

Chapter 4

Victims of Human Trafficking or Perpetrators of Fraudulent Marriage?

– Foreign Spouses Engaging in the Sex Industry in Taiwan

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Introduction

I met Lihua at an immigration detention centre in Taiwan. She had been caught by the police at the betel nut stand where she worked as a *binlang xishi* (betel nut beauty).¹ The police charged Lihua with coming to Taiwan to engage in prostitution in the name of marriage. When I talked to her, she was sitting on a chair, her hands cuffed. The handcuffs implied that she was a ‘danger’ to me and to society. The captain in charge of the detention centre warned me to keep some distance from her in case she attacked me and escaped the detention centre. From our conversation, I learned that Lihua was 21 years old, had migrated from Indonesia to Taiwan to marry, but ended up working in the sex industry because her marriage was not happy. In order to escape her husband, she ran away and found a job as a *binlang xishi* with her friend’s help. In the beginning, she hesitated to accept the job because she knew she would need to provide sexual services. However, her lack of education and professional skills and her identity as a ‘runaway bride’ forced her to make this choice. Lihua had only been working for about two weeks when she got caught. When I met her, she looked confused and depressed, and incessantly asked me to

help her get out. 'I just want to go home now. I had the bad luck to meet my husband. I did come to Taiwan to get married. They can check my documents. They are real.'

Foreign brides engaging in sex work is commonly reported news in contemporary Taiwan. There are many sensational stories about *jia jiehun*, *zhen maiyin* (fake marriage, real prostitution) reported in the mass media every day. The following newspaper article exemplifies the supposed link between fake marriage and prostitution:

Title: Foreign Bride Bargirls Playing Crazily

According to Apple Daily's investigation, recently Taipei has seen nearly a hundred runaway Vietnamese brides swarming into the sex industry such as Karaoke bars, nightclubs, tea shops and so on. They are popular for cheap prices and being fearless, daring to play any kind of games with customers. It is suspected that there would be a foreign bride brokering company in charge of recruiting and controlling those runaway brides, and forming the biggest 'runaway bride sex work ring' in the north of Taiwan...According to a statistics by the National Police Agency, there are about ten thousand Southeast Asian women missing in Taiwan, and Vietnamese account for two-thirds. It is believed that most of them would have been trapped into the sex industry.

(Apple Daily 2005)

In the early era of transnational marriage studies, many feminist scholars linked 'mail-order bride' arrangements to prostitution, trafficking in women and human rights abuses to represent Third World women's situation in a transnational setting (Anderson 1993, Barry 1979, Barry et

al 1983, Cao 1987, Demleitner 1994, Glodava and Onizuka 1994, McConnell 1992, Meng 1994). They consider incidences of domestic violence and engaging in prostitution the evidence of their being 'trafficked', where marriage is simply a ruse for traffickers to trap women into prostitution. Today, even though an increasing number of studies work to counter this dominant discourse (Ahmad 2005, Aradau 2008, Brennan 2008 & 2005, Constable 2003, del Rosario 2005, Hsia 1997, Kempadoo 2005, Kempadoo et al 2005, Piper 1999, Simons 2001), the association between transnational brokered marriage and trafficking in women is still widely assumed by the state and many women's groups and activists.

Nonetheless, there has been a significant increase in karaoke bars and betel nut stands hiring Southeast Asian and mainland Chinese migrant women as hostesses and nut sellers. Some of the bars and stands blatantly use such phrases as 'Vietnamese sisters' or 'Mainland Chinese sisters' in naming their businesses to imply cheap prices and exotic services. In addition, some *yuenan xiaochi dian* (Vietnamese snack shops) in the south of Taiwan have also become places for prostitution, selling food in the front and sex in the back. Many women involved in the business are 'runaway brides' or housewives who hide their jobs from their husbands. Some scholars working on women's migratory experiences have documented women's agency in the interconnection between sex work and marriage. While most of these studies focus on women's role changing from sex workers to wives or lovers of their clients (Faier 2009, Brennan 2004, Mix and Piper 2003), few have paid attention to the opposite situation where foreign wives become sex workers. In order to address this gap in our understanding, the Chapter addresses the question of how foreign wives and their marriages are perceived and represented when they are involved in sex work and, relatedly, on the way in which knowledge about trafficking is

produced in Taiwan in relation to this group of women. My intention is not to confirm the stereotype of 'foreign brides' as victims in relation to their husbands as criminals, but to look at the interconnection between their marriages and their participation in the sex industry in the discursive formation of trafficking in women. By doing so, I hope not only to deconstruct the widely held understanding of their marriages as 'a guise for real prostitution' but also to challenge the distinction of the real/fake marriage that is defined by the state's 'fraudulent marriage' screening mechanism, which I will discuss further below.

Discussion in the chapter draws on interviews with twelve 'runaway brides'² at immigration detention centres and at a karaoke bar in Taiwan, immigration officials in charge of visa issues in Taiwan and Taiwanese consular officers in Vietnam, as well as marriage brokers from Taiwan and local matchmakers in Vietnam. I also collected data through participant observation of one-on-one visa interviews and fieldwork on transnational marriage brokerage in Vietnam and Taiwan. These runaway cases show that once a foreign wife runs away and enters the sex industry, her marriage will very likely be regarded as fraudulent by local authorities and she will be represented by the mass media as a perpetrator who has come to Taiwan seeking money in the guise of marriage. In this chapter, therefore, I aim to contest, first of all, the common error in Taiwan of judging a brokered marriage as real or fake based on its success or failure. Secondly, I seek to deconstruct the myth that fake marriages can be efficiently prevented with the state's visa interview mechanism. I argue that the mechanism is unreliable because 'fake couples' are hard to detect when their documents have legal validity, their background differences are socially acceptable, and they are able to provide the consular officer with correct information about each other. I contend that no matter what criteria are set to determine whether a marriage is real or

fake we cannot define what a 'real' marriage ought to be as we cannot place parameters on people's love.

Transnational Brokered Marriage and Human Trafficking in Taiwan

In the emerging international campaign led by the United Nations and the United States to 'fight' trafficking in human globally, Taiwan is not absent. According to some estimates by the United Nations, there are 2.7 million victims of trafficking around the world; of these, 80 per cent are women and children. Further such figures suggest that around 10 per cent of the migrant women working the streets as prostitutes are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes (UNICRI 2010). To combat human trafficking, the United Nations has cooperated with governments of its member states and international non-governmental organisations around the world to establish anti-trafficking programs and facilitate relevant policy making and enforcement. For Taiwan, actively participating in international affairs and promptly responding to international 'problems' is a significant strategy in claiming legitimacy in the international community in the face of ongoing sovereignty tensions with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Joining the global fight against human trafficking therefore in part symbolises Taiwan's effort to connect globally. In Taiwan, transnational brokered marriages had not attracted much attention in the domestic and international communities until the early 2000s when the number of transnational marriages reached an all-time high.³ In 2006, the American Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report placed Taiwan on the Tier 2 Watch List for perceived lack of effort to combat human trafficking. According to the report,

Taiwan is primarily a destination for men, women, and children trafficked for forced labour

and sexual exploitation.... Women and children, primarily from Vietnam, are trafficked to Taiwan through the use of fraudulent marriages, deceptive employment offers, and illegal smuggling for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labour....The recruitment of foreign brides primarily from Vietnam, but also from other Southeast Asian nations, is poorly controlled and, as a consequence, has become a major conduit for the trafficking of girls and women into the Taiwan sex trade, as well as for forced labour.

(US Department of State 2006)

This report is believed to have significantly influenced Taiwan's international reputation as a newly developed nation. In response, the government began raiding suspicious entertainment venues call girl/escort agencies. At the same time anti-trafficking policymaking was increasing in pace: the government promulgated the Anti-Trafficking Act in 2006 and passed the Anti-Trafficking Law in 2009. During this period of time, the number of conferences, workshops and training classes on how to locate and identify victims of human trafficking held by central and local governments and civil groups burgeoned. It was at this time that banning the transnational marriage brokering business emerged as a policy directive in Taiwan.⁴ In fact, before the 2006 American TIP Report came out, the government had already planned to curb the influx of female marriage migrants. A one-on-one visa interview became required of Chinese spouses in 2003 and other foreign spouses in 2005 respectively, and after the interview mechanism was carried out, the total number of transnational marriages sharply dropped. With these visible efforts and figures, Taiwan's ranking in the annual TIP Report was finally raised in the next year's report, so enabling Taiwan to avoid economic sanctions by the United States.

The Identification System: Victims or Perpetrators

After the Anti-Trafficking Law was passed, the government undertook its most important task to follow: identifying trafficking cases. How to establish a system of knowledge that helps identify, rescue and then rehabilitate victims became an urgent matter for the government. One immigration official expressed his excitement to me about the creation of the law, 'now whenever I find foreign wives in the sex industry, I ask myself if it is a trafficking case. I try to apply the trafficking law to all cases I encounter first' (personal communication, May, 2007). Since the law was passed, foreign women involved in 'fake marriage, real prostitution' are no longer simply recognised as 'perpetrators'. Rather, it is increasingly more likely that they will be identified as 'victims'. In the immigration official's words, it is because 'we need more victims to prove our efforts to combat trafficking in women'. However, how to identify a victim in practice remains unclear. Misrecognising trafficking crimes always frustrates the police and immigration officials who enforce the law at the frontline. Another immigration official said,

It is very frustrating that we work very hard to find out victims, save them and prosecute the suspected traffickers, but the judge does not take our testimonies and evidence to determine the case as a TIP crime. We came across many cases in which Vietnamese spouses engaged in the sex industry and were exploited by their employers. Yet given that these Vietnamese women come from a world of poor living conditions, they could endure poor working conditions and bad treatments they were given in Taiwan without fully sensing that they were being exploited as forced labourers. We have to educate and remind them of their human rights. I urge others to pay more attention to this type of 'potential victims', but most judges do not buy in to this idea. I have emphasised many times that although these foreign

women are unaware of their victimhood, they are indeed ‘victims’ in our standard of human rights. The judge’s denial of the case we prosecute as a trafficking crime frustrates us and causes a loss of morale of our colleagues.

(Personal communication, May, 2007)

According to the official, constructing a ‘victim’ identity involves teaching by the police, learning by the ‘potential victim’, and confirmation by the judge’s verdict. Sometimes, ‘real victims’ have to be educated in order to be considered victims because,

[I]n many cases, the victims of trafficking may not readily identify themselves as such. For example, individuals tricked into forced labor through the imposition of extortive fees may require education, or those who are psychologically attached to a sex trafficker as a ‘boyfriend’ may require counselling before they understand that they are being exploited and their human rights violated.

(UNODC 2009: 41)

According to the guidelines developed by the UNODC on how to identify victims, women’s initial consent to be transported is irrelevant and meaningless for conviction of trafficking cases because women’s position of vulnerability makes them easily subject to the trafficker’s exploitation through force, coercion or deception. The concern for women is appreciated. However, the assumption of victimisation risks ignoring migrant women’s ability to decide to migrate and oversimplifies the complex dynamic between the women and the trafficker; categorising them as victims versus perpetrators would be too simplistic (Constable 2006,

Nakamatsu 2005). Several women at the detention centre shared with me how they were taught by their brokers to insist that they were tricked into prostitution. As we can see, the identity of 'victims' is formed and sometimes manipulated not only by law enforcing agencies but by a range of other actors as well, including the 'victim' herself. In this sense, the police and the victims ironically become complicit in the knowledge production of 'victimhood' of human trafficking. In fact, as Natasha Ahmad's study on undocumented Bangladeshi sex workers in India has showed, no matter how the women decide to engage in prostitution, voluntarily or by deception, all of them go with a dream of bettering their life. They all resort to fraudulent means aided by professional middlemen whom they usually know and trust, and face the same risks of exploitation, harassment and abuse (Ahmad 2005: 224–5). Ahmed's observation suggests that the simple categorisation of some women as perpetrators of smuggling and the others as victims of trafficking make not only the diversity of migrant women's life stories but also the complexity of human relationships hidden.

The Identification System: Real or fake marriages?

In the *UN Combating Trafficking in Persons* handbook, certain kinds of marriage that are subsumed as suspicious trafficking activities include: early marriage, forced or servile marriage, arranged marriage, compensation marriage, transactional marriage, temporary marriage or marriage for childbearing (UNODC 2009: 15). Nicole Constable (2003) has critiqued such assumption of a connection between transacted or brokered marriages and trafficking which assume women, especially those from developing countries, are vulnerable subjects who are unable to make a rational decision and always subject to coercion or deception by middlemen. When the stereotype is applied to foreign spouses involved in the sex business, it is commonly

perceived by the public that their marriages are fraudulent and that they are either perpetrators of 'fake marriage, real prostitution' or victims of 'trafficking in women'. The image is constructed through the mass media just as the abovementioned news report implied in its narrative: these foreign women are trapped into the sex industry by the evil marriage brokers and need to be rescued.

As mentioned earlier, the Taiwanese government has taken measures to prevent fraudulent marriages. In addition to the ban against profit-oriented marriage brokerage, the one-on-one interview institution has also contributed to curbing the influx of marriage migrants. After the interview institution was carried out, the number of visas issued to mainland Chinese and other foreign spouses sharply dropped, for example, about 70 per cent for Chinese spouses and about 40 per cent for other Southeast Asian spouses in one year. However, whether the decrease can be recognised as the success of the government's screening method for fraudulent marriages is debatable,⁵ because a higher visa rejection rate and a decrease in the total number of Taiwanese men looking for foreign brides could also contribute to the result. Many brokers shared the same feeling that the thirst regarding transnational marriages in Taiwan has been quenched.⁶ They complained that the stricter and more complicated visa application procedure plus longer waiting time to get the visa has scared off many men who were considering marrying foreign brides.

It is also questionable if fraudulent marriages can be adequately screened out with the current interview mechanism. Several 'paper husbands'⁷ and two fraudulent marriage brokers I met shared with me how they successfully went through the visa interview with careful arrangements. In fact, many consular officers in charge of the visa interview have secretly

admitted to the difficulty of determining which marriages are fraudulent.⁸ Consular officers are trained to detect suspicious marriages based on several unwritten rules, such as an age difference of more than 20 years, a bad marriage record in the past, a lack of evidence of regular communication, or the couple's inability to answer questions about his or her spouse correctly. Most officials know well that these principles are unreasonable to apply to each case. For this kind of 'instant marriage', the couple would only spend three days to one week to get to know each other before applying for a marriage certificate and submitting a visa application.

To facilitate passing the interview, brokers usually help the couples prepare the interview by giving them a script in which all of the possible interview questions and answers are listed. Such questions include: how they met each other,⁹ what their spouse's family backgrounds are, how to describe the character of the bride's house, and other personal questions that would involve the partner's privacy. In addition, brokers also arrange rehearsals before the couples go to the interview. It is very common to see brokers helping the couples review the answers in the waiting room of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) while waiting for a visa interview. It is ironic that the real couples are taught to tell a lie based on the version the broker provides in order to pass the interview. Many real couples I met unfortunately failed the interview because they were unable to answer questions completely in such a tense atmosphere. Among my informants, one couple failed four times and was preparing for the fifth when I visited the wife's family. They attributed the failure to their age difference as the husband was the same age as his father-in-law. Yet even though nobody approved their marriage, including the wife's family, they never thought of giving up.¹⁰ Finally they passed the interview and the

wife got a visa on their fifth try, which took two years and a considerable number of airfares for the husband to meet the wife.¹¹

Ironically, the Taiwanese ‘paper husbands’ I met in Vietnam seemed to have confidence in passing the visa interview. They were two young men around 30 years old. They both had a job despite its low salary, and were never married before. They went to the interview with real documents, and registered their marriage with a local authority. The paper husbands also visited their paper wife’s house to get necessary information needed for the visa interview. In general, it seems that as long as the conditions of the paper couple meet the consular officer’s expectations of the age difference between the couple, the husband’s financial ability, and other criteria such as the frequency of communication between each other, the probability for them to pass the visa interview would be the same as real couples. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the interview system does not function to prevent fraudulent marriages at all. Rather, it means that in the end it not only hinders the potential crime of fake marriages but also discourage ordinary people to marry foreign women.

Questioning the fraudulent marriage screening mechanism does not suggest that the state therefore improve its skills to define what a real marriage ought to be. On the contrary, I aim to challenge the myth that fake and real marriages can efficiently be distinguished from each other using some imposed mechanism of classification. In other words, the question what kind of marriage can be counted as real or fake is epistemically problematic in itself. To show how the distinction could be blurred in reality, I would like to use Lihua’s story as one example of how a perceived ‘real’ marriage would turn out to be ‘fake’ in the end.

Lihua's Story

Lihua was introduced to me by the captain of the local immigration office in the south of Taiwan for her becoming involved in 'fake marriage, real prostitution'. She is Chinese Indonesian from Kalimantan. She has four siblings and worked at a restaurant before marrying a Taiwanese. She wanted to marry a Taiwanese husband because she wanted to help alleviate her parents' financial burden and she believed that she would form a family and enjoy a happy marital life afterwards, as many of her friends do. She came to Taiwan with a dream, yet unfortunately, her dream was crushed soon thereafter due to her bad luck in marrying a man who did not treat her well and exploited her labour.

As with many of her friends, Lihua also met her husband through a broker. At the matchmaking meeting, she was told that the man was 40 years old, never married, and that once she married to Taiwan, she did not need to go out to work. However, after moving to Taiwan, she found the fact was totally opposite. Her husband was married once and had fathered two children aged 9 and 11. He owns a farm planting black fungus as a family business, and asked her to help as a worker. She was promised to get paid as other employees for a salary of US\$600 per month, but only got US\$90 in the end after many unknown expenses were deducted. She was asked to work as an employee in the daytime and a housewife at night. She had to get up at six a.m. to prepare breakfast for all family members, and then go to the farm to work from eight in the morning till six in the evening. After getting off work, she needed to rush home to prepare dinner and do other housework, which extended until eleven p.m. Nobody in the family helped her and she was

not allowed to take a rest before going to bed. What made her feel worse was that she had no private or leisure time to enjoy on weekends.

The factors that influenced Lihua's decision to run away from her husband were based not just on the physical suffering but also on spiritual torment. She said,

I felt I was not respected by all family members and was treated more like a maid than a wife at home. For example, I used to get blamed by my parents-in-law for asking their grandchildren to wash dishes. They thought it was my duty. It seemed that I was requested to take care of the children's daily life but could not rebuke them. Moreover, I had to meet my husband's sexual need almost every night after finishing overloaded housework. He insulted me with abusive language if I rejected. I was granted no time to go to Chinese language classes, and therefore got few chances to reach outside world and establish my own social network. I felt very isolated and painful when staying at home. I wanted to go out. I missed my family and I wanted to go home.

(Personal interview, April, 2007)

A strong desire for freedom eventually triggered her runaway plan. One day when she worked at the farm, she saw the front gate was open and decided to leave that instant. She went to a friend and inquired about job opportunities everywhere. One of her friends grudgingly introduced her to a job at the betel nut kiosk, told her what they did in detail, and asked her to consider it carefully. She struggled a lot but eventually decided to take the job. 'It was really a painful decision. I dared not to tell anyone. I did not want to do the job but I knew if I wanted to save enough

money in a very short period of time so as to go back home sooner, I'd better take it', she said. According to her, many employees working there were 'runaway brides', among whom some were 'real wives' and some were 'paper wives'. Not long after she was caught, her marriage broker also got caught for his involvement in smuggling people with fake documents, which made her case even more suspicious. Although she believed her real documents would prove her innocence, she was still labelled by immigration officials as an opportunist who took advantage of marriage for prostitution.

Three other 'runaway brides', who served as hostesses at a karaoke bar I visited, shared similar stories. Another foreign spouse, Xiaohua from Vietnam also entered work due to an unhappy marriage. As she said,

Having realised my husband is a drug addict after moving to Taiwan, I decided to live on my own. I was not well informed of his background beforehand; otherwise I would not have married him. Nevertheless, I tried hard to make our life better, but he is very lazy, not willing to find a job, and just wants to depend on me.... He never cares about me, so I do not care about him either. Now I live alone close to my working place, and come home only on weekends to give him some money. I am totally fine with my current situation as long as he does not come to bother me...I feel okay now because I have a job, despite its unpleasantness. For now I just want to earn money as much as possible for myself and my natal family, and then divorce my husband after getting my identification card.

(Personal interview, March, 2007)

'Fake marriage' stories are reported sensationally by the mass media without being carefully investigated. People readily judge a marriage as fake based on the foreign wife's marital situation and her occupation. That is, if she does not live with her husband, then her marriage is suspicious, and if her job is sex-related, then her marriage must be fraudulent. At the same time, the woman will also be judged morally by how she gets involved in the business: if she is violently forced, then she is a victim of trafficking worthy of sympathy. Otherwise she will be regarded as a perpetrator who should receive punishment not only for violating immigration regulations but also for disobeying social morality. Unfortunately, few people are willing to listen to these women's voices, and to reflect on the distinction between real/fake marriage and victims/perpetrators in the public discourses about transnational marriage and anti-trafficking.

Using Lihua's case, I would like to critique these dichotomies that form people's perception of 'foreign brides' who engage in sex work. The concept that 'real marriage' is formed on the basis of 'love' while 'fake marriage' on the basis of 'material needs' is problematic. This simplified distinction ignores the fact that even if economics triggers women to migrate through marriage, it does not mean they do not desire to have fulfilling affective relationship with their partners at the same time. In addition, if the dream of a happy marital life does not come true, they would need to make money on their own in order to live a relatively independent life. When looking for jobs, unfortunately, their lack of cultural and social capital plus the soon-overdue legal status always limit their choices. Under the circumstances, getting a job in sex-related businesses becomes an option. We should recognise that sex work is never an easy job for foreign spouses, especially if they have not yet gained their citizenship and have children to take care of. They have to face the risk of being repatriated if caught. Therefore, their situations are much more complicated and

worthy of more nuanced and in-depth treatment. Without looking into how they are brought to the sex-related industry, these ceaseless reports of 'fake marriages' only homogenise these women's migration and marriage experiences and will in turn reinforce the stereotype of foreign spouses as potential trouble makers.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to deconstruct the binaries of victim/perpetrator of human trafficking and real/fake marriage in the representation of foreign spouses engaging in the sex industry in Taiwan. I examined how the victim identification and fake marriage screening mechanisms malfunction and consequently reinforce stereotypes of 'foreign brides'. I argue that the knowledge about victims of trafficking is actually constructed by different social forces, not only the police and immigration officials, but also by mass media and the arrestees who respond to the call of 'enlightenment of victimhood' by the authority. In this sense, the arrestees have become conspirators in creating the identity of victims.

By pointing out the failure of the screening mechanism, I do not suggest that the mechanism thus needs to be improved accordingly. On the contrary, I demonstrate that the failure shows the very absurdity of judging a marriage as 'real' or 'fake' based on certain criteria and the consular officers' inner conviction whether the marriage is formed for 'love' or 'money'. I argue that even though many foreign women from developing countries would first consider the material condition of a marriage when deciding to marry a foreigner, their marriage should not simply be seen as morally suspicious and fake in the first place. We should not deny the fact that many middle and upper-class people consider their marriages in a similar manner but remain beyond

social censure. It is just because they are not thought to be potential 'social problem makers'. Only marginalised social groups like migrants from poorer countries are labelled as such.

Lihua's story helps us reflect on the widely held assumption that foreign spouses engaging in the sex industry are perpetrators of 'fake marriage' who migrate for prostitution in the guise of marriage. I do not intend to use Lihua's story to generalise other foreign spouses' migrant experiences and to reinforce the dichotomised stereotype of foreign wives as poor victims versus Taiwanese husbands as cruel perpetrators. Rather, I hope to tell people a familiar story from a different perspective. Revealing the dark side of the transnational marriage should not hinder our efforts from celebrating others with a happy ending.

Overall, I contend that we should avoid categorising these migrant women engaging in the sex industry as perpetrators of 'fake marriage, real prostitution', if not victims of human trafficking. The dualistic thinking will only lead us to continually stereotype them as innocent, vulnerable dupes who lack the ability to make a decision. Other than labelling them as such, there is a need to appreciate more of their multiple identities as mothers, daughters and wives who struggle for a better life for themselves and their families. Just as Lihua told me at the immigrant detention centre in the end,

I never expected to be treated as a criminal living in the prison-like place with handcuffs on my hands. I just wanted to be an ordinary wife and enjoy my familial life. Now I dared not to tell my mom what happened to me. She must be worried about me as I have not called her for two weeks. I used to call her every day before coming here. Could you help me give her

a call?

(Personal interview, May, 2007)

In reflecting on these women's situations, we cannot ignore the fact that to work in the sex business, they have to bear double anxieties of social discrimination and the fear of having their illegal status revealed. Once found by the police, they swell the ranks of detainees in the detention centre. In the public mind, they are all reduced to an icon in the anti-trafficking brochure and signboard, symbolising the state's efforts to respond to anti-trafficking's discourse of human rights and justice. The campaign for trafficking in women should not be carried out at the expense of neglecting women's diverse patterns of migratory experiences. Only when their stories receive more attention and their representation in the mass media is challenged can more empowering processes of social inclusion begin.

Notes

¹ The term Betel Nut Beauty refers to a common sight along roadsides in Taiwan: a young woman selling betel nuts and cigarettes from a brightly light glass enclosure while wearing revealing clothing. Though betel nuts are chewed in many regions of the Asia-Pacific, the betel nut beauty phenomenon is distinctly Taiwanese. By the end of the century betel nut kiosks had become a trademark feature of Taiwan's cities and countryside. They are most characteristically encountered along major highways where truck drivers – famously enthusiastic consumers of betel nuts – can easily find them. For more details please see <http://www.taiwanderful.net/guides/betel-nut-beauty>. Even though betel nut beauties do not necessarily provide sex-related service, they are widely perceived as potential sex workers. Some betel nut shops offer different levels of sex service at different prices: from touching the breasts of betel nut beauties to having sex with them. Sometimes they cooperate with hotel proprietors to provide 'door-to-door' service so as to avoid the police's attention.

² I met eight women at the detention centre and four at a karaoke bar in Changhua County, West Taiwan. Among the eight, there were four from Indonesia, two from Vietnam and two from China. They were all at their early twenties when I met them and they all got married to their Taiwanese husbands through marriage brokerage except one from China. The young Chinese woman admitted to me that she came to Taiwan for prostitution through fake marriage with a fake passport. The others strongly defended their marriages and expressed their frustration of being regarded as suspects.

³ Below is a table of the total number of transnational marriages in Taiwan in the past years. We can find that from 1998 to 2003, the number of transnational marriages increased from 22,905 to 54,634, which accounted for 15.7 per cent and 31.86 per cent of the total registered marriages in 1998 and 2003 respectively.

Year	Total no. of foreign spouses*	As % of total marriages	Nationality of Foreign Spouses			Sex		Total no. of registered
			China	SE Asia	Other areas	Male	Female	
1994	12,784	NA	7,885		4,899	NA	NA	NA
1995	16,754	NA	9,180		6,574	NA	NA	NA
1996	20,561	NA	9,349		11,212	NA	NA	NA
1997	24,960	NA	8,951		16,009	NA	NA	NA
1998	22,905	15.7	12,451		10,454	NA	NA	145,976
1999	32,263	18.6	17,589		14,674	NA	NA	173,209
2000	44,966	24.8	23,628		21,338	NA	NA	181,642
2001	46,202	27.10	26,797	17,512	1,893	3,400	42,802	170,515
2002	49,013	28.39	28,906	18,037	2,070	4,366	44,647	172,655
2003	54,634	31.86	35,473	17,351	2,292	6,001	48,633	171,483
2004	31,310	23.82	10,972	18,103	2,235	3,176	28,134	131,453
2005	28,427	20.14	14,258	11,454	2,354	3,139	25,288	141,140
2006	23,930	16.77	14,619	6,950	2,574	3,214	20,716	142,669
2007	24,700	18.29	15,146	6,952	2,602	3,141	21,559	135,041
2008	21,729	14.03	12,772	6,009	2,948	3,516	18,213	154,866
2009	21,914	18.71	13,294	5,696	2,924	3,673	18,241	117,099
	476,386		261,270		215,116			

Resource: Ministry of Interior, Taiwan.

⁴ There was a debate over whether or not marriage brokerage should be completely banned. The supportive camp thought that to prevent women from being exploited, the introduction service should not be commercialised. It unexpectedly meets the state's expectation of promoting the idea that 'marriage itself is a beautiful thing that should not be commercialized'. The opposite camp argued that a complete ban rather than regulation would only cause an underground market and that enthrone marriages based on romantic love and degrading commercially brokered marriages just reflects middle-class people's romantic imagination. The bill of banning the business was passed in 2008, four years after the government agreed to set up a new registration item for the business. Now only non-profit organisations can provide the matchmaking service. Ironically, most of these newly registered NGOs were formed or transformed from brokering companies by former proprietors.

⁵ According to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Ho Chi Minh City, the rejection rate of visas issued to Vietnamese spouses has been kept about 30 per cent since the one-on-one interview institution was implemented.

⁶ It has been seen that while the Taiwanese-Vietnamese marriage is on the downside, the Korean-Vietnamese marriage is on the rise. The decline and growth of the two trends demonstrate how 'desire' is determined by the political economic factors.

⁷ 'Paper husband' and 'paper wife' refer to the couple involved in 'real' fake marriage. They are 'married on paper' only. For example, the Taiwanese men I met agreed to be 'paper husbands' for the compensation of NT\$100,000 (about US\$3,000). The only condition they had to comply with was that they cannot divorce their paper wives until their paper wives get citizenship.

⁸ In fact, ferreting out suspicious marriages relies more on monitoring marital life afterwards. The consular officers usually issue suspected spouses a shorter-term residency permit, which requires the couple to renew with a local immigration office in person after the spouse resides in Taiwan for a certain period of time.

⁹ Because those Vietnamese matchmakers illegally engage in transnational matchmaking, they make up romantic stories of their clients' encounter with their wives so as to avoid legal responsibility. But in fact the common practice has been known by Taiwan consular officers for the similarities of the plots in the stories.

¹⁰ When I visited the bride's family, her mother expressed her reluctance to marry her daughter to the old man. She cried in front of me but the daughter insisted on the marriage because, as she told me, 'I really love him.' Their story provokes a moral controversy: what 'love' means for the couple would not make sense for many of us. So how can we use an age difference to evaluate the couple's sincerity of getting married with each other?

¹¹ In 2007, the Taiwan government amended the procedure of the visa application. According to the amendment, visa applicants have to get their marriage certificate issued by the local authority before applying for a visa. However, the certificate does not guarantee a success in obtaining the visa. It leads to a result that many marital couples are thereby forced to choose either living in Vietnam together or living separately until they pass the interview.

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