Immigrants and National Identity of Taiwan:
A Preliminary Study on Multiculturalism Practice
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Summary
This paper treats national identity and ethnic awareness as a given in present day Taiwan. It acknowledges that the formation of the ‘four major ethnic groups’ discourse is a mixture of primordial sentiment and social construction, that the national identity debate is in a state of flux, and that the debate that surrounds ethnic relations as well as those between Taiwan and China generates a sense of tension, uncertainty and anxiety in Taiwan. This paper sees that the interaction between the state and immigrants is a site of national politics. As a preliminary study limited by available secondary literature, this paper finds that although multiculturalism is prescribed by the government as the cure for ‘problems’ caused by female marriage immigrants, the multiculturalism practiced in Taiwan is designed to address Taiwan’s ethnic politics issue, therefore it falls short of responding to the needs and wants of immigrants. It, nevertheless, does help Taiwan-based researchers who have specific interest in ethnic studies to explore the identity evolution of immigrants, although the ultimate concerns seem to be more about Taiwanese than about their informants.

Marriage immigration and national politics
Transnational marriage as a pattern of cross-border migration is not a novelty in Taiwan. A Chinese-descendant Indonesian matchmaker, when asked about Indonesian women marrying Taiwanese men in the early 1990s, returned the question to his inquirer and commented, ‘don’t they [Taiwanese] remember just about two or three decades ago when every Taiwanese girl dreamt about marrying an American soldier?!’ (Hsia, 1997: 10).

What is captured by the question and the answer is the transformation Taiwan has experienced since the 1960s. Gone are the days when the American GIs stationed in Taiwan under the Mutual Defence Treaty between the USA and the ROC, and the annual US economic aid. Lost is the seat of the ROC as the legal representative of China in the United Nations (UN), as well as recognition by most states in the world of the statehood of the ROC.
Today, being incorporated into the global economy, Taiwan, amongst other leading economies including Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore, is a draw for migratory labourers of Southeast Asian origins (Jones, 2004). Standing by the official title of the Republic of China, Taiwan has also become home to more than 110,000 spouses from China and Southeast Asia who acquire permanent residency and citizenship. When ROC President Chen’s petition for the island being accepted as a member of the UN is rejected by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, on the grounds that neither ‘Taiwan’ nor ROC exists as a state, a UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)-affiliated journal held Taiwan accountable for making Vietnamese wives ‘stateless’ (McKinsey, 2007). Taiwan’s naturalisation law requires foreign spouses to renounce their original nationality before applying for citizenship of their host country. As their legal status in Taiwan hinges on marriage, a divorce occurring before they acquire citizenship makes them fall into statelessness, as happened to some Vietnamese women who had renounced their former nationality.

Taiwan is not unique in having such a legal requirement, nevertheless. Germany and Japan execute similar system. UNHCR identifies various practices pertaining to transnational marriage that result in statelessness of female marriage immigrants (UNHCR, 2008: 186-187). What is not common of Taiwan case is that while the state institutions process citizenship applications of foreign persons, Taiwan itself, or rather the Republic of China, is internationally challenged for its sovereignty and statehood claim. Another paper published by UN-affiliated agency is the case in point. In that paper, the island is repeatedly referred to as ‘Taiwan Province of China’ (Yamanaka & Piper, 2005). At the society level, to require foreign spouses to renounce their nationality seems at odds with the common practice amongst its citizens to possess dual nationality as a safety measure faced with perceived political uncertainty of Taiwan, or simply as an option for better life.

The paradox underlines that the interaction between the state and immigrants is a site of national politics. As a preliminary study limited by available secondary literature, 

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1 In Germany the required length was five years but shortened to three after non-governmental organisations advocated for favourable treatment. In Japan foreign spouses are not allowed to register in the household until naturalisation (Piper & Roces, 2003: 16-17).

2 UNHCR lists practices that cause women’s statelessness in transnational marriage as follows: a) Women may be granted their husband’s nationality. If she is divorced or widowed, and has not retained her old nationality, she becomes stateless; b) In a country where the law makes a woman’s nationality dependent on her husband, before she acquires the one of her husband’s, she becomes stateless; c) In many countries, a woman may be required by her husband’s country to renounce her old nationality. If the marriage ends before she is naturalised, she becomes stateless.
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cure for ‘problems’ caused by female marriage immigrants, the multiculturalism
practiced in Taiwan is designed to address Taiwan’s ethnic politics issue. Therefore it
falls short of responding to the needs and wants of immigrants. Nevertheless, it does
help Taiwan-based researchers who are interested in ethnic studies to explore identity
evolution of immigrants, although the ultimate concerns seem to be more about
Taiwanese than about their informants.

They are coming: waves of marriage immigrants

It is perhaps impossible to ascertain when the first transnational marriages appeared in
Taiwan society. Long before the general public became curious about the alleged
‘commodified’ marriages between Taiwanese and Vietnamese (Wang, & Chang, 2002;
Kabeer, 2007a), the pattern of cross-border marriage between Taiwanese and other
nationals in the past three decades has changed along with Taiwan’s transformation:
from a poverty-stricken society oppressed by an authoritarian regime that was
dominated by non-naïve elites, to a young democracy backed up by a vibrant global
economy which is highly connected with the Chinese market.

First wave: Mainlander veterans and ‘Overseas Chinese’ women

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, women from Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia,
and Thailand were introduced to marry men in Taiwan via transnational links with
overseas Chinese. Some of them were descendants of Chinese immigrants who
migrated to Southeast Asia from provinces in southeast China. Conventionally they
were referred to as ‘Overseas Chinese’ (Hsiao, 2000). Some of the husbands were
immigrants, too, but of a different sort.

Between 1945 and the mid 1950s, after the Nationalist government (Kuomintang,
KMT) lost the civil war to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), an estimated 1 to 1.5
million people fled China for Taiwan, most of whom were military personnel, either
elite officers or foot soldiers\(^3\) (Gronwold, 2004: 59). In the following years, in order
to preserve military capacity, prevent CCP penetration, and reduce government
expenditure in military families’ welfare, the KMT government restricted the right of
military officers, NCOs and rank-and-file soldiers to get married. The restriction,
known as ‘marriage ban’ by soldiers, low income, and actual alienation of the military

\(^3\) Up to 2004, the number of veterans over the age of 65 was 332,127, or 30.6 percent of total male
nationals over the age 65. This can be treated as an approximate figure of the surviving military exodus
after 1949 (DGBAS, 2005).
establishment from the society that was purposefully segregated by the government, made it difficult for soldiers to get married. When they sought marriage after discharge, their options were limited mainly to women in the bottom stratum of Taiwan’s social order (Li, 1998: 53-55, cited by Chao, 2004b: 8). Available literature provides little information about how the marriage was actually arranged. Marriage with Chinese descendents in Southeast Asia gradually spread to Taiwan’s rural villages where the population was Hakka dominated, and male adults were affected by marriage squeeze caused by industrialisation and urbanisation. It is reported that Hakka descendent women in West Kalimantan were preferred because of their cultural closeness with the bridegrooms (Hsia, 2002).

**Second wave: Mainlander veterans/Taiwanese and Chinese women**

Since the late 1980s, marriage across the Taiwan Strait has appeared as an unintentional result of lifting the travel ban by governments on both sides. On the Chinese side, it was not until 1976 that the Beijing government reversed its previously hostile policies towards citizens who had overseas relatives, including those in Taiwan, and actively encouraged the resumption of overseas contacts in order to attract investment from abroad (Oxfeld, 2005: 25-26). This policy relaxation, though originally aimed at obtaining external resources to reinvigorate China’s economy worn down by years of social turmoil, paved the way for future marital migration across the Strait. On the Taiwan side, four months after the end of the martial law, the government lifted a nearly forty-year travel ban to China on November 2, 1987, which enabled people in Taiwan to visit China, followed by the opening of Taiwan to Mainland Chinese visitors in 1990.

Mainlanders (mostly elderly veterans), who were home-goers after a forty-year separation from families left behind in China, found their hometowns a source of martial partners that could also be their caregivers. Their wives were mostly laid off workers who were ex-divorcees or widows. Since then the number of the cross-strait couples has boomed as the contact between Taiwan and China rapidly expanded. Disadvantaged men hit by marriage squeeze in Taiwan later also found marital companionship with Chinese women through matchmaking agencies. With more Taiwanese people investing, studying, working, and travelling in China (and forming a Taiwanese expatriate community of long-term presence), the ratio of younger and better off couples marrying on the basis of
affection rose. As the number of cross-strait couples grew, heterogeneity of the socio-economic background of the wives and husbands broadened (King, 2007).

Third wave: Taiwanese men and Southeast Asians women
As Taiwan’s contact with China opened doors for marriage, so did Taiwan’s economic interaction with Southeast Asia. In 1992, the government formally authorised the importation of foreign labour (Lee, 2002). In 1994, after Taiwan’s economy suffered price hikes in production factors, a shortage of labour, and exchange rate appreciation of Taiwan Dollar against US Dollar (Yang, 1998), Taiwan government launched a policy pack ‘Go South’ (Kung, 2005: 28) to explore raw materials, and import relatively cheaper workforce in Southeast Asia for Taiwan’s labour-intensive industries and large-scale development projects (Tsai, 2005: 171-172, 193-194). It is argued that the outflow of Taiwan’s investment to Southeast Asia is correlated with the surge of transnational marriages (Chang, Kui-ying, 1996).

How many?
A yearly snapshot of statistics provides an updated picture of current immigrants residing in Taiwan. In 2007 alone, there were 135,041 registered marriages in Taiwan, 15,146 of which are with Chinese spouses, and 9,554 with foreign spouses (6,952 from Southeast Asia). In other words, almost one fifth of the marriages are with non-Taiwanese nationals, and 87 percent are women (21,559 persons). Within non-Taiwanese female spouses, the biggest group are from China (14,595 persons), followed by Vietnamese (4,770 persons) (MOI, 2007). Figures of issued resident visas show that since 1996 the number of Vietnamese spouses has surpassed the previously dominant Indonesian group and remains the principle source of foreign female spouses to Taiwan (BOCA, 2008, see Table 1). In the National Security Report of 2006, marriage immigrants have been bundled together – ‘New Immigrants’- as an identified ethnic group in Taiwan (NSC, 2006: 63).

Feminised immigration
Taiwan is not only being home to female spouses from China and Southeast Asia, the island has also received more than 200,000 female contract workers since the importation scheme began. Taiwan thus is one destination that receives ‘feminised’ immigration (Tsay, 2004: 5). Chiang (2005) points out that Taiwan’s migration studies were initially funded by the National Science Council in 1997. They included sociological studies of ‘foreign brides’, manufacturing industry’s FDI in Malaysia, legal and sociological studies of Chinese spouses, and international movement of
Taiwan’s professionals. It seems that governmental as well as academic were responding to the marriage immigration at its formative stage.

**Problematised marriage immigrants**

Otherness, inferiorisation, racial and gender discrimination, victim of domestic violence and patriarchy, speculation of bogus marriage and materialistic motivation, and criticism of exhausting public resource are common in the public perception of ‘mail-order-bride’. It is no exception in Taiwan. ‘Foreignness’ seems a free ticket to the host society for its uninvited gaze and imagination. Pinned to the derogatory labels as ‘foreign bride’ and ‘Mainland sister’, Southeast Asian and Chinese spouses suffer stigmatisation. Reacting to the domination of discrimination against immigrants in public discourse, there is suggestion that both legislative and judicial branches of government should take action to hold racist speech legally accountable (Tian, 2007).

It can be argued that in highly culturally homogenous Taiwan, a lack of regular contact with and substantial exposure to foreign culture might be a reason why the presence of foreign spouses stimulated intensive interest. For example, a non-Taiwan based analyst observes that ‘in the eyes of the older [Taiwanese] generation, foreigners are uncultured, do not have the proper bloodlines, cannot speak Chinese, and do not know how to cook the right kind of food’ (emphasis added) (Limanonda, 2007). Exoticism (particularly of the association with prostitution) and ethnic profiling fill the public with imagination, and are reinforced in tandem with the importation of foreign contract labour.

Ethnic profiling, a presentation of essentialism and act of construction, is produced and reproduced by employment brokering agency, employer, and consular officer, and at times by prospective foreign workers themselves, in order to secure employment. Repetition of what foreigners are said to be gradually becomes what they are born with or made to, hence they are recruited to jobs ‘corresponding to their nature’ (Fan, 2005). As their ‘nature’ is prone to local interpretation, the same

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4 In spite of the derogatory connotation of ‘Mainland Sister’, a Chinese spouse accepts the fictitious kinship of ‘sisterhood’ that indicates affection, even though she is entirely aware of its negative meaning. She stresses that it is warmth rather than discrimination when she herself addresses other Chinese spouses as ‘Mainland Sisters’ regardless of their actual age (author’s personal communication). A strategy as such enables individuals to negotiate a contextual self-identity as opposed to the stigmatised group identity.

5 The presence of Filipina domestics is so visible in Greece that ‘Filipinza’ enters one Greek dictionary as the euphemism for ‘domestic help’ (Piper & Roces, 2003: 5)
Filipina in Japan are praised for being traditional mothers, while in Taiwan are less favoured domestics because of being modern and progressive.

On the whole, public attention has concentrated on the problematisation of immigrants, which can be attributed to their criticised material motivation, accused bogus marriage, subjection to exploitation by brokers and mistreatment by in-laws, average younger age, lower education, less advantaged background, earlier pregnancy, Chinese illiteracy (of Southeast Asian spouses), and less incapable motherhood. The intensive academic discussion – 101 master and doctoral dissertations between 2001 and 2006 (Lin, 2007) – well demonstrates the dedication of academics to studying them. Identity, adaptation, empowerment, transnationalism are some prominent subjects that interest researchers more than others.

**Chinese spouses: caught between**

To a large extend, Chinese and Southeast Asian spouses suffer self-claimed superiority of Taiwanese population similarly. However, Chinese immigrants are found caught specifically between the ongoing up-and-downs between Taiwan and China. A circulating discourse suggests that had it not been for the political constraints of Taiwan-China relations and the resultant conservative policies of the Taiwan government, Chinese labour and spouses of the same Han cultural inheritance would have been preferred by employers and bachelors. However, opinion polls indicate that although both Chinese and Southeast Asian spouses are not perceived in positive light by the adopting society, social distance between locals and Chinese spouses is more obvious and it is an equation of respondents’ political orientation and ethnic group membership (Chen & Yu, 2005; Yi & Chang, 2006). Chinese spouses are treated with suspicion for being natural collaborators of the hostile PRC government and potentially disloyal to Taiwan. The skepticism can be conveyed by the question whether Chinese spouses can or ought to be categorized as ‘New Mainlanders’ (Xin Waishengren), a term that has a resounding pronouncement of ethnic politics (Sung, 2004). The skepticism also materialised in legislators’ (failed) efforts in 2002 to lengthen the ‘probation’ period of applying for permanent residency.

**Reproduction**

From 1998 to 2007, the number of total births in Taiwan was 2,426,523, of which the number by non-Taiwanese nationals is 243,209 (10.0 percent) (Department of Household Registration, 2008) (see Table 2). In 2003 the government pointed out that the percentage of births by non-native mothers grew by 7.4 percent since 1998,
and ‘one out of every eight infants born in Taiwan was by a non-Taiwanese mother’. This short piece of analysis, particularly ‘one out of eight’ figure, was later widely quoted to support the assumed rapid growth of children of mixed parenthood. It further noted that although immigrants’ share of total birth is much less than that of ‘non-white’ mothers in the US (21.3 percent), the increase should be treated with caution and policy tools for ‘elevating the quality of the population’ were recommended, including promoting ‘positive eugenics’ concepts to non-native mothers (DGBAS, 2003). Interestingly, an official of the same ministry offers a counterargument but along the same eugenic line: transnational marriages are potentially biologically superior because it creates a genetic pool that includes distant sets of genes from non-Taiwanese parents (Business Week, 2005). A racial hierarchy agenda is also printed in the National Security Report of 2006. Under the heading ‘Inundation of Immigrants Bearing the Impact on the Socio-Economic System’, without specifically referring to current immigrants, the government sees an urgent need to initiate immigration policy that attracts ‘high quality immigrants’.

Genealogical nationalism is apparently on government policy agenda and echoes well in the mind of the general public. Natal differentiation between children of mixed parenthood and ‘native-born’ nationals also features in the 1949 Report of the Royal Commission on Population: ‘British traditions, manners, and ideas in the world have to be borne in mind. Immigration is thus not a desirable means of keeping the population at a replacement level as it would in effect reduce the proportion of home-bred stock in the populations (ibid: 31) (emphasis added).

The discussion of population was triggered by Britain’s predicted low birth rate and influx of immigrants from Ireland, ‘Old Commonwealth’, non-Commonwealth countries, and later ‘New Commonwealth’ (mainly non-white population), as immigrants were recruited to fill labour shortages. However, there was a pronounced preference for ‘good stock’ (white immigrants) as to ‘coloured’ immigrants (Bliech, 2003: 38). The exclusion of unwanted immigrants and natal differentiation between ‘home born and bred’ population and immigrants is one of the most talked aspects of Taiwan’s immigration and population policy.

It may look odd at first glance that when the adopting society is ageing and the birth rate is declining below replacement level, the government should voice their concern
about children born to immigrants. However counterargument may be articulated⁶, it is clear that the body of immigrant women, as much as the body of native ones, is central to the production and reproduction of the nation.

**Multiculturalism: Taiwan version**

**Yes, or no?- the ‘Ancestral Immigrant’ Narrative**

People in Taiwan were not permitted to travel abroad for tourism until 1979. The martial law effectively isolated Taiwan from active international migration (Selya, 2004: 308). Before the 1980s, Taiwan remained a closed system in which the volume of in-bound and out-bound migration was insignificant and the demographic structure was relatively stable (Chiang et al, 2005). It was not until the 1990s that Taiwan received a continual influx of foreign contract labourers and spouses, whose visible difference pours new input into a society where discourse of ethnic consciousness is abundant and multiculturalism as a set of discourses, actual governmental organisations, and public policy are already in place.

Narrative of immigration plays a pivotal role in the multiculturalism discourse. In a school textbook entitled 'Understanding Taiwan’, Taiwan enters the stage as such: ‘Taiwan is an immigrant society, from the Stone Age to the present, people coming here across many different times and places. Before the largest number of Han arrived on Taiwan, Aborigines were already here’ (cited by Harrison: 2006: 195). It also teaches students that Taiwan’s history is characterised by a) multiple cultures; b) internationalisation; c) prosperous foreign trade; d) bravery, adventurousness, and endurance (Understanding Taiwan, 1999: 4).

The official narrative about Taiwan’s history is thus unveiled: since time immemorial, Taiwan is a nation of successive waves of immigrants consisting of people with various cultural inheritances (Wang, 2005a: 56). It is an official portrait of where the islanders’ Han ancestors originate, and the difference between these ancestors is only a matter of when they arrive. Since time of arrival leads to differentiation, and those who arrive after WWII are later than those who settle much earlier, hence they are

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⁶ The most frequent critiques in response to the genealogical nationalism comments are to a) produce numerical counterarguments against assumption of ‘more births by immigrant mothers’; b) provide medical proof against the fact that ‘children of mixed parenthood develop slowly’; c) clarify that immigrant women do not usually have the access or information to family planning; d) argue that giving birth (particularly to a son) will make immigrants better off in the family as this is a function their husband and in-laws expect them to perform; e) explain on behalf of the immigrants that becoming mother is part of the cultural inheritance that defines their femininity; f) or simply try to convince the feared government and the general public that it is good that some women do want to produce the next generation and this should be embraced.
‘New Residents’. Standing next to Aborigines, Han people are ‘many of one’: they are Han, but they form different ethnic groups with distinctive group cultures. Hence a multicultural society Taiwan is.

Since time of arrival is instrumental for differentiating the island’s inhabitants, marriage immigrants from China and Southeast Asia, despite of their rich similarities and considerable heterogeneity, can be bundled together to form one identified group, ‘New Immigrants’, as they arrive much later than everyone else.

Immigration theme has been incorporated into the president’s inauguration speech (Chen, 2004), adopted by the National Security Report (NSC, 2006: 63), appealing to pop culture and social work non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and inspiring literature critics. In everyday language saying Taiwan is a multicultural society seems simultaneously implying the acknowledgment of Taiwan being an immigrant society. Citizens of Taiwan have ‘rediscovered’ their immigration past, and now are reunited with a forgotten history.

Immigration-themed multiculturalism discourse has been widely informed by the government and immigrant advocacy groups, whenever female marriage immigrants are concerned. For issues ranging from children education, parenthood, domestic abuse and violence, marriage consultation, spouses’ Chinese language training, individual agency and empowerment of immigrants, to social support, multiculturalism is referred to be the cure. In other words, multiculturalism is already out there. What is lacking is to translate words to deeds and action.

Such high awareness and visibility seems contradictory to outsiders’ comments, notwithstanding. Hugo states ‘Taiwan has not been an immigration society’ (2005), and Eyton, who writes an informative journalistic story about Vietnamese spouses’ plight in Taiwan (including being trapped in statelessness), reports that ‘Taiwan is not a multicultural society by any means’ (2003) (both emphasis added). Eyton further sends off an alarming message that, given that ‘Taiwan has a strong racist streak’, the future for the mixed-ethnicity children seems dim. A calmer message is from Hugo, who acknowledges that a significant portion of children born to transnational marriage indicates substantial cultural diversity, and Limanonda, who foresees that the surge of marriage with foreigners would bear much social, economic, cultural and demographic impact on Taiwan (2007). Why would the islanders pride themselves for

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7 If taking time divides more precisely, it is suggested that there have been seven immigration waves landing on the shore, including Dutch and Spanish merchants and Japanese colonisers (Yang, 2007).
being ‘multicultural’, whereas onlookers think otherwise? An examination of how multiculturalism coming into being would perhaps shed light on potential answers.

**Multiculturalism and Taiwanese nationalism**

The content of the history textbook was made public in 1997. In retrospect, it is one of several social forces that were syndicated into a coalition of reform contributing to Taiwan’s national transformation projects of 1990s.

In early 1996, taking advantage of the KMT’s marginal majority in the Legislative Yuan, the KMT Aboriginal legislators bargained hard for several constitutional initiatives, including establishing a government body dedicated to Aboriginal affairs (Jacobs, 2005: 40). Aboriginal elites were able to put forward such negotiation demands thanks to an earlier constitutional amendment, which enshrines protection of Aboriginal political participation and promotion of Aboriginal education, culture, social welfare and economic development (a.k.a. ‘Aboriginal Article’). In July 1997 the ‘Aboriginal Article’ was further expanded to ‘recognise multiple cultures’ and formally recognize the official status of Aborigines as ‘the First Nation’ (Yuanzhu Minzu, 原住民族). Chang argues that such constitutional recognition formally laid the foundation of multiculturalism, as the status of Aborigines has been lifted from an ethnic group to a nation, equally to Han citizens of Taiwan (Chang, Mao-kui, 2002).

In tracing how Multiculturalism loosely absorbing several political concepts, Chang describes the process as ‘discursive formation’. Elements of indigenisation appeal, encouragement of mother tongue, promotion of humanist education and comprehensive education reform, feminism, community-building, political pluralism, and advocacy of Taiwan independence all played roles in the formation of multiculturalism discourse. Canadian and Australian practices were particularly consulted (Chang, Mao-kui, 2002). Foreign immigrants as a minority did not appear to be a concern.

In September 2004, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) passed ‘Resolution on Multi-Ethnicity and Uniformity of State’ (Zuqun Douyuan, Goujia Yiti). As the title suggests, recognition of multi-ethnicity is a policy goal to be achieved together with pursuit of uniformity. The key is, as it asserts, to promote indeginisation (bentuhua).

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8 In the December 2, 1995 legislative election, the KMT almost lost its legislative majority. The following election for Speaker of the Legislature resulted in a tied vote between the nominees of the KMT and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). An aboriginal KMT legislator in the evenly divided Legislature mobilised the aboriginal legislators to bargain hard with the KMT leadership to achieve several long sought goals including a central Commission of Aboriginal affairs (Jacobs, 2005: 40).
through promotion of multiculturalism, and civic nationalism is understood as the
other part of multiculturalism. That is, a nation-building project, indeginisation
(bentuhua), is pursued through an ethnic awareness project, and it gains legitimacy by
treating citizens equally, with recognition of their difference. However, as it employs
Hoklo, Hakka, Aborigines, New Residents, and New Immigrants classification, the
centrality of this noble project seems to be more about differentiation than difference.

As pointed out by Chang, education is part of multiculturalism discourse. In mother
tongue promotion, Shih elaborates that Hakka language promotion should be taken as
a priority. As for how to address the pressing issue of identity politics, he contours an
impressive blueprint that incorporates nationalism, multiculturalism, constitutionalism,
and republicanism. The center of the scheme is burgeoning Taiwanese nationalism,
which achieves inclusiveness of all ethnic groups by categorically rejecting Chinese
identity. Multiculturalism is to prevent ethnic nationalism from turning ‘nationalised
state’ to ‘ethnicated state’. Acknowledging that ‘politics of recognition’ is critical to
multiculturalism and it recognizes co-existence of multiple identities, Shih articulates
that Chinese identity is not compatible with Taiwanese identity because the PRC
threatens national security of Taiwan. Its hostility explains why ‘Mainland brides’ are
concerned by some. As for republicanism and constitutionalism, they are to nurture
‘republican citizenship’ and achieve ‘deliberative democracy’. In a holistic design that
champions Taiwanese nationalism, where marriage immigrants sit is where they stand.
The criteria are that a) if they are to form a single group of collective identity; b) the
Shih’s elaborate arguments demonstrate that Taiwanese nationalism is such an
overwhelming political campaign that it not only claims ownership of multiculturalism but also makes claims of complete allegiance of immigrants.

Neglected is the fluidity, contextuality, and negotiated identity of immigrants. Lost is
the link with country of origin. This is a striking contrast to ‘transnationalism’, which
is what Bash et al. found common in immigrants’ lived experience of identity that
straddles across their home country and adopting country (Basch et al., 1994).

**Multiculturalism and marriage immigrants**

At its formative stage, in political discourses, policy platform, and education practice,
immigrants, understood as people of different nationalities move across national
border, did not feature prominently in multiculturalism projects. Rather, the official
narrative of immigration, which is to hold up the multicultural pronouncement, is
exclusively enshrined to the anonymous group of Taiwan’s (male) ancestors, the single Han stock.

Multiculturalism in Taiwan’s context is conceived to address the discrimination of Aborigines, then the tension between Waishengren and Benshegnren, and Hakka’s anxieties of being marginalised. There was no theoretical space for immigrants. Considering it was mainly after the mid 1990s that humanist advocates, Aboriginal rights campaigners, feminists and education reformers gained momentum to configure multiculturalism framework, it is regrettable that immigrants were by and large neglected. As Hsia eloquently argues, overwhelming stigmatisation by media coverage is a major culprit to hold accountable.

Madood clearly attributes the emergence of ‘multicultural’ phenomenon in the UK to the introduction of immigrant labourers from the Caribbean, Africa, Turkey, the Middles East and Asia (Madood, 1997: 1). In Taiwan, the official narrative of immigration was called upon to nurture (a differentiated) sense of us-ness amongst its citizens, but did not extend to include current immigrants. To argue it differently, as the editors of one journal did, there would be no tension between Benshengren and Waishengren if they were facing Aborigines, foreign labourers, and foreign spouses together, because the two would soon find they are more similar than different (Editors’ Note, 2001). If so, the Chinese spouses are to be left out.

Parekh points out that multiculturalism has a normative meaning as well as a descriptive one. A multicultural society is one that ‘includes two or more cultural communities’, which is a description of empirical reality. Britain and France, for example, have more than 6 percent of immigrants or ethnic minority population, therefore they are both multicultural society. The key is how to treat minority in relation to majority. One can choose to respect the demands of the minority, or force the minority to conform to the dominant culture. The former, according to Parakh, is MULTI-culturalist, and the latter MONO-culturalist (Parekh, 6-7). What makes Hugo and Eyton show reservation about Taiwan is how immigrants are treated. When they suffer stigmatization and other forms of discrimination, and are under great pressure to be assimilated, it is difficult to argue that the national identity-driven multiculturalism conforms to the normative definition.
Ethnic ‘mining’ in Taiwan’s transnational marriage

As multiculturalism concept is taking root in Taiwan, and ‘Four Major Ethnic Groups’ discourse is gaining ground, inter-ethnic marriage⁹ offers rich soil for ethnic study. Inter-ethnic marriage of Hakka members particularly inspires booming interest amongst Hakka Studies researchers.

For example, Hsieh explores how ethnicity, Hakka or Chinese, as a cultural and social category is constructed and lived in Indonesian/Chinese context, and how they are felt when members of the community encounter in Taiwan. She points out that Hakka, Chinese and national identity (of Taiwan) can be maintained together and its actual manifestation depends on context and situation (Hsieh, 2005).

A study on Hakka Indonesians finds that their three-decade long presence has formed a network that enables more immigrants move in at later times. Earlier immigrants who moved between 1950s and 1980s for escaping anti-Chinese suppression in Indonesia demonstrate strong identity with the ROC. As a contrast, marriage immigrants who migrated in the 1990s do not express similar degree of enthusiasm (Yang, & Lan, 2006). A Chinese descendant spouse who has lived in Taiwan more than ten years not only is proud of her Chinese cultural inheritance and sees marrying to Taiwan as home-going, she also expresses strong identity with Taiwan (Chen, 2007). On the whole, Indonesian immigrants positively view Taiwan and the Chinese culture presented in Taiwan. It is noticed that the classification of Indonesian immigrants has been changed from ‘Overseas Chinese’ to ‘Foreign National’, which reflects the political transformation of Taiwan (Yang, & Lan, 2006). These findings seem to correspond to the significance of immigrant network: networks migrate, categories stay put, and networks create new categories (Tilly, 1990: 84-86).

Immigrants’ experiences can be used as a control group to filter out ethnic difference between Hoklo and Hakka. A study relying on Vietnamese spouses as informers finds that in everyday life, some concepts and practices do not differ significantly between Hoklo and Hakka, while some others seem to ‘prove’ stereotypical images of specific group. Hence the findings suggest that ethnic image is better to be closely observed in multiple contexts of everyday life rather than relying on public discourses (Hsu, 2007).

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⁹ Jones refers the Chinese-preferred (from China and Southeast Asia) marriage to ‘inter-ethnic marriage’ (Jones, 2004: 13). It is a practice also evident in South Korea, China, and Vietnam where cross-border marriage creates a union of different nationalities but of same ethnicity.
The above findings show that multiculturalism discourse prepares researchers to explore identity evolution of immigrants, as part of their adaptation experiences. Although the research questions address immigrants, they are ultimately responding to the ethnic relations in Taiwan. That seems to return to the starting point of why and how multiculturalism coming to being. After all, this multiculturalism is originally to address the issues amongst Taiwanese themselves, rather than immigrants.

**Conclusion**

Caught in a peculiar international and domestic context, where Taiwan’s proclaimed sovereignty is questioned and the society is allegedly polarized by ethnic politics, Taiwan has become more assertive about the challenged statehood, and endeavours to sustain a collective identity embraced by majority population. At this conjuncture, it is crucial to examine how a burgeoning national identity reacts to and interacts with the immigrants from outside.

This paper finds that the interaction between the state and immigrants is a site of national identity politics. Public reservation about Chinese spouses indicates that they are a victim of the unstable relations between Taiwan and China, as they are seen as the embodiment/agent of the hostile PRC. As for Southeast Asian spouses, their naturalisation seems to ‘plebiscite’ the existence of the ROC sovereignty. The reservation surrounding fertility of immigrant mothers shows that genealogical nationalism is common, and the body of female immigrant is under the spotlight of nationalistic project driven by nativism and essentialism. The overwhelming problematisation of immigrants and the self-claimed superiority of Taiwanese underlines that there is a significant lack of understanding of different culture, or more importantly, appreciation and recognition of difference. Multiculturalism developed along the line of differentiation thus falls short of responding to the needs and wants of immigrants. On the other hand, ethnic awareness seems growing as a result of promotion of multiculturalism, which encourages observing evolution of ethnic and national identity of immigrants. However, those findings seem suggesting that the ultimate interest is to explore more about Taiwanese themselves than the immigrants in question.
Table 1 Resident Visa Issuances to Southeast Asian Spouses: 1994-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>The Philippines</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
<th>Myanmar</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Total (Person)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>2,247</td>
<td>1,183</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>4,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2,409</td>
<td>1,757</td>
<td>1,301</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1,969</td>
<td>7,574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2,950</td>
<td>2,085</td>
<td>1,973</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>4,113</td>
<td>11,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2,464</td>
<td>2,128</td>
<td>2,211</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>9,060</td>
<td>16,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2,331</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>1,173</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>4,644</td>
<td>8,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>3,463</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>1,184</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>6,790</td>
<td>12,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4,381</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>12,327</td>
<td>19,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,230</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>12,340</td>
<td>16,514</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>The Philippines</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
<th>Myanmar</th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Total of the Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2,746</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>1,780</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2,683</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,757</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>1,123</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1,258</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 The number of resident visas issued to Southeast Asian spouses does not equal to the number of women who marry Taiwanese men. However, given the female dominance in marriage immigration from Southeast Asia, it is a reliable indicator of the actual number. Nevertheless, it is unclear why the ministry would combine statistics of Thai and Burmese spouses into one category before 2001, and why afterwards separated into two columns.

Table 2 Birth by Taiwanese and by Non-Taiwanese(1998-2007) unit: person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total (a=b+c)</th>
<th>By Taiwanese (b)</th>
<th>By Non-Taiwanese (c=d+e)</th>
<th>Percentage c/a (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>271,450</td>
<td>257,546</td>
<td>13,904</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>283,661</td>
<td>266,505</td>
<td>17,156</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>305,312</td>
<td>282,073</td>
<td>23,239</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>260,354</td>
<td>232,608</td>
<td>27,746</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>247,530</td>
<td>216,697</td>
<td>30,833</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>227,070</td>
<td>196,722</td>
<td>30,348</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>216,419</td>
<td>187,753</td>
<td>11,206</td>
<td>17,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>205,854</td>
<td>179,345</td>
<td>10,022</td>
<td>16,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>204,459</td>
<td>180,566</td>
<td>10,423</td>
<td>13,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>204,414</td>
<td>183,509</td>
<td>10,117</td>
<td>10,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,426,523</td>
<td>2,183,324</td>
<td>243,209</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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