

Far Far Motherland: The Link with Home Country of Vietnamese Brides in Taiwan

Nguyen Tuan Nghia

Assistant, Center for Vietnamese Studies, National Cheng Kung University

Abstract

Taiwan has become one of the favorite destinations for Southeast Asian immigrants, especially Vietnamese and Indonesians. Not only attracting a lot of labor migrants, Taiwan has also become the new home for another type of migrant: foreign brides. From the 1990s to the end of 2009, there were more than one hundred thousand Vietnamese women married to Taiwanese men. Many studies on these foreign brides have been conducted over a period of time. However, most studies focus only on life experiences and adaptation to new life with little attention paid to their connection to their home country. This study was conducted to contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between Vietnamese brides immigrating to Taiwan and their homeland in the current period. Will living in a foreign country make them gradually forget their homeland? Or has the rapid development of communication and transportation made them more closely associated with their homeland than in the past?

Keywords: Marriage Migration, Vietnamese Brides, Taiwan, Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and integration, the world is witnessing huge migration flows daily and hourly with diverse purposes such as labor, marriage, study, and so on. According to statistics from the International Organization for Migration, UN Migration, in 2020 there were 281 million migrants worldwide, accounting for about 3.6% of the world population, an increase of more than 9 million people compared to 2019 despite the Covid-19 pandemic. Of those 280 million migrants, there were about 135 million female migrants, 146 million male migrants and about 169 million working migrants (according to 2019 data). Although the pandemic has posed a huge challenge to the global economy, international remittances only decreased from USD 719 billion in 2019 to USD 702 billion in 2020, which was a big surprise because it had been initially forecast that the decline could be more than nine times larger (Migration, 2021). That fact not only shows that migration has been and is one of the main trends in the world today, but also brings with it a lot of consequences in terms of economy - society, culture - education, security - politics in both sending and receiving countries.

Entering the Doi Moi (Renovation) period since 1986, Vietnam has begun to open up to the world to find a solution to the serious socio-economic crisis in the country. Decree No.370/HĐBT passed by Vietnam's Council of Ministers in 1991, Decree 152/1999/NĐ-CP issued by the Government in 1999, and then Decision No.71/2009/QĐ-TTg approved by Prime Minister of Vietnam in 2009 have created a legal corridor for Vietnam to become one of the countries with a big number of export workers today. Although bilateral agreements on labor export have been signed with many countries, in fact more than 80% of Vietnamese workers have migrated to Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Malaysia to work; in particular, Taiwan not only recruits factory workers but also domestic workers from Vietnam. In order to further promote labor export, the government of Vietnam has also approved a series of policies to support workers with the costs of medical examination, criminal record removal certificates, passports as well as expenses for language and skills training courses with the expectation that this strategy will help improve the production capacity of the labor force and bring about a significant source of remittances to their homeland (Phuong, Ahmad, & Venkatesh, 2020).

In the opposite direction, Taiwan has become one of the favorite destinations of immigrants, not only from Vietnam but also Southeast Asia in general. After martial law was

lifted on July 15, 1987, Taiwan released its first policy on labor migration in 1989 and welcomed its first foreign workers in 1991. According to data from the National Immigration Agency of the Taiwan government, at the end of 1992 there were only 11,264 migrant workers in Taiwan, it rapidly jumped to 222,951 in 1997, and 321,804 in 2007, then 602,366 in 2017 to satisfy the labor thirst of one of the Asian economic dragons (Deng, Wahyuni, & Yulianto, 2020). Among them, according to the Ministry of the Interior in 2015, about 40% came from Indonesia, 28% from Vietnam, 20% from the Philippines and 13% from Thailand. In order to avoid independent or long-term effects on Taiwan's labor conditions, these migrant workers are approved for employment by the Taiwanese government on a "temporary" and "selective" basis, of which more than half are women (54.6% in 2017) and the majority participate in care work (Cheng, 2016; Deng et al., 2020). But not only attracting labor migrants, Taiwan has also become the new home of another type of migrants: brides.

The advanced industrial nations of East Asia such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have gradually transitioned to individualized societies, where low birth rates and aging populations have become more common and threaten their sustainable development. In response, cross-border marriages have increased rapidly in this region and have not stopped (Deng et al., 2020; Tang & Wang, 2011). According to Wang and Bélanger (2008), "Taiwan holds the Asian record for the proportion of families that involve so-called 'foreign brides'". In present-day Taiwan, the population of aboriginal and first-generation mainlanders is even less than the total number of immigrants and children of mixed-parent families. Obviously, after naturalization in Taiwan, these immigrants, along with their children, will soon become a key part of the island's population in the not too far future (Tseng & Lin, 2013). According to Tang and Wang (2011), if only the group of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan are counted from the 1990s to the end of 2009, there were more than 100,000 people married to Taiwanese men and more than 90% felt satisfied with their marriage. However, like their counterparts from Thailand, Indonesia or the Philippines, Vietnamese migrant brides in Taiwan also face challenges from the prejudices of the local society. The transnational movement has caused them to experience the downward social mobility of the class in the new land (Deng et al., 2020).

Being misconceived as people without inescapable personal commitments to their motherlands, who have no education, no premigration past, and no social pressure,

Southeast Asian migrant workers are often described as untrained, undisciplined and unreliable while marriage migrants are often portrayed as opportunists taking advantage of loopholes in Taiwan's labor regulations or worse, stigmatized as "commoditized female", "money marriage", "mercenary marriage" or even prostitutes hiding in fake marriages (Chen & Liu, 2017; Cheng, 2016; Fan, 2017; Hsia, 2019; Huang, 2015). Fan (2017) alleges that starting around the late 1990s, the Taiwanese government and society began to fabricate public opinion about Southeast Asian marriage migrant women as a serious social problem. The author also points out some harsh and unfair regulations that have been applied to these foreign brides such as the Nationality Act that requires a naturalization applicant to 'provide the certification of his/her loss of previous nationality when applying for naturalization'. Along with the stigma is income hardship, according to a 2008 government report, up to 71% of working immigrant spouses worked in the unskilled and low-income sectors (Tang & Wang, 2011). The experimental results also show that while education has a positive effect on Taiwanese women, it is not recognized in foreign immigrant brides, which means that the labor market undervalues their human capital (Chen & Liu, 2017).

Women are expected to reinvent the nation through their fertility and the education of their children. However, an immigrant woman can encounter challenges in all aspects of mothering, including maternal and child health and welfare, family chores and responsibilities, shared mothering with in-laws, formation of supportive network, and identity formation (Tsai, Chen, & Huang, 2011; Wang, 2007). Moreover, under the stigma of local residents, foreign brides are underestimated in terms of their educational background and regarded as "alien wombs" or "unfit" for reproductive roles. Those women must strive to build harmonious relationships with family members and do whatever they can for their family and society to change those people's negative ideas and images of them and become "good mothers" (Huynh & Tuan, 2020). In another work, Wu (2019) shows that motherhood and femininity are promised to immigrant women a more respected position in the fiancé's family because of their contributions to productive labor and reproduction. Some even appraise their strangeness as a strategy for social integration (Juan, 2015). Each migrant mother finds her own way to happiness and forms an identity complex in her immigrant life. Vietnamese women who have access to professional organizations are reported to be happier while perceived

friendliness is seen as important protective factor for marriage migrants (Li & Yang, 2019).

Fortunately, they are not entirely alone in their struggle, activists like Hsiao-Chuan Hsia have helped create organizations like Association for Southeast Asian Sisters or TransAsia Sisters Association, Taiwan (TASAT) to assert their rights to live in a new home like Taiwan (Hsia, 2019; Sheu, 2007). Through another Taiwanese NGO named Awakening Foundation, female migrants have been fighting for a new way of calling themselves 'new migrant women' instead of 'foreign brides' (Juan, 2015). However, in an article investigating the role of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their projects to help foreign brides adjust to new life, Lin (2017) points out that although those projects help foreign spouses to improve themselves and raise their status, the projects also shape each migrant into a 'proper Taiwanese wife/mother'. Thus, even when NGOs play an active role in the empowerment of foreign spouses, their efforts can also become a mechanism to strengthen the cultural prejudice about transnational spouses. Anyway, with or without help from NGOs, overcoming the constraints of gender culture and patriarchal families, Vietnamese immigrant women in Taiwan continuously use different ways to deal with the difficulties they face in different situations (Tang & Wang, 2011).

Meanwhile, in another aspect, the departure of the brides to a new country also causes considerable changes to their homeland. Many women, once financially and socially settled, feel satisfied with their identity as both immigrants and married women when they return to their homeland and support their families through remittances (Li & Yang, 2019). However, according to Rahman and Fee (2012), the social impact of remittances on migrant workers and their families and communities has only received significant research attention in recent years while several Vietnamese rural families did change their economic situations thanks to the help of their daughters (Bélanger & Wang, 2012). But in some localities of Vietnam where a large number of women marry foreigners, men face the risk of not finding a wife and the gender structure of society is increasingly imbalanced (Bélanger & Linh, 2011; Guilmo, 2012). Bélanger and Wang (2013), in a study on the case of Vietnam as a sending country of migrants to South Korea, Japan and Taiwan, conclude that we need to pay more attention to the migration process taking place in the country of origin to deepen our understanding of the migration flows that take place afterwards. The strategies, experiences and trajectories of migrants in the host country can be

elucidated by analyzing their activities in the sending country.

Using Portes' concept of transnationalism as "a broad category referring to a range of practices and institutions linking migrants, people, and organizations in their homelands or elsewhere in a diaspora", Bélanger and Wang (2012) examine several aspects of this migration flow and highlight how families, communities, and nations are connected across national borders by marriage migration. The authors argue that despite the limited economic and cultural capital, those people, especially women, have created a new transnational community linking Vietnam and Taiwan that scholars often ignore. They also emphasize that it is not modern technology, fast communication or powerful capital, but such kinds of human and capital flows are based on gendered, family-centered and grassroots activities deployed in order to survive in the modern capitalist world. However, according to Tseng and Lin (2013), "while most research concentrates on the experiences of foreign spouses or contract labour, few pay attention to their links with their home countries." Therefore, this study was conducted to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between Vietnamese migrant brides in Taiwan and their homeland in the current period.

RESEARCH DESIGN & PARTICIPANTS

This study was conducted using in-depth personal interviews over two months from December 2021 to January 2022. The shortest interview lasted 40 minutes while the longest was 120 minutes. The interviews took place in various locations such as in person at home or through online meetings. A total of six Vietnamese brides with different backgrounds residing in various locations of Taiwan such as Tainan, Kaohsiung and Yunlin were selected for interview through convenient sampling, specifically:

- Mrs. Liu, 37 years old, is a friendly, quiet and childish person. As the fifth child in a family of six children in Hai Phong - a port city in the North of Vietnam, her parents fish and farm and appear to be well off. Although she did not intend to get married at first, she wanted to go after seeing many of her friends emigrating to Taiwan. She met her husband through a matchmaker's recommendation and has been married for 15 years with a 14-year-old daughter and a 13-year-old son. She has lived in Taiwan for 15 years, naturalized 11 years and runs a small restaurant with her husband.
- Mrs. San, 39 years old, is a lively and active person. Hailing from Hau Giang, a province in the Mekong Delta, her parents are farmers with five daughters. She planned to marry a foreign husband very early after witnessing many sisters leading a happy life in Taiwan. She met her future husband at a relative's wedding at the age of 19 and began dating immediately. She has lived in Taiwan for 21 years and naturalized for 15 years with a 21-year-old daughter and a 17-year-old son. She and her husband run a small restaurant and even do matchmaking for Vietnamese brides, including her eldest sister.
- Mrs. Fu, 29 years old, is a well-spoken and quick-witted person. Hailing from Thai Nguyen, a midland and mountainous area in the North of Vietnam, her parents are self-employed and have two daughters, her younger sister is currently studying at university. She worked before receiving a Master's scholarship in Taiwan at the age of 27. After graduating, she married a Taiwanese and is currently working as an office worker for a company in Taiwan. In addition, she also set up a group on social networks to support Vietnamese students in Taiwan.
- Mrs. Shui, 59 years old, is from Hue City, the ancient capital of Vietnam in the central region. As a lover of literature and art and enjoys social relationships, she got married quite late at the age of 32 and met her fiancé while working at a Taiwanese company in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. As one of the first generation Vietnamese brides, she has moved to Taiwan for 26 years and is working as a Vietnamese language teacher. She has two children a son and a daughter who are in their 20s.
- Mrs. He, 43 years old, has a strong and determined personality. She came from a small merchant family on the outskirts of Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. After graduating from university in 2002, she went to Taiwan to work as a factory worker to earn extra income for her family. Thanks to her efforts, from a worker, she completed a PhD program in 2021 and became a university lecturer in Taiwan. She is married to a Taiwanese friend and they have three children. She is very active in activities for new Vietnamese immigrants.
- Mrs. Zhuang, 40 years old, is independent and steadfast. Hailing from Ho Chi Minh City, a large and growing hub in South Vietnam, her parents are government employees. She met her husband while still a college student and was pursued by him for several years before getting married. She has lived in Taiwan for 6

years and naturalized for 2 years with a 10-year-old son. Currently, she is studying for a doctorate while teaching Vietnamese at a university in Taiwan.

Focusing on the link with home country of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan, the interviewees were asked about their communication and exchange habits with individuals and organizations in Vietnam, especially their families and close friends. Their interest in the motherland's situation as well as their sense of maintaining Vietnamese identity in their husband's hometown were also explored. In addition, efforts to connect children with their mothers' homeland in Vietnam is also an issue that the study targets. From the data of these interviews, the study hopes to answer the question "Will living in a foreign country make them gradually forget their homeland? Or has the rapid development of communication and transportation made them more closely associated with their homeland than in the past?"

FAR FAR MOTHERLAND: WHEN TECHNOLOGY REMOVES THE DISTANCE

Often we will feel nostalgic when we have to leave a familiar person, thing or place. So how is the nostalgia for the family and homeland of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan? For brides who came to Taiwan many years ago, the feeling of nostalgia is common, especially when they first immigrated to Taiwan. At that time, communication between Taiwan and Vietnam was still difficult and expensive. Moving to a new living environment and the lack of information about family and homeland often made new immigrants feel lonely. Most relieved their nostalgia by calling home as much as possible, some were even lucky to have frequent visits to Vietnam in the first few months.

- Mrs. San: "When I first arrived, I was very homesick. I called back and said I don't know why I miss home so much. My husband advised me to try to accept it and then we would fly back once a month. Actually I flew back once a month, he followed me too. Three months back three times! Every time I came back, I stayed for ten days or at least a week."
- Mrs. Shui: "When I first came, I used to cry a lot. Many people misunderstood my husband, they thought I was beaten by him. I miss home very much ... I was six months pregnant when I first arrived ... It was so sad! When I first came here, I didn't have any friends ... Only I was at home with my parents-in-law ... I was

very upset and homesick. I missed Hue so much. Once in Saigon, it was already far from Hue, then in Taiwan, it's even farther from Hue. Therefore, every time my husband saw me sad, he told me to call home. But every time I called, I called until the phone heated up like it's on fire! My phone bills were already thousand of Taiwanese dollars or more every month."

However, not everyone felt so sad and nostalgic. Many people confessed that they had absolutely no feeling of nostalgia for their homeland and family, especially in the group of brides who arrived in Taiwan later. Personal characteristics and family circumstances are also two factors that have a significant impact on their attachment to their hometown. In the context of globalization, marrying a foreigner or emigrating to another country is no longer a new and unfamiliar phenomenon as before. Some people even think they are just like women who get married in another locality in Vietnam. Humorously, the flight time from Taiwan to Vietnam is really shorter than the travel time between some localities within Vietnam.

- Mrs. Liu: "I didn't miss home. I didn't even miss them when I just came here. I don't know why! I guess I don't like living in Vietnam very much because I saw that women who got married in Vietnam had a hard life ... I had a job immediately so I didn't miss them when I worked from morning to night."
- Mrs. Fu: "My relationship with my family has neither increased nor decreased, at the same level as usual. Since I am a very extroverted person and my personality is very strong, it turns out that I am not good at expressing emotions. Even when I'm at home with my parents, I never whine or act like I'm a soft girl to them ... So when I came here, people might think that girls who are away from home must be homesick and call home often. But I think that's not necessarily the case. I'm mature! So when I go out, I won't need to put more pressure on my parents, calling back every few days and saying that I miss home a lot will only make my parents worry more but not solve anything. Besides, I don't miss my home at all! [laughs]"

Homesick or not, contact with family took place. It is not only a need but also an obligation of children towards their family. Vietnamese people have a tradition of filial piety to their parents, which has been reminded and taught by the whole society since their childhood. This has also been confirmed by many previous studies when talking about the sacrifices of Vietnamese migrants for their parents (Tang & Wang, 2011).

In the past, due to the lack, inconvenience and expensiveness of telecommunications services, communication often took place periodically. Brides and families usually had to set fixed times to contact each other and often the bride would be the one to call home. The brief moments of hearing the voices of loved ones at that time were really valuable both in terms of spirit and cost. Some people even wrote letters to reduce communication costs.

- Mrs. San: “Phones used to be very difficult and expensive. In my hometown then, we didn’t have a phone at our home, so I had to call my uncle and he would ask my mom to talk to me later, so I didn’t dare to call her many times ... I had to make an appointment with her first.”
- Mrs. He: “In 2002, 2003 in Vietnam, actually, landline phones were still rare. There were only two in my village. The first time I called back, I had to call the village head and ask the village head to go to my house and call my mother to go to his house in 5 minutes and then I’d call back.”
- Mrs. Liu: “In the past, I had to use a (phone) card, so one week or two weeks I called when I remember ... In the past, I only used cards, each card costed about NTD 200 ... only about 60 minutes. If I used it carefully, one card could be used two or three times, but if not, it’s all over at once ... When I called home, I talked to my mother because only my mother is at home. My brothers were all busy at work, I didn’t talk to them much because we had nothing to talk.”

However, the situation has completely changed in the last ten years with the rapid explosion of information technology. The miraculous development of modern technology has made communication easier than ever. Not only talking freely, people can also see each other’s faces at almost zero cost anytime, anywhere with just a smartphone with internet connection. The habit of communicating with the family of Vietnamese brides has also changed rapidly. They can call their relatives in Vietnam whenever they want without an appointment. Relatives in Vietnam can actively contact the brides in Taiwan instead of passively waiting as before. The object of contact has been extended beyond the family such as friends. They can not only see each other’s faces but also call in groups. However, humorously, the easy communication sometimes makes people feel redundant and even annoying on busy days.

- Mrs. He: “I call Facetime all day. I usually call my mother, sisters or make group calls. We set up a Zalo group ... If there’s something secret,

I will call each person individually, and if there’s nothing secret, I will call the whole group.”

- Mrs. San: “Normally, my work is a bit busy, so I will call my mother for an hour or two on weekends ... But now we have the internet and it is very comfortable seeing the picture ... Now I call too often, my mom even says “It’s okay ! I’m busy now, we’ll talk later” then hanged up.”
- Mrs. Liu: “Sometimes it’s okay to call or not. Sometimes when I was watching TV, my mother called. Mom called but I only paid attention to watching TV, then she talked for a while and said, “Okay, watch your TV !” She talked and listened to herself so she got bored.”
- Mrs. Zhuang: “I talk more often with my two younger brothers than with my older sister probably because my older sister is quite introverted and three years older than me while my two younger brothers are only one and two years younger than me, just like the same generation.”

In addition, modern technology also allows communication to take place in many new ways. The brides have many new options for staying in regular contact with their families. Not only updating information via phone or text messages, some people set up social media accounts and update their personal situation so that all other family members and friends can follow up on a daily basis. Recent technological advances even allow these brides to monitor their families in Vietnam remotely continuously without interruption via monitoring devices. Seeing their loved ones with their own eyes in real time seems to have removed the physical distance from reality and made them feel as if they were living next to their family in Vietnam.

- Mrs. Zhuang: “My family has a private chat group on Zalo consisting of six family members. This is a private conversation group between parents and children while other family members (sons-in-law and daughters-in-law) are in another large group ... In the group chat, we can update on what we are doing.”
- Mrs. Fu: “Up until now, I have maintained a certain polite relationship with other relatives ... Because my family relationship is still very good, not too far away. Due to busy work, they also have their own families and children and many things to take care of, so they just look at my Facebook.”
- Mrs. San: “It’s ok now. Now I can also see the camera. Open (the camera), I can see my

family. There are cameras on the front and back of the house (in Vietnam) so I can watch directly what my mom is doing ... When I see what my mom is doing, she doesn't even know I'm watching her ! I'm very happy now, not like before."

Along with keeping in touch by phone, sending money and gifts to family in Vietnam has also become much easier than in the past. Remittance is a gift often given to parents as an act of filial piety of their expatriate children. Some Vietnamese brides still transfer money every month or every few months, while the rest only send money on special occasions like the New Year and when they return to Vietnam to visit family. In cases where families in Vietnam are financially stable, they usually only send gifts but rarely send money. Gifts are usually sent by air and are mainly Taiwanese specialties such as confectionery, dietary supplements, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. This result is quite similar to Bélanger and Wang's statement, "multivariate analyses on the determinants of remittances showed the likelihood of receiving money depended largely on the characteristics of the emigrant woman and her living conditions in the place of destination. Both emigrant's age and duration of time abroad showed an inverse U-shaped effect on the propensity to remit. After several years abroad, women send remittances, but the likelihood of sending declines over time" (Bélanger & Wang, 2012).

- Mrs. San: "Sometimes I send gifts home, mainly medicine such as stomach medicine, pain medicine, anti-inflammatory drugs, vitamins. Sometimes I send money to my mother through the bank. In the past, it was difficult to transfer money, so every time I return, I bring money back because I didn't know who to help that time. Now I transfer money about once every three months."
- Mrs. Liu: "I've lived in Taiwan for 15 years, but I only send gifts home three times from Taiwan ... Goods in Vietnam and here are the same, so it's no need to send them home. The goods here are no better than the ones in Vietnam ... During New Year, I send money home, but on normal days, I don't. Each time I send NTD 20,000. Recently, when my mother is older, I send money once in the summer and once in New Year. About NTD 40,000 a year. When I visit home, I usually bring cereal for the family and clothes for the kids there."
- Mrs. Zhuang: "I almost don't send money home because honestly my current income is just enough for three members of my family now ... But every year I send a box of gifts,

mostly trifles. For example, my older sister likes Taiwanese masks."

Although the brides still periodically return to Vietnam once a year or two, this need seems to be no longer as important as before. One of them claims to be very attached to his family and homeland, but has not returned to Vietnam for eight years. Although unspoken, it is likely that frequent contact with family, especially the ability to see them from a distance, has had a significant impact on their desire to return. This surprisingly convenient communication has made the feeling of loneliness in a foreign land suddenly disappear and helped the brides focus on their present life. In addition, many people avoid visiting their hometown because it costs a lot, especially gifts for relatives and friends. Only one of the interviewees is very active in visiting Vietnam as it serves her matchmaking work.

- Mrs. Zhuang: "Normally, I rarely come back during New Year because I only have a few days off in Taiwan and my husband doesn't come with me, so I don't want to. Usually I go back in the summer, my son has many days off, then I come back."
- Mrs. San: "In the past, when there was no pandemic, I came back once a year around October or December. I don't come back to celebrate New Year because airline tickets are expensive and there are a lot of traffic jams. Waiting for a car in a traffic jam is very tiring. That's why I didn't come back for New Year, but before it."
- Mrs. Shui: "Now it's convenient, so I haven't returned to Vietnam for eight years ... Now communication is very quick. Another key thing is that my parents recently passed away. In my opinion, when my parents are gone, my roots are gone. Brothers and sisters each have their own family. Nowadays, information is developed, so for example, my niece or nephew is teething or walking, I just need to open the computer to see them. So there are many reasons why I go back to Vietnam less."
- Mrs. Liu: "My friends here also don't want to go back to Vietnam frequently, they said that every time they returns, they must spend a lot of envelopes (money) for their relatives, several hundred (thousand Vietnam dong) each."

The Vietnamese community in Taiwan expands with groups of immigrants getting married, working and studying abroad, leading to the rapid increase of Vietnamese shops and Vietnamese restaurants. Consequently, it also

makes the image of Taiwanese society closer and more familiar in the eyes of Vietnamese brides. Most have developed a new network of friends in Taiwan, but the choice of friends depends on each person's judgment. Due to their busy lives, they meet infrequently, mostly just talking on the phone and meeting on long holidays. The interview results also show that the brides' contact with Vietnamese organizations and groups in Taiwan is very limited. It can be said that after naturalization in Taiwan, Vietnamese brides are no longer legally bound to their homeland; therefore, if not for some special reason, they are not interested in keeping in contact with Vietnamese agencies or organizations.

- Mrs. San: "In Vietnam, I have helped a lot of people. Many people in the neighborhood believe in me, so they asked me to advise their relatives to come here. Previously, many people thought that going to Taiwan was scary. Since I'm in Taiwan, I think Taiwan is good, so I explained it to them. I helped them with the procedure in Taiwan. As for the procedure in Vietnam, if needed, I'd phone to guide them too. I have so many friends, so many that I can't even remember their names [laughs] Here, I have a group of Vietnamese sisters who got married to Taiwanese men in Taipei, Kaohsiung. Every year we usually meet twice on vacations. They gather at my house to have fun for two days and then go home to work again."
- Mrs. Liu: "I don't know any friends over here. If I make friends but when they ask me to hang out and I don't have time to go, they will be upset, so I don't like making friends with anyone. I have only two Vietnamese friends in Kaohsiung and Taichung, sometimes chatting online. I am not a member of any groups or networks here."
- Mrs. Zhuang: "In Taiwan I don't have many Vietnamese friends because when I moved here, my husband's family warned that some Vietnamese brides were not good so I didn't make friends with them ... I mainly know some Vietnamese colleagues who are living here but I do have a lot of Taiwanese friends ... I have no connection with the Vietnamese Culture Office in Taipei. When I was not married, I went on a business trip to Taiwan, and I went to that office once. After getting married, even going through procedures to renounce my citizenship, I used the service of a travel agency, which is very convenient."
- Mrs. He: "The first Vietnamese groups were organized by Taiwanese because not many

Vietnamese knew how to organize at first ... (But) I don't see any connection with Vietnamese organizations."

Regularly watching news from Vietnam and enjoying Vietnamese movies and music on the internet also makes Vietnamese brides feel less away from home. Not only that, some people also regularly follow and update information about Vietnam to serve their work, especially the group of Vietnamese language teachers. Highly educated teachers and brides are quite active in promoting Vietnamese culture in Taiwan and believe that every Vietnamese should be an ambassador for the culture of their homeland. They strive to improve the Taiwanese people's understanding of Vietnam and improve the image of the Vietnamese in their husband's society. Meanwhile, other brides are only interested in Vietnamese entertainment programs on the internet.

- Mrs. Shui: "I don't think I can do it alone, but I will contribute. For example, when I teach Vietnamese language or Vietnamese culture ... I am like a piece of the puzzle that contributes to promoting Vietnam. Personally, I am a prism for people to look at and say Vietnamese people like that ... must be a kind person."
- Mrs. He: "I myself still do work that is beneficial to the country (Vietnam). Actually, I think I have a mission. My mission until now is to spread Vietnamese language, culture and history to Taiwanese people to know and understand more about Vietnam, understand more about Vietnamese people and respect Vietnam more. Since I started teaching, I have found myself with such a mission ... When I was a worker, I only cared about money."
- Mrs. Zhuang: "I think I'm Taiwanese now, but in my blood I'm still Vietnamese, my thinking is also Vietnamese. No matter how many languages I learn, I am still Vietnamese ... In Taiwan, we should show what's good in Vietnamese culture."

Despite the positive changes in the above-mentioned living situation and communication services, Vietnamese brides still hold on to the close affection of their families and the atmosphere of New Year holiday in their homeland. Although happy with their husbands, most still feel that social relations in Taiwan are quite separate, even quite pale when compared to the cohesion and sometimes excessive care in Vietnamese traditional families and clans. New Year's Day in Taiwan is considered to be not as interesting and exciting as Vietnamese New Year, which is the most important occasion of the year

for family reunions. Children of these families are also very curious and interested in the atmosphere and activities to welcome the New Year in Vietnam.

- Mrs. San: “The most memorable Vietnamese culture is Tet (New Year holiday). There are cakes, candies and fruits on Tet holiday, here it is different, here Tet is boring. Tet here is not interesting. Only married daughters return to their mother’s house to have meals together on the new year second day and then return. Everyone hangs out but there is nothing to play.”
- Mrs. Shui: “The day I arrived in Taiwan, no one picked me up, my husband and I called a taxi to go home. I am sorely disappointed ! I imagine myself as in Vietnam ... Like in 2013, I flew back to Vietnam, back to Da Nang, my whole family rented a big car to carry dozens of people, including a child under two years old, to the airport to pick me up.”
- Mrs. Zhuang: “In Vietnam, emotion, expressing feelings and issues of family life are deeper than in Taiwanese.”

According to these Vietnamese mothers, their children are also very impressed with the New Year atmosphere in Vietnam and love to visit their motherland a lot. However, the relationship of the Taiwanese-Vietnamese generation with the mother’s family lineage in distant Vietnam is very blurred. A major and most obvious barrier is the limited Vietnamese level of the majority of the children in the group, although they can communicate a little. Aside from a few rare trips back to her mother’s hometown, contact with her mother’s family in Vietnam is simply a few polite greetings over the phone.

- Mrs. Shui: “I am very sorry about that but maybe because of the circumstances at that time. Because when I first came here, my sense of mother tongue was very weak. I just think that it is good (for children) to speak (Vietnamese), but it is not compulsory to teach them. I’m very easygoing ... The children can speak with a Hue accent, but they are very bad at reading and writing.”
- Mrs. He: “(My son) also speaks Vietnamese since childhood, I also taught him to write Vietnamese and read Vietnamese. (He) knows the basics. Now he doesn’t speak much. If I speak (Vietnamese), he still understands but he doesn’t speak. But if you don’t say it, you’ll forget, if you don’t use it, you’ll forget soon. But I still have to speak to him. If he remembers, it’s good, if he doesn’t remember, it’s ok.”

- Mrs. Liu: “They don’t know any Vietnamese sentences. As I even don’t have time to call their grandmother, so I don’t have time to teach them Vietnamese. They only speak Taiwanese. Besides, I don’t like letting them learn Vietnamese. Although they are young, they can study quickly, but I see some children in Vietnam, they learn the bad habits from the adults and say bad words ... (The kids) Love going back (to Vietnam). My first son came back to visit the hometown and when he came back, he cried a lot and it took a day for him to calm down.”

When asked about their desire to return to live in Vietnam in the future, the interviewees were hesitant. Most feel stable with their current family and are satisfied with the welfare regime provided by the Taiwanese government. Some people still retain their Vietnamese nationality as a backup for unexpected situations or to maintain certain rights in their home country such as the right to trade or inherit. Even the woman who showed the strongest feelings for her family and homeland herself also did not have a definitive plan to return to Vietnam in the near future. It can be said that they have really considered Taiwan as their second home, where they will spend the rest of their lives.

- Mrs. Fu: “Actually, in Taiwan, my work cannot be said to earn more money than in Vietnam. It is also impossible to say that the job in Taiwan is better than in Vietnam. It’s not right if it’s only because of the economy that I stay here to make money, to build a career. This is because I love a person and I accept being with that person, I accept to change my career to take care of him.”
- Mrs. He: “I also thought about it, if I graduate and have the opportunity to return to Vietnam, will I come back ? I used to think, but didn’t dare to plan to return to Vietnam now ... I also thought about it, but looking back in reality, my son enjoys social welfare and health here which is better than in Vietnam. If my son can be independent, earn his own living and live on his own without any support, there is a possibility that I will return to Vietnam.”

CONCLUSION

It can be seen that Vietnamese brides in Taiwan in all circumstances still maintain a close relationship with their families, especially their parents and siblings. Although information technology has bridged the gap, apart from the family connection, other ties to the homeland still seem to fade over time. Their attention becomes more focused on a few close individuals and their

nostalgia also eases with time and adaptation to the new society. Their relationships with friends as well as agencies and organizations in Vietnam seem to be fading and are often replaced by other relationships in the host country.

While the Filipino mothers in the UK may feel that their phones have allowed them to partially rebuild their role as parents (Madianou & Miller, 2011), this study shows that the advancement of communication facilities as well as transportation is creating psychological similarities with people in Vietnam living away from home. The habit of contacting family as well as exchanging money and gifts with relatives is actually very similar to that of people living away from home in Vietnam. The convenience of telecommunications services and the large migration of Vietnamese people have made them feel that they are very close to their family, their motherland and gradually reduce their need to return Vietnam in reality.

Consistent with the previous observations of Bélanger and Wang, this study also shows that the personality and specific circumstances of each individual are two factors that determine the degree of attachment to their family and homeland. Anyway, Vietnamese brides in Taiwan still do not forget their homeland, at least the bustling atmosphere of Tet holiday and the close relationship in the family. However, as the Vietnamese often say, “boat follows the driver - woman follows her husband”, they accept to spend their lives in a foreign land and create a new generation for their second homeland. Because of the language barrier, children of Taiwanese-Vietnamese families almost give up their link with their mother’s homeland and maintain only sparse contact with their maternal family.

In the context of the explosion of science and technology and the profound transformation of Taiwanese society caused by the recent steady influx of migrants, larger qualitative as well as quantitative studies are necessary and could be done in the near future to give a more complete picture of this interesting and topical issue. In addition, the expansion of the study to other subjects such as families with Vietnamese couples or families with Vietnamese husbands and Taiwanese wives also promises interesting results for further comparison and analysis.

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 作者簡歷

- 姓名：阮俊義 / Nguyen Tuan Nghia
- 現職：國立成功大學越南研究中心助理
- 學歷：Ph.D. Student, Department of Taiwanese Literature, National ChengKung University
- 研究專長：Oriental Studies, Asian Studies, Chinese Studies, Vietnamese Studies
- 研究著作：
- Nguyen Tuan Nghia. 2022. "Vietnamese identity in the era of globalization: What the youth think about traditional culture." The 5th International Conference on Vietnamese Studies: Researching, Teaching Vietnamese Studies and Vietnamese Language. Ho Chi Minh: VNU-HCM. 410-420.
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