

Challenging Nationalism, Patriarchy and Masculinity



Constructions of Transnational Marriages between Vietnamese Women and East Asian Men in Vietnamese Mass Media

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Background

- Introduction

- Since 1990s, ~100,000 Vietnamese women have married Taiwanese men and ~15,000 married men from RoK.
- This has attracted an intensive media attention over a decade

- Previous research

- Took place mainly in receiving countries of immigrant spouses



Methodology

- Analysis of Vietnamese press and state discourse
- Data sources
 - 300+ sources from online media (State-owned online newspapers and magazines)
 - Online contents of state/party agencies and political organizations' websites



Results

- Representations of different actors of transnational marriage
- The consequences of transnational marriage for the Nation
- The politics of transnational marriages
- Media discursive strategies

Representations of Vietnamese women



- **Poor, Uneducated and Ignorant**

Those women who want to get married to foreign men are young, including street children, poorly educated, from families with economic difficulties. They are easily cheated by brokers (VWU website, 15/7/06);

- **Victims and Commodities**

While in Southern provinces of Vietnam, thousands of Vietnamese girls eagerly look for broker companies to get married to Taiwanese husbands in Taiwan itself, thousands of brides are tortured and maltreated day and night. But because the cry of Vietnamese brides is locked within walls, their mothers in Vietnam who sold them cannot imagine their beloved daughters are treated like animals (VnExpress 12/7/04).

Doan Nhat Linh incident (Taichung 2/2003)

Thảm cảnh làm dâu Đài Loan
Ngoisao.net, 12/7/04)



- **Opportunists and Materialist:**

... most of them want to change their fate quickly. They don't care about age, love and the nation. Some of these young women are lazy and want to abandon themselves for a life of pleasure (VWU website, 14/7/2006).

- **Shame of the Nation**

More than anger, it is also a pain and a shame of Vietnamese women, of every Vietnamese. The pride of our nation has been seriously hurt by this event (About Chosun's Daily article, Laborer online, 1 May 2006).

Representations of foreign men marrying Vietnamese women

- **Poor, Disabled and Old:**

From a glimpse one can see that she is not happy at all with one-eye husband who is also lame and twice her age... she has to work very hard and was beaten quite often by her husband and mother in-law (Tien Phong online 29/12/01).

- **Aggressive and Violent:**

... Without any reason, he beat her whenever he wanted. He beat her from the bed to the floor. He forced her to kneel on the floor and beat her on her face until it was black and blue. She did not dare to protest otherwise he would choke her or would threaten to kill her. (Vietnam Net 23/9/06).

- **Without Moral or Ethics:**

T. got married to a 45 year old husband who was always drunk but willing to beat and to torture her anytime (Sai Gon giai phong.9/6/06).

- **Powerless Bachelors**

The majority of Taiwanese men who marry Vietnamese women are those who are unable to marry native women because they don't have enough money, are too old or are handicapped ...(Laborer online 26/5/04).

It becomes more and more difficult for rural Korean men to get married because Korean women don't accept hardship and prefer to live in cities to work ...(ibid.)

Representations of transnational marriage

- **Unhappy**

Among the marriages to Taiwanese husbands, very few people have wealthy lives. Most of them are unhappy because of language barriers and the age differences, and most are “disillusioned” when getting to the foreign land (Laborer online 12/10/04).

- **Doomed to failure**

... most women married to foreign husbands are unhappy... many women were sold to brothels a week after their marriage to Taiwanese husbands. (Laborer online 26/4/05).

Representations of matchmaking industry

- **Matchmaking as trafficking**

According to statistics, 30 percent of Vietnamese-Taiwanese marriages are fake marriages so that women can enter Taiwan. A number of women were cheated and sold from one hand to another... many bad things happened, creating instability for society (Ngoisao.net 5/5/05)

- **Criminalized:**

HCM City police say they have arrested members of an alleged mail-order bride ring in a recent raid in the TB district including two 35-year-olds from South Korea ... (Vietnam News 11/4/07).

The Consequences of Transnational Marriages for the Nation

- Marriage squeeze for young men:

... in TN district of CT city, there are 320 Taiwanese bridegrooms in one village alone. This leads to an imbalanced marriage rate in one particular area and in the society in general. (Vietnam News 3/12/05).

- The problem of the mixed-blood generation:



In “Taiwanese island” there are numerous children who escaped with their mothers from Taiwan... children were adopted by an uncle or aunt so that they can get residential registration, a birth certificate and the right to go to school (Ngoisao.net 19/1/06).

- **Harming national pride**

More than being indignant [the article], that matter creates pain and shame for Vietnamese women and all Vietnamese people. This matter seriously hurt our national pride. (Laborer 1/5/06).



The politics of transnational marriages

- International political matter
- Authoritative voices
- The Chosun Daily incident



HỘI LIÊN HIỆP PHỤ NỮ VIỆT NAM
VIETNAM WOMEN'S UNION
UNION DES FEMMES DU VIETNAM

To: MINISTRY OF GENDER EQUALITY
REPUBLIC OF KOREA
Fax: 82-2-2106 5287

Vietnam Women's Union

HỘI LIÊN HIỆP PHỤ NỮ VIỆT NAM
VIETNAM WOMEN'S UNION
UNION DES FEMMES DU VIETNAM

To: Chosun Daily Newspaper
Fax: 82-2-724 5018/52398299

From: Vietnam Women's Union
Fax: 84-4-9713143

April 27th, 2006

Vietnam Women's Union would like to extend to you our warm greetings and best wishes.

We write this letter to seek for your support and cooperation.

Vietnamese people, especially our women, are angry about the article "Vietnamese Young Women Coming to Korea - A Land of Hopes" published in the Chosun Daily Newspaper on April 21, 2006. The article has abused Vietnamese women's dignity and rights, particularly those who are married to Korean men. We deeply regret that this article has caused severe reactions in our country.

Marriage between foreigners and Vietnamese women based on mutual respect and love, is protected by law. With a view of protecting women's rights and legitimate interests as well as abroad, the Vietnam Women's Union sees women being treated in any forms as victims who need our necessary protection and assistance. Practices related to illegal marriage, violating our morality and laws, are voiced to be strictly and addressed by the law.

Although the Korean Embassy, based in Hanoi, has issued an apology on behalf of the Chosun Daily Newspaper, we request the Chosun Daily Newspaper to convey an official apology to Vietnamese women and we do hope that similar mistake never happens again.

Hope to receive your positive response.

With Regards

Tùy viên báo chí Hàn Quốc đã bôi nhọ danh dự phụ nữ Việt Nam
Nhật báo Chosun xin lỗi độc giả VN
Báo chí Hàn Quốc quan tâm chuyện cô dâu Việt
Biểu tình phản đối bài báo về cô dâu Việt tại Hàn Quốc
Thư ngỏ của phóng viên viết bài về cô dâu VN

Media discursive strategies

- **Overlapping coverage**
- **Doubtful statistics**
- **Sensationalism**
- **Use of officials from 'receiving countries'**

Phản đầu xứ Đài Loan
Cô dâu Việt trên xứ Đài
Trăm thân anh lấy chồng Tây
Trôi nổi ở 'chợ người'
Thảm cảnh làm dâu Đài Loan
Vợ mọng làm dâu xứ người
Nạn nhân Đoàn Nhật Linh: 'Em đã cố gắng để quên'
Bùng phát dịch vụ mồi giới lấy chồng Hàn Quốc
Ký ức làm bị lừa làm dâu xứ người
Cô dâu Việt Singapore bỏ trốn
Gái Việt thái mề đàng khoe mẽ
Đến đâu đau phau khi làm vợ
Cô dâu Việt trên xứ Đài
Trăm thân anh lấy chồng Tây
Trôi nổi ở 'chợ người'
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Ký ức làm bị lừa làm dâu xứ người
Cô dâu Việt Singapore bỏ trốn
Long đong nhỡ chồng Hàn Quốc trong 24 giờ
Bi kịch lấy giọt máu Đài
Phận cùng cực của những cô gái đầu Hàn Quốc
Con lai Đài Loan (kỳ cuối) Trả lại tuổi thơ cho trẻ

Discussion

- Challenge to nationalism
- Challenge to patriarchy
- Challenge to masculinity

- Impact on public opinion?
 - Over hundred comments by readers were posted on forum “Marrying a foreign husband?” on VnExpress over 2 months April-May-June 2006

Chúng ta có lỗi khi phụ nữ Việt lấy chồng ngoại;
Không cần thiết phải xin lỗi
Lấy chồng Việt chắc gì đã tốt hơn?

Hãy giữ lòng tự tôn

Tôi cảm thấy bất đồng với bài báo trên

Nhiều cô gái muốn được sung túc bằng mọi giá

Thật xót xa!

Xin hãy lên tiếng và hành động vì chính chúng ta

Buồn cho thân phận phụ nữ Việt Nam

Thank you for your attention!