

# Immigrant Wives and Their Cultural Influence in Taiwan

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## Abstract

In Taiwan, the number of immigrant wives (foreign brides) has increased dramatically in recent years. Media outlets and academic research works report family violence and other problems. This study explores immigrant wives' "hidden" position and status within the family and wider society by interviewing immigrant wives and their families. We compare the result of our fieldwork with the reports of Taiwan's media and governmental institutions. It is found that the Taiwanese government mostly sees the problems that are reported to them that are only a part of the whole picture. Most immigrant wives actually have strong influence in Taiwan, in their new families and in society. At the same time, they provide the stimulus for the Taiwanese government to consider multiculturalist approaches to policy-making, give Taiwanese people more cross-cultural opportunities, and provide Taiwan a lesson for globalization.

**Keywords:** cultural migration, globalization, immigrant wives

## Introduction

There were 4,899 registered immigrant wives in Taiwan in 1994,<sup>1</sup> but a booming immigration has occurred in recent years and their number reached 319,735 (Dept. of Household Registration Affairs, MIO, 2005b), about sixty times more, in ten years. As a result, intermarriage attracts people's attention. Many media outlets report sentimental social cases, such as the case of A-ling. A-ling was an immigrant wife from Vietnam. She was seriously abused by her Taiwanese husband. She finally got a legal divorce after litigation.<sup>2</sup> The Taiwanese government sees the problems that are reported to them. Many academic research works examine the problems such as family violence, marriage swindle, the wives being a disadvantaged minority, etc. (Lu, 2001; Hsia, 2001; Chu, 2002; Chen, 2002; Yen, 2002;

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<sup>1</sup> No official record of the non-registered migrant wives before 1994 can be found.

<sup>2</sup> A-ling obtained an R.O.C. passport and became a Taiwanese citizen in April, 2005 (The Liberty Times, 2005, p. 19).