

PN 1114-026

Ann 51123

RURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION AND CHINESE WOMEN:  
A CASE STUDY FROM TAIWAN

by

Rita S. Gallin, Ph.D.  
Michigan State University

February 1984

Working Paper #47

Abstract: To maintain political stability and a cheap, elastic labor supply necessary for contemporary capitalism to operate in Taiwan, the government allocates a large share of its budget to national security, a small share to a social welfare infra-structure, and encourages an ideology of patriarchal familism. This paper examines how women facilitate Taiwan's comparative advantage in the world economy by considering: (1) the ways in which women from a small village community act in defense of the patriarchal family; (2) what their interests may be in maintaining such a family; and (3) how development affects their lives.

About the Author: Rita S. Gallin received her Ph.D. in Sociology and is presently Assistant Professor in the College of Nursing, and Acting Coordinator of the Office of Women in International Development (WID) and Editor of the WID Publication Series at Michigan State University. Her extensive field research on socioeconomic and culture change in Taiwan as well as her research on the sociology of health in American society have led to numerous published articles in journals and books.

## RURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION AND CHINESE WOMEN: A CASE STUDY FROM TAIWAN<sup>1</sup>

When the Chinese Nationalist government retreated to Taiwan in 1949, it found a primarily agricultural island marked by conditions not all favorable to development. The policies it adopted to foster economic growth have been documented in detail elsewhere (Ho, 1978; Lin, 1973). Suffice it to say that the government initially strengthened agriculture to provide a base for industrialization, pursued a strategy of import substitution for a brief period during the 1950s, and then in the 1960s adopted a policy of export-oriented industrialization.

The latter policy produced dramatic changes in Taiwan's economic structure. Agriculture's share in national output declined as industry's rose. By 1973, agriculture contributed only 11 percent to Taiwan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while manufacturing accounted for 43 percent (Ho, 1978:130). Industrialization was not restricted to a few urban centers, however. During the 1960s industry began to disperse to the countryside to gain access to labor and raw materials. By 1971, 50 percent of the industrial and commercial establishments and 55 percent of the manufacturing firms in Taiwan were located in rural areas, and the proportion of farm households with members working off-farm grew.<sup>2</sup> Taiwan was no longer an agrarian society.

To promote industrialization, the government relied heavily on foreign capital (Ho, 1978:111, 117, 249), introducing numerous tax incentives and establishing export processing zones to attract investors. These measures undoubtedly helped create a favorable investment climate, but Taiwan's political stability and cheap, elastic labor supply proved more important to foreign investors (Ho, 1978:107-108, 205, 239, 253). Accordingly, to ensure the competitiveness of its labor-intensive industries, the government maintains a restrictive political and traditionalistic social climate. It allocates a large share of the budget to national security, a small share to a social welfare infra-structure (Ho, 1978:230, 295), and encourages an ideology of patriarchal familism, thereby creating the conditions necessary for contemporary capitalism to operate.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how women facilitate Taiwan's comparative advantage in the world economy. To this end, it considers (1) the ways in which women act in defense of the patriarchal family; (2) what their interests may be in maintaining such a family; and (3) how development affects their lives. The paper is about women from a Taiwanese village which has changed over the past 25 years from an economic system based almost purely on agriculture to one founded predominantly on off-farm employment.<sup>3</sup> During this period, young married women have joined the men of their families in the industrial labor force. Yet although their participation in work outside the home has not been accompanied by changes in their status relative to men, it has altered their position relative to older women. I argue that this change is a reflection of women's attempts to perpetuate the family in order to gain security in old age and that by maintaining the family women subsidize development in Taiwan.

### The Traditional Chinese Family

The basic unit of Chinese society is the family. In the past, and to a large extent today, it was a cooperative enterprise and the fundamental provider of economic and social security for the individual. Traditionally, an authoritarian hierarchy based on gender, generation, and age dominated life within the family. The oldest male had the highest status; women's status, although it increased with the birth of sons and age, was lower than that of any man. Great emphasis was placed on respect for age differences and the desires of the young were subjugated to those of the old, just as the wishes of women were subjugated to those of men.

The roots anchoring this hierarchy were the principles of filial piety and veneration of age. "Filial piety demanded absolute obedience and complete devotion to the parents, thus establishing the generational subordination of the children" (Yang, 1959:89). It obligated offspring to repay parents for caring for them and ensured the elders of support in their later years. Veneration of age demanded a similar obedience. It required children to honor the strategic knowledge and skills of their elders with deference, respect, and compliance. Both principles served as forms of social control, perpetuating the family and the domination of the young by the old.

This domination is well illustrated by the way in which marriage partners traditionally were selected. Marriage brought a new member into the family, joined two people in order to produce children, and established an alliance between families. The needs of the family therefore took precedence over the desires of the individual in the selection of a mate. When parents arranged marriages, they attempted to recruit women who would be compliant, capable workers, able to produce heirs for the group, and from families willing to forge bonds of cooperation and obligation.

Such arranged marriages served the needs and interests of the family, but were particularly difficult for women. When she married, a woman severed formal ties with her natal family and moved as a stranger to live in the home of her husband. As a stranger, she had to be socialized and integrated into the new household, and this task fell to her mother-in-law who often disciplined her stringently and treated her harshly.

The tyranny of the mother-in-law can be explained in several ways:

. . . in terms of necessity to break the newcomer to the ways of her new home, in terms of a revenge for her own lifelong subjection taken on the part of the older woman against the one adult person over whom she was given much power, or in terms of the results of rivalry for the affections of the son. . . . (Baker, 1979:44).

An older woman also had come as a stranger to her husband's family and the birth of a son had bettered her status within it and ensured her old age insurance. She had spent years nurturing her relationship with him and tying him firmly to her (Wolf, 1972:32-41). A young bride was seen as a competitor for claims on her son. If she could not be "broken," she might deprive a mother of her son's loyalty and support.

Coercion, then, was used by an older woman to subjugate her daughter-in-law. In this, she was helped by her son. He had been taught that the goal of marriage was the continuation of the family, not love or personal satisfaction. He was expected to side with his mother in the case of conflict, to demand his wife's submission--even by physical force. Given this expectation--as well as the close emotional ties he had with his mother--a son acted as his mother's ally to control his wife. She, deprived of his support, had few resources with which to bargain for better treatment. She could only look to the day when she bore sons who grew up, the division of the family, or the death of her mother-in-law. Then she would earn a dominant place in the hierarchy that ordered relationships within the family.

In sum, filial piety and the veneration of age buttressed a status system that defined authority and fostered control of the young by the old. Within the rigidity of this hierarchy, young women were subjugated by old women to provide for the strength and stability of the family. The preservation of the family, however, was achieved at the price of immeasurable repression and suffering of young women.

#### Development and Women in Hsin Hsing Village

Hsin Hsing is a nucleated village located beside a road that runs between two market towns, approximately 125 miles southwest of Taiwan's major city, Taipei. Its people are Hokkien (Minnan) speakers--as are most in the area--whose ancestors emigrated from Fukien, China several hundred years ago.

In 1958 the registered population of the village was 609 people in 99 households (hu) or economic families (chia) (see Table 1). The majority (55 percent) of the villagers were members of conjugal families and only 10 percent were members of joint families and 35 percent members of stem families.<sup>4</sup> Almost all families in the late 1950s were agriculturalists, deriving most of their livelihood from two crops of rice, marketable vegetables grown in a third crop, and, in some cases, from farm labor hired out for wages.

No significant industries or job opportunities existed locally to provide supplemental income or to absorb the excess labor produced by a growing population on a finite land base. Men worked in the fields, taking care of such tasks as plowing, narrowing, transplanting, and harvesting. Women managed the house and children, raised poultry, dried and preserved

crops, helped with agricultural chores such as weeding fields or drying rice, and, in their "spare time," wove fiber hats at home to supplement the family income or to earn pocket money.

Parents expected children of both sexes to work, but girls had many more responsibilities than boys. From an early age girls helped with the myriad tasks their mothers performed, while their brothers experienced much greater freedom. This differential treatment was intentional. In preparation for a woman's move to another family at marriage, a mother socialized her daughter to be an able worker, submissive daughter-in-law, and obedient wife. The socialization of her sons, in contrast, encouraged the construction of bonds of sentiment between a mother and her sons who would stay in the family and provide for parents in their old age.

When sons reached marriable age, therefore, a mother, to promote her interests, took an active part in negotiations for his bride. If the young woman brought into the family as her daughter-in-law was not tractable, she might be unwilling to take on the household drudgery or to obey her mother-in-law's commands. If she was too attractive to her son, they might form a strong conjugal bond that could threaten the family hierarchy and a mother's future.

Nevertheless, because Hsin Hsing was a village in change (B. Gallin, 1966), a mother realized that it was better to share some of the responsibility for arranging the marriage with her son. Two years of compulsory military service and, perhaps, migration to urban centers for employment had provided him with opportunities to meet women and even to have an affair. Mothers had witnessed cases in which a young man was unwilling to marry a woman sight unseen and chosen for him by others.

Therefore, once arrangements for a marriage were underway--through the aegis of a matchmaker--and the two families entertained favorable attitudes toward one another, a meeting was arranged at which the young man and woman could see each other. Sometimes the rendezvous was held in a tea house or theatre in the market town. Other times, the young man and his family visited the home of the prospective bride where they were served tea by the young woman. In either case, after the meeting the son--and in turn his prospective bride--were asked for an opinion about the tentatively chosen mate.

Given the brevity of the meeting, the young people could not really judge each other, except perhaps by looks. Further, if they were at all filial and respectful of their parents, they could say little more than "the boy looks all right" or "she is not too pretty, but if you think she is acceptable, then it is all right." Few young people disobeyed their parents and, consequently, men married women--and women married men--with whom they had had no further contact after the "initial meeting."

Once married, the customary daily routine of a young man was not affected substantially. As a new husband he continued to spend as much of his free time with his friends as he had before his marriage and almost never allowed himself to be seen publicly with his wife. (Open displays of affection were frowned upon and discouraged through gossip, teasing, and ridicule.) In general, a young man continued to function under the authority of his father who controlled the family estate.

Unlike her husband, a young woman upon marriage was immediately saddled with work under the close supervision and scrutiny of her mother-in-law. She was the family drudge, responding to the daily needs and catering to the idiosyncrasies of all family members. Many considered their situations intolerable, but it was a rare young woman who dared disobey or show disrespect to her mother-in-law. Divorce was discouraged, opportunities to earn an independent livelihood practically nil, and husbands provided little support or comfort. A young woman, therefore, submitted to the will and whims of her mother-in-law and looked to the time when she could assume the role of wife of the head of the family.

The assumption of this role occurred upon the retirement or death of a mother-in-law or upon family division. Most commonly it occurred upon division because partition of the family was inevitable as a result of internal conflicts born of economically-based problems and general poverty: sons thought other family members were not contributing equitably to the group's maintenance; daughters-in-law believed the family's "wealth" and chores were distributed unjustly. Under such circumstances, the idea of family division was initiated--usually, according to villagers, by a daughter-in-law. It was her husband, however, who acted on the suggestion, for despite a mother's stratagems to protect the filial bond between her son and herself, not infrequently a real compatibility or unity of interest developed between a husband and wife, and he listened to her views and accepted her advice.

Although a very strong and authoritarian family head or his wife could postpone division for a number of years, continuing friction wearied most parents and they agreed to partition. Usually it took place before the death of an old father (family head), soon after all sons of the family were married. In such a division, the parents might join the conjugal family of one of the sons, thus forming a stem family. More frequently, however, the parents themselves formed another conjugal family as did each of their sons.

In either case, the parents remained in their own quarters. If they officially became a conjugal family, they were fed and cared for on a rotation basis, usually for ten or fifteen days, by each of the new families formed by their sons. They received a certain amount of pocket money from each son, and if they needed medical care, it was their sons' responsibility to contribute equally to its cost.

From fear of public criticism as well as from filial piety, children rarely failed in their obligations to parents. A son who had migrated might sometimes be delinquent in sharing the costs of his parents' care, but more often the problem was his wife's inability, because she lived with him outside the village, to do her share of parent-feeding in the monthly rotation. Under such circumstances, the wives of his brothers often refused to take over the absent wife's duties and the mother-in-law, much to her annoyance, had to cook during her migrant daughter-in-law's part of the rotation.

Nevertheless, an older woman had few pressing responsibilities. Although she lost the role of imperious mother-in-law directing the activities of younger women upon family division, she continued to enjoy considerable leisure. Her daughters-in-law performed many of her domestic chores, and she was free to enjoy her grandchildren and to visit with other retired women in the village.

In sum, during the 1950s most villagers were tied to the land. The elders controlled the principal form of productive property--the farm--and held sway over their children who were dependent on them. Marriages were arranged with the "consent" of the young, but a woman came to her husband's home as a submissive, exploitable bride. With the birth of a son, however, she earned a place in her husband's family; and with the arrival of a daughter-in-law, she achieved a position of authority. Life improved with the onset of old age. A woman became a receiver rather than a provider of care, a supervisor rather than a supervisee.

Given this traditionalism, one might ask how villagers responded to the transformation of Hsin Hsing's economic system in the 1970s, when labor-intensive factories, service shops, retail stores, and construction outfits burgeoned in the area. During this period, seven small, satellite factories, three artisan workshops, and twenty-six shops and small businesses appeared in the village. Farming was modernized, minimizing the need for either a physically strong or a large labor force. In response to these changes, out-migration decreased (although a stream of emigrants from Hsin Hsing in the 1960s had resulted in a loss of population), the proportion of stem and joint families increased (see Table 1), and villagers became part-time agriculturalists and full-time, off-farm workers.<sup>5</sup>

The movement of villagers into the rural industrial sector was not limited to men, however (see Table 2). In 1979, two-fifths (39.9 percent) of the married women in Hsin Hsing worked for remuneration.<sup>6</sup> Theoretically, the earnings of a married woman were her private money, her sai-khia (Hokkien), but in practice a woman's ability to accumulate sai-khia was a function of her family's economic position.<sup>7</sup> Women in conjugal families often worked out of economic necessity, and their wages were contributed directly to the family budget. This budget, however, was not joint. It belonged to the conjugal unit of which the husband was head. The extent to which a woman had access to the conjugal fund, therefore, depended on her and her husband's personalities. In exceptional cases, if a woman

was strong and domineering, she might have considerable influence in the expenditure of funds. If her husband was very authoritarian, she had little control over monies spent.

The disposition of the earnings of married women living in stem or joint families was more complex. In such families, a common treasury, controlled by the father, covered the cost of gifts and medical and household expenses, provided capital for family businesses, and met all educational expenses. The contribution of women to this treasury, however, varied. Some women were required to deposit their earnings into the family treasury if the group was economically insecure. Most women living in larger family units, however, contributed none of their earnings to the joint coffer. They were permitted to keep them to use for the clothing and recreation of their individual conjugal units and for future business ventures or investments (Gallin and Gallin, 1982b). Nevertheless, because it was expected that a woman would "surrender" her sai-knia to her husband when they divided from the larger family and became a conjugal unit (Cohen, 1976:210-211), wives lost or gave up personal control of their private money upon family partition.

It is obvious, then, that gender equality was not promoted by development. The assumption of new roles by married women was not accompanied by changes in their position relative to men. Given this lack of change, one might ask if development affected the structure of relations between the generations. Was the domination of the young by the old maintained under conditions of economic change? Did older women continue to subjugate younger women?

Perhaps a good way to begin to answer these questions is to look at the way in which marriages were arranged and young brides integrated into the households of their husbands. It was seen that in the 1950s parents responded to incipient signs of change by seeking their children's consent to the mate they, the parents, had selected. By the 1970s, parents' monopoly on mate-selection had disappeared. They were still involved in the negotiations--the maintenance of family continuity required that they retain some control--but opportunities for jobs in the rural and urban areas had expanded free mate choice among the young.

Sometimes, young people met at work, liked each other, and asked parents for their consent to marry. In some such cases, a prospective bride was pregnant and parents had no choice but to acquiesce to the marriage. Few parents, however, were willing to veto the bride choice of their son. No longer tied to the land and dependent on their patrimony, sons could sell their labor power and, if they chose, provide for a life independent of the larger family unit. Accordingly, to secure their sons' good-will and loyalties, parents acceded to their wishes.

Most often, however, young people met through the introductions of kin or neighbors. In such cases, the introducer would suggest to a mother that she knew a suitable mate for her son. If the mother agreed with the

introducer's appraisal, she would talk with her son about the young woman. He then decided whether or not he wanted to meet the potential bride, and if he did, arrangements were made for a chaperoned meeting at the introducer's home, a local restaurant, or some such neutral place.

After the meeting, if the young couple were agreeable to each other, negotiations between the families to arrange the marriage began almost immediately. Dating, in the Western sense, usually occurred only after these negotiations; it was considered a process through which a betrothed couple developed a compatible relationship, not a system of screening potential mates.

In short, when an "introducer" was involved in mate-selection, a son had the right to say who he would not marry, but his mother retained considerable power in the choice of who he could marry. Nevertheless, the mutual affection that frequently developed between a young couple during the pre-marriage dating period was a potential threat to an older woman. It gave her daughter-in-law a decided emotional advantage in their rivalry for her son's affections and loyalties.

This potential advantage was perhaps one of the reasons that the integration of a new bride into her husband's household was undertaken with moderation on the part of her mother-in-law. The bond between husband and wife meant that a young bride was not as helpless in dealing with her mother-in-law as the older woman had been with hers. Thus, although mothers-in-law complained that their daughters-in-law were "slow in learning" their domestic obligations or were "lazy," they often avoided direct confrontations with them. It was better to sidestep an issue than risk pitting a son's emotional ties to his mother against those to his wife. At best, a son might remain neutral and withdraw from the fray. At worst, he might defend his wife.

A daughter-in-law's transition into the household of her husband, then, was far less traumatic in 1979 than it was in the 1950s. Nevertheless, despite the sufferance with which a mother-in-law accepted her daughter-in-law's failings, a young woman still was expected to conform to traditional familial norms--to bear and rear children and to contribute her labor to the family enterprise. That most women did fulfill their obligation to produce heirs can be seen from the fact that the majority (54.5 percent) of young married women did not enter the off-farm labor force until they had produced two sons.<sup>8</sup>

Young married women were not as filial, however, in discharging other obligations to their mothers-in-law. Less than one-quarter (22.7 percent) of the older women living with daughters-in-law identified themselves as retired and, as might be expected, four of the retirees had daughters-in-law who occupied traditional roles (see Table 3).<sup>9</sup> The one other woman who identified herself as retired had a daughter-in-law who worked off-farm, but the mother-in-law cared for her two pre-teen grandchildren when they were not attending school.<sup>10</sup> The majority (54.5 percent) of the older women

living in stem or joint families had assumed some of the role responsibilities of their daughters-in-law to release them for off-farm employment; they cared and cooked for their young grandchildren and took care of agricultural chores during the daytime absence of the younger women.

Three other women also occupied non-traditional mother-in-law roles. The daughters-in-law of these women were at home, but two of the older women continued to work on the family farm, and one worked off-farm while her daughter-in-law managed the household and cared for her two-year-old son. In actuality, then, few older women living with daughters-in-law enjoyed the prerogatives of the traditional mother-in-law role. Most had lost a mother-in-law's single privilege--commanding the labor of her daughter-in-law so as to lighten her own workload.

What accounts for this shift in power between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law? One explanation is that a mother-in-law had a serious rival in her daughter-in-law. In addition to the emotional advantage discussed above, a younger woman had an economic advantage as well. A daughter-in-law entered her husband's household with sai-khia which, regardless of the family's economic condition, remained under her control and which, if she had worked and kept her earnings, may have grown substantially. This sai-khia represented a sizeable portion of the seed money for the conjugal unit which she and her husband would eventually establish and which her husband would head.

A mother-in-law, in contrast, had little wealth to offer in competition. Her sai-khia, if any, had long since either been spent during her early years of marriage or been surrendered to her husband for use by their conjugal unit upon family division. Further, family land--the bequeathal of which a mother had some control of through her ability to influence her husband--represented only a secondary source of income and sons had a lessened interest in it as an inheritance. Accordingly, a mother-in-law had fewer economic resources than her daughter-in-law with which to vie for her son's loyalty or affection, and her daughter-in-law capitalized on this disparity to negotiate a new role relationship with her.

Yet a second explanation for the shift in power between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is that an older woman had fewer resources with which to motivate a younger woman's obedience than she had had in the 1950s. Earlier a daughter-in-law had been dependent on her mother-in-law's largesse to pay for bus fare if she wanted to return to her natal home or to buy something personal for her own or her children's use. A younger woman thus submitted to her mother-in-law's authority to maintain the older woman's good-will. In 1979, however, a daughter-in-law was no longer as dependent on her mother-in-law's beneficence. She had her sai-khia which she could use to pay for the "luxuries" she wanted or the bus fare necessary for her trip home. As a result, the rewards her mother-in-law had to offer often were insufficient to persuade her to submit to demands she considered unjust.

In sum, the increase in resources at the command of daughters-in-law struck at the roots of older women's power. Despite their weakened position vis-a-vis their daughters-in-law, however, older women living in stem or joint families considered themselves more fortunate than their counterparts who lived apart from their families; none of the rewards of old age were available to these women.

For example, of the 18 older women living in conjugal family units in 1979, none identified themselves as retired (see Table 4). A majority (55.6 percent) said they worked in the fields and at off-farm jobs in addition to maintaining their households. Most (38.9 percent) had no married children living in the village. Thus, not only did they work a double day, but they also had no offspring living nearby with whom they could eat or to whom they could turn for companionship.

These women provided stark evidence that support of parents was not automatic in a changing world. Old mothers could be forced to work to earn money their delinquent sons failed to remit, and to relive the drudgery and loneliness of their early years of marriage. Perhaps for these reasons, older women feared to antagonize their daughters-in-law. If a son's wife alienated him from his mother, who would take responsibility for her?

#### Discussion and Conclusions

In the preceding pages, I have shown how rural industrialization was accompanied by a shift in power between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. It was seen that in the 1950s villagers were tied to the land, children were dependent on farms controlled by parents for a livelihood, and the old held sway over the young. By 1979, in contrast, most income was derived from off-farm employment, parents were dependent on children in whom the major income earning power rested, and the young had achieved a new bargaining position with which to resist the traditional authority of parents.

It was also seen that working was not a source of economic independence for younger women, but a base from which to defy the authority of their mothers-in-law. As the resources at the command of daughters-in-law increased, the sanctions at the disposal of mothers-in-law decreased. Older women complained that they were "powerless," that their "daughters-in-law did not listen to their orders," "did not treat them very well," and "even looked down on them." They also voiced apprehension about their future. Free-choice marriage and post-betrothal dating among the young had strengthened the conjugal bond and threatened older women's economic and social security.

Yet despite the number of older women living alone in the village, more resided in expanded family units. Clearly, although daughters-in-law were defying the authority of their mothers-in-law, they were not directly contending it by initiating suggestions for early family division. The question becomes: Why were younger women not agitating for fission of the family?

Obviously, the emotional and economic advantages they held vis-a-vis their mothers-in-law had allowed them to redefine their subordinate position within the generational hierarchy and they were neither treated harshly nor disciplined stringently. Further, most were permitted to keep their earnings to provide for the personal needs of their individual families and thus had little cause to complain about "favoritism" by their mothers-in-law. Coercion and inequity, however, were but two of the reasons daughters-in-law had encouraged early family division in the 1950s. Dissatisfaction over the lesser contributions to the family enterprise by a husband's brothers also had been a potent force for initiating suggestions for division.

There is little reason to expect that such a divisive force would disappear with rural economic development. Indeed, the arrangements of the joint family had been modified--so that each son contributed an amount to the group treasury proportional to his income and to the share of family resources his conjugal unit consumed--to mitigate the problem. Nevertheless, the problem did exist. Brothers working in cities might send little or no money home. Younger brothers might be provided a different amount and kind of education than their older siblings as the family's financial security increased. Such economic inequities, however, apparently were viewed with greater dispassion than they had been in the past.

The most plausible explanation for this dispassion is that the advantages of the joint family outweighed its disadvantages. I noted above that a young woman's sai-khia was an important foundation of the conjugal fund for the family that would be composed of herself, her husband, and her children. It was in a woman's interest, therefore, to guard her sai-khia and the joint family allowed her to do this.

First, the large unit offered savings in money. Costs of daily living, gift giving, and taxes were less for the larger, single unit than they were for a small, individual unit. Costs of operating the land also were less because crops could be harvested and marketed in one large, joint unit. Second, the joint family enabled a young woman to engage in economically remunerative activities. The presence of a mother-in-law who could assume some of her role responsibilities allowed a young woman to work off-farm, thereby making possible the growth of her sai-khia. Finally, the joint family increased the economic potential and security of a young woman's future conjugal unit. The single economic base of the large unit served both as a source of potential venture capital for her husband as well as a source of protection if he used private capital to start a new enterprise. In other words, the profits of his success belonged primarily to her conjugal unit, but the losses of his failure were shared by the joint family and its treasury.

The advantages of the joint family, in short, so outweighed its disadvantages that young women made conscious efforts to ensure its continuance. They carried a double burden of domestic chores and off-farm

work, even though they had the leverage to gain a lighter workload within the household. To demand that their mothers-in-law assume still more of their role responsibilities than they already had might have created conflict and hastened the division of the large family. Their goal was to prolong the life of the joint family, for as their mothers-in-law had in the past, so too did they look to their future families and the prosperity of their sons who would provide support for them in their old age.

Young women's attempts to secure their futures, however, were achieved at the expense of their mothers-in-law. As young brides, the older women had been subjugated by their mothers-in-law to provide for the strength and stability of the family. The women had looked to the time when they bore sons who grew up and gave them respectful, obedient daughters-in-law to lighten their workload and surround them with grandchildren to enjoy. Their dreams of an old age of decreasing responsibilities and increased leisure had not materialized, however. Support in old age and the preservation of the family had been bought at the price of their supremacy.

Yet although the costs of perpetuating the family were perhaps borne unequally, I would argue that the profits of its continuity were garnered primarily by the state. Let me explain. Taiwan's dependence on foreign capital and trade means that the government must maintain political stability and low wage rates to ensure capital does not seek a cheap labor force elsewhere. Taiwan's linkages to the capitalist world economy and consequent extreme vulnerability to international market fluctuations means that the government must maintain an elastic labor force responsive to the demands of business cycles.

The traditional Chinese family system supports and furthers these goals. On the one hand, the authoritarian hierarchy which dominates life within it assures the requisite labor force. The relegation of women to a subordinate and dependent position produces a minimally trained, docile, and tractable labor force willing to accept low pay and to be drawn into or expelled from the labor market according to the exigencies of the capitalist economy. On the other hand, the authoritarian hierarchy contributes to the maintenance of political stability. The presumption that children will assume responsibility for parents in their old age allows the government to allot money from the budget--money that might otherwise have to be spent on a social welfare infrastructure--for investment in security and defense. Moreover, the presumption that the family will harbor members of the work force when economic recessions reduce the system's labor needs exempts the government from potential disorders created by discontented unemployed.

The traditional Chinese family system, in short, fosters values and behaviors necessary for contemporary capitalism in Taiwan.<sup>11</sup> By subjugating the interests of women to those of men--and theoretically the interests of the young to those of the old--the family perpetuates dependencies that serve the needs and interests of the state. To gain economic and social security in old age, mothers-in-law must assume some of the role responsibilities of their daughters-in-law, thereby supplying

industry with the labor force it needs to survive in the international market economy. To secure their futures, daughters-in-law must assume responsibility for the physical needs of their mothers-in-law, thereby obviating governmental expenditure on welfare assistance for the aged.

The accommodation of women's mutual dependence maintains and reaffirms the ideology of patriarchal familism needed by the government to justify the employment practices and underdeveloped social security system that underpin the political economy. Women's mutual dependence, however, is rooted in dual principles--filial piety and veneration of age--that today are more fiction than fact. In this sense, then, development has exacted a heavy toll from older women who suffer the consequences of the generational inequality bred by the process as well as from younger women who remain embedded in the gender inequality perpetuated by the process.

NOTES

1. The research on which the paper is based was carried out in collaboration with Bernard Gallin, whose insights have contributed immeasurably to my intellectual growth. We acknowledge with thanks the organizations that provided financial assistance over the years and made our several field trips to Taiwan possible. Specifically, funding was provided by a Foreign Area Training Fellowship, a Fulbright-Hays research grant, the Asian Studies Center at Michigan State University, the Mid-Western Universities Consortium for International Activities, the Social Sciences Research Council, and the Pacific Cultural Foundation.
2. See (Ho, 1979). Ho's data are not disaggregated by area, but our observations suggest that throughout the 1960s industry mainly penetrated towns and rural areas within commuting distance to cities, not the more distant countryside such as the village area studied.
3. The research on which the paper is based covers the period from 1957 to 1982. The first field research, in 1957-1958, involved a 17-month residence in the village. This was followed by two separate studies, in 1965-1966 and 1969-1970, of out-migrants from the area. The most recent research, conducted in the village, spanned two months in 1977, six months in 1979, and one month in 1982. During these field trips, data were collected using anthropological and sociological techniques including participant observation, in-depth interviews, surveys, censuses, and collection of official statistics contained in family, land, school, and economic records.
4. The family takes one of three forms in China: conjugal, stem, or joint. The conjugal family consists of a husband, his wife, and their unmarried children; the joint family adds two or more married sons and their wives and children to this core group. The stem family--a form that lies somewhere between the conjugal and joint family types--includes parents, their unmarried offspring, and one married son and his wife and children.
5. The sources of the data contained in Table 1 differ as indicated. Correlation with other statistical materials, however, confirmed the accuracy and comparability of the two sets of data. These included enumerations based on our own surveys, and field interviews with individual village family units cultivating land, maintaining livestock, and owning farm implements. See (Gallin and Gallin, 1982a:205-246) for a detailed discussion of changes in the village.
6. The proportion of married women working in industry is higher in the rural areas than in the city, a result of an imbalance between supply and demand in the countryside (i.e., a small pool of available single women combined with a large demand for cheap labor). Married women are accordingly recruited into the labor force to meet employers' needs.

7. Cash and jewelry are given to a young woman as part of her dowry, the amount varying on her natal family's economic condition. In contrast to the other items a woman takes with her to her husband's home at marriage, this cash and jewelry (as well as her clothing) is considered to belong to her and not to the family as a whole. Taiwanese call this "private property" a woman's sai-khia. Any money she may be allowed to retain during her married life is said to become a part of her sai-khia. In Hsin Hsing the practice of sai-khia was recognized in the "old days" but was not prevalent because of the poverty of the local people. So rare, in fact, was the practice that no villager thought it important enough to report spontaneously to us, and only after reading Conen (1976) in the late seventies did we question women about it.
8. The ideal number of children was considered three, two boys and one girl.
9. Although the numbers in all tables are small, observations and interviews in other villages in the area support the findings. The women discussed in this paper all resided in the village in 1979 and had at least one living daughter-in-law. They represent a subset of the population of women 48 years of age and older. The numbers of families included in tables 3-5, therefore, are different from those contained in Table 1.
10. All five of the women who identified themselves as retired were 64 years of age or older. Because four other women in their cohort identified themselves as housewives, it is assumed that the retired women's perception of their primary role was not a factor of age alone. Further support for this assumption can be found by considering the 18 women living in conjugal units. None identified themselves as retired, and they were, on average, only two years younger than their counterparts living in joint and stem families (58.4 and 60.4 years of age, respectively). In addition, the mean age for women aged 64 and older who lived in expanded families and in conjugal units was 69.6 and 70.0 years of age, respectively.
11. See also (Gates, 1979) and (R. S. Gallin, 1982; 1984).

TABLE 1. POPULATION OF HSIN HSING VILLAGE BY FAMILY TYPE, 1958 and 1979

Family Type	Period	
	1958 <sup>1</sup>	1979 <sup>2</sup>
<u>Conjugal</u>		
Number and percent of households	65(66%)	33(45%)
Number and percent of persons	337(55%)	163(30%)
Average number of persons per household	5.18	4.9
<u>Stem</u>		
Number and percent of households	29(29%)	27(37%)
Number and percent of persons	213(35%)	194(36%)
Average number of persons per household	7.3	7.2
<u>Joint</u>		
Number and percent of households	5(5%)	13(18%)
Number and percent of persons	59(10%)	186(34%)
Average number of persons per household	11.8	14.3
<u>Total</u>		
Number of households	99	73
Number of persons	609	543
Average number of persons per household	6.15	7.3

Source: 1. Household record book (nu kou), Pu Yen Township Public Office.

The figures for 1958 are for all people registered as members of Hsin Hsing households, regardless of whether they were residents or simply registered there. An estimated 509 people actually lived in Hsin Hsing in 1958.

2. Field Interviews.

The figures for 1979 record only people resident in the village. In 1979, 606 people were registered as members of Hsin Hsing households.

TABLE 2. OFF-FARM ACTIVITIES OF HSIN HSING RESIDENTS 16 TO 65 YEARS OF AGE BY SEX, 1979

Type/Off-Farm Activity	Sex			
	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Entrepreneurial (Self-employed)	27	39.7	6	11.1
Salaried or Wage Labor	38	55.9	40	74.1
Family Business with Indefinite Wages	3	4.4	8	14.8
Totals	68	55.7	54	44.3

Source: Field Interviews, 1979.

The 68 male workers constituted 68 percent of their cohort. The 54 female workers constituted 49.5 percent of their cohort.

TABLE 3. HSIN HSING WOMEN 48 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER LIVING IN STEM AND JOINT UNITS BY WORK STATUS OF DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW AND WORK STATUS OF MOTHERS-IN-LAW, 1979

Work Status/ Mothers-in-Law	Work Status/Daughters-in-Law					
	Working Off-farm		Not Working Off-farm		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Retired	1	8.3 (20.0)	4	40.0 (80.0)	5	22.7 (100.0)
Housewife	7	58.3 (70.0)	3	30.0 (30.0)	10	45.5 (100.0)
Farmer	4	33.3 (66.7)	2	20.06 (33.3)	6	27.3 (100.0)
Off-farm Worker	--	---	1	10.0 (100.0)	1	4.5 (100.0)
Totals	12	100.0 (54.5)	10	100.00 (45.6)	22	100.0 (100.0)

Source: Field Interviews, 1979.

TABLE 4. HSING HSING WOMEN 46 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER LIVING IN CONJUGAL UNITS BY LOCATION OF MARRIED SONS AND WOMEN'S WORK STATUS, 1979

Work Status/ Women	Location of Married Sons					
	Living in Hsin Hsing		Living Outside Hsin Hsing		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Retired	--		--		--	
Housewife	2	100.0 (25.0)	6	37.5 (75.0)	8	44.4 (100.0)
Farmer	--		1	6.3 (100.0)	1	5.6 (100.0)
Housewife/farmer	--		4	25.0 (100.0)	4	22.2 (100.0)
Off-farm Worker	--		5	31.2 (100.0)	5	27.8 (100.0)
Totals	2	100.0 (11.1)	16	100.0 (88.9)	18	100.0 (100.0)

Source: Field Interviews, 1979.

Ten (55.5 percent) of the women included in the table considered themselves to be members of undivided families but had no married children living in the village.

REFERENCES

- Baker, H. D. R.  
1979 Chinese Family and Kinship. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Cohen, M. L..  
1976 House United, House Divided: The Chinese Family in Taiwan. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gallin, B.  
1966 Hsin Hsing, Taiwan: A Chinese Village in Change. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gallin, B. and R. S. Gallin.  
1982a Socioeconomic Life in Rural Taiwan Twenty Years of Development and Change. Modern China 8(2): 205-246.
- 1982b The Chinese Joint Family in Changing Rural Taiwan. in S. L. Greenblatt, R. W. Wilson, and A. A. Wilson (eds.), Social Interaction in Chinese Society. New York: Pergamon Press. Pp. 142-158.
- Gallin, R. S.  
1982 The Impact of Development on Women's Work and Status: A Case Study from Taiwan. Working Papers on Women in International Development No. 9. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Office of Women in International Development.
- 1984 The Entry of Chinese Women into the Rural Labor Force: A Case Study from Taiwan. Signs. 9(3), in press.
- Gates, H.  
1979 Dependency and the Part-time Proletariat in Taiwan. Modern China. 5(3): 381-407.
- Ho, S. P. S.  
1978 Economic Development in Taiwan, 1860-1970. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- 1979 Decentralized Industrialization and Rural Development: Evidence from Taiwan. Economic Development and Cultural Change. 28(1): 77-96.
- Lin, K. C. V.  
1973 Industrialization in Taiwan 1946-1976. New York: Praeger Press.

- Wolf, M.  
1972 Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Yang, C. K.  
1959 The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.

22

M I C H I G A N   S T A T E   U N I V E R S I T Y  
WORKING PAPERS ON WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Published by the Office of Women in International Development at Michigan State University and partially funded by the Ford Foundation and a Title XII Strengthening Grant

EDITOR: Rita S. Gallin, Office of Women in International Development and College of Nursing

EDITORIAL BOARD: Marilyn Aronoff, Department of Sociology  
Ada Finifter, Political Science  
Peter Gladhart, Departments of Family and Child Ecology and Resource Development  
John Hinnant, Department of Anthropology  
Susan Irwin, Department of Anthropology  
Akbar Mahdi, Department of Sociology  
Nalini Malhotra, Department of Sociology  
Anne Meyering, Department of History  
Ann Millard, Department of Anthropology  
Barbara Rylko-Bauer, Department of Anthropology  
Judith Stallmann, Department of Agricultural Economics  
Paul Strassmann, Department of Economics  
Diane Turner, Department of Anthropology

MANAGING EDITOR: Margaret Graham, Office of Women in International Development

EDITORIAL POLICY: The series of Working Papers on Women in International Development publishes reports of empirical studies, theoretical analyses, and projects that are concerned with development issues affecting women in relation to social, political, and economic change. Its scope includes studies of women's historical and changing participation in political, economic, and religious spheres, traditional roles within and outside the family, gender identity, relations between the sexes, and alterations in the sexual division of labor.

MANUSCRIPTS (in duplicate) should be submitted to the editor, Rita S. Gallin, Ph.D., WID Publication Series, Office of WID, 202 International Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824. They should be double-spaced and include the following: (1) title page bearing the name, address, and institutional affiliation of the author(s); (2) one-paragraph abstract; (3) text; (4) notes; (5) references cited; and (6) tables and figures. To further the rapid dissemination of information, a timely schedule of manuscript review and publication is followed.

TO ORDER PUBLICATIONS OR RECEIVE A LISTING OF WORKING PAPERS, write to the Office of WID, 202 International Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824.