies and private enterprises found TASAT to be too radical and decide not to offer funding. Without funds to provide economic resources for the immigrant women who are usually in need of work and financial support, TASAT runs the risks of losing members given that empowerment as an ideal is not enough to live on.

It is becoming clearer that the state and private companies can only tolerate NGOs that advocate a version of multiculturalism that is unthreatening to the status quo. NGOs such as TASAT that practice a form of contentions politics (Tarrow 2003) that challenges the existent structures—such as ideology and the legal system—find it increasingly more difficult to gain access to governmental funds, which most NGOs rely on. Without funding, the more militant NGOs find it even more difficult to survive. Some NGOs are very aware of the danger of losing funds, so they comply to the demands of the state and the issues of immigrant women’s empowerment and subjectivity are far from their concerns. The original objective to help immigrant women has in some cases been replaced by the goal to gain funds, which can lead

such organizations to consciously or unconsciously exoticizing and marginalizing immigrant women. One indicator of this trend is that the NGOs most successful in raising funds in the name of helping immigrant women have not joined AHRLIM—despite having been invited to join when several NGOs initiated planning meetings for the alliance. More disturbingly, many NGOs manipulate the image of multiculturalism in order to acquire funding from governments and corporations. For instance, I once observed that in order to convince a government agency to fund its organization, one NGO had its Taiwanese staff pretend to be Vietnamese by wearing traditional Vietnamese costume.

In short, multicultural citizenship seems ideal for challenging the exclusionary model of incorporation. Multiculturalism can, however, soon be co-opted without changing the substantive rights or even formal rights of citizenship for the immigrants. As Faulks (2003) point out, capitalist globalization further intensifies the contradiction between the values of market and citizenship. Without linking the struggle for citizenship rights to the broader issues of capitalist globalization, immigrant women—especially those in economic need—can barely practice substantive citizenship rights even if they do manage to obtain formal citizenship rights. While being aware of the impasses, we should also realize the prospects of multicultural citizenship. The case of the immigrant movement in Taiwan illustrates that multicultural citizenship can be employed as a narrative strategy to gradually force the historically exclusionary model of incorporation to be more inclusionary by radicalizing the politically correct concept of multiculturalism. In other words, from a dynamic perspective of social transformation, I would argue that in the trend of capitalist globalization, multicultural citizenship should be seen as a strategic rhetoric rather than an ideal goal itself.

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