



Cross-Border Marriages and Socioeconomic Mobility of Thai Migrants in Austria

Kosita Butratana (Department of Geography and Regional Research, University of Vienna)

&

Alexander Trupp (Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University)

Overview

- *Introduction*
- Marriage migration and cross-cultural relations
 - The notion of hypergamy
 - Socio-cultural and economic dimensions
- Thai Migrants in Austria
- Preliminary results
- Conclusion

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คม·ชัด·ลึก

นสพ.ยอดเยี่ยมในงานประชุมหนังสือพิมพ์โลก 2005

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อึ้งพันเด็กอนุบาลหนองคาย

'โตขึ้นหนูจะเป็นเมียฝรั่ง'

เชื่อรวย-มีบ้านหลังใหญ่ จีลางแนวคิดยึดติดวัตถุ

ตะตึง เด็กอนุบาลหนองคายบางคนฝัน "โตขึ้นหนูจะเป็นเมียฝรั่ง" เมื่อรวย-มีบ้านหลังใหญ่ บอย วิชิต เด็กเพิ่งอายุ ๗ ขวบ จีลางแนวคิดนี้ ระบุทุกฝ่ายต้องเร่งแก้ไข อย่าให้เด็กติดวัตถุมากกว่าจิตใจ

๑๖ มีนาคม 15



■ พุธภาพ ■ น.ส.สมพร - อนุบาล อายุ ๖ ปี ชาวหนองคาย ถ่ายรูปอยู่ที่โรงเรียนและบ้านราคาแพง / บ้านบาทที่ทำงานที่กรุงเทพฯ จากนั้นก็มาเที่ยวเล่นที่หนองคาย

- In 2003/2004 almost 20,000 women in 19 provinces in Thailand's Northeastern region married Western men
- those living abroad send remittances back to Thailand worth 1.5 million baht per year (NESDB, 2004)

17 Paare sagten direkt vor der Karlskirche nach thailändischem Ritus Ja zueinander Thai-Massenhochzeit in Wien

Heute ist das Finale von „Wunderbares Thailand“ im Resolpark. Schon am Samstag gab es eine exotische Zeremonie - 17 Ehen geschlossen.

Wien. „Sawasdee“ heißt es nur noch heute im Resolpark vor der Karlskirche beim Festival Wunderbares Thailand. Mit exotischen Klängen, bunten Tanzvorführungen und original thailändischen Köstlichkeiten begeistert das bunte Festival seit Mittwoch Tausende Wiener und Touristen.

Ein ganz besonderes Highlight stand am Samstagnachmittag auf dem Programm. Bei einer „Massenhochzeit“ gaben sich gleich 17 Paare auf thailändisch das Ja-Wort. „Die Nachfrage nach einer traditionellen Hochzeitszeremonie war enorm“, freut sich Organisatorin Vera Maria Kessler. Neben Paaren aus Wien und den Bundesländern reisten die Hochzeitswilligen aus Deutschland, Frankreich und den Niederlanden an. „Wir haben vor zehn Jahren



Ungewohnt: Buddhistische Thai-Hochzeit vor der Karlskirche.

standesamtlich geheiratet. Jetzt war ein perfekter Zeitpunkt, mit einer traditionellen Hochzeit unser Gelübde zu erneuern“, sagen Thomas und Nathathai aus Krems. Hochzeits- und Zaungäste waren von den farbenprächtigen Gewändern aus feinsten Rohseide begeistert.

Zeremonienmeister. Geleitet wurde die Zeremonie von einem buddhistischen Mönch und einem Vertreter der Botschaft.

„Nach diesem großen Erfolg wird es auch im nächsten Jahr wieder eine Hochzeitszeremonie geben“, verzärt Kessler.

Wer heute am Sonntag noch sein Fernweh stillen will, auf den wartet ab 20.30 Uhr ein abwechslungsreiches Programm: Neben einer buddhistischen Feiersorgen bis 22 Uhr Tanzgruppen für Urlaubsfeeling.

Johannes Hoize



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ต้นระพีงวาท
แบบไทย 17 คู่
กลางกรุงเวียนนา
หน้าโบสถ์คริสต์

WIEN



Massen-Hochzeit im Thailand-Style

17 Paare sagten vor Karlskirche thailändisch Ja



Aim and method

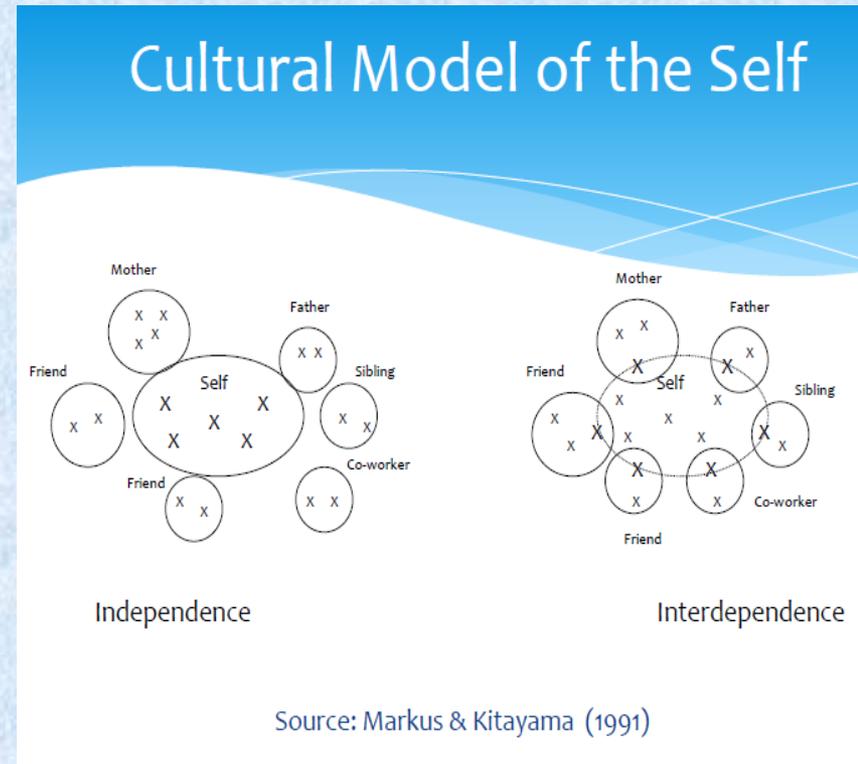
- Introducing the case of Thai marriage migrants in Austria, we investigate whether marriage migration promotes upward mobility
- Desk research and migration data
- 30 in-depth interviews
- Participant observation
- Survey with 85 Thai women living in Austria
 - Married (or de-facto relationship)
 - Aged between 23 and 77 years
 - Covered all 9 provinces

(Marriage) migration and socioeconomic mobility

- Hypergamy (,to marry up‘)
 - a practice of marrying men of equal or greater wealth and status (Wilson, 1978)
 - implies a better life in terms of social status, education, income, and other characteristics associated with economic well-being (Rose, 2004)
- The majority of international marriage migrants are female and follow a Global South to Global North migration pattern mirroring female labor migration (Constable, 2011; Piper & Roces, 2004)
- Critique by Constable (2003)
 - assumes that women are the ones who marry up
 - Marry up in which ways? Economically, socially, emotionally?
 - Paradoxical hypergamy

Sociocultural and economic dimensions

- Marriage and migration decisions in Asian contexts are influenced by sociocultural and economic expectations of the family (Palriwala & Uberio, 2008; Yang & Lu, 2010).
- Thai context: *Bun Khun* concept
 - expression of gratitude and reciprocity to parents, teachers or anybody who does good things to us (Tosakul, 2010)
 - ‚Daughter’s duty‘ as a “culturally specific gender role largely performed by women to meet familial and community obligations” (Angeles and Sunanta, 2009, p. 554)



Sociocultural and economic dimensions

- Imaginations of a better life
 - Many *mia farang* from Thailand's villages have gained material wealth by acquiring houses, land, cars, jewelry or new mobile phones
 - adopted new roles as family provider or entrepreneur through transnational marriage (Angeles & Sunanta, 2009; Lapanun, 2012).
- Such stories and media perpetuate an image of a 'Golden West' (economically, socially) and form a 'global imagination' in which possibilities for a better life are imagined (Appadurai, 1996)
- Migration decisions shaped by two forces (Mills, 1997)
 - *Bun khun* – family values
 - *Than samay* – desire to be 'modern' and experience a new lifestyle
- Transnational relations in form of economic remittances are most obvious but also 'social' or 'political' exchanges in terms of traditions, ideas or values can be highly relevant. (Basch et al., 1997; Vertovec, 2009)

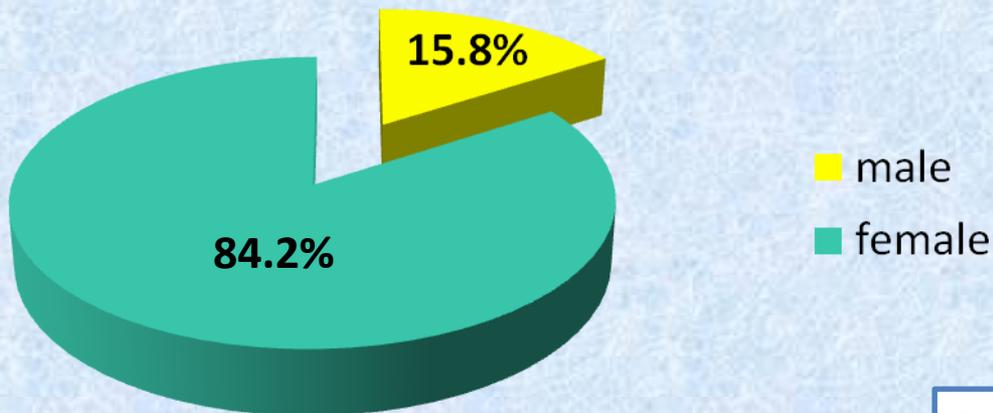
Thai (Marriage) Migrants in Austria

- Thai migrants in Austria constitute the second largest group from SEA
- 4,041 Thai citizens + 1,099 Thai born with Austrian citizenship (Statistik Austria, 2013)



Gender ratio of Thais in Austria

Gender Ratio of Thai Migrants 2010 in Austria in %



Statistik Austria 2010

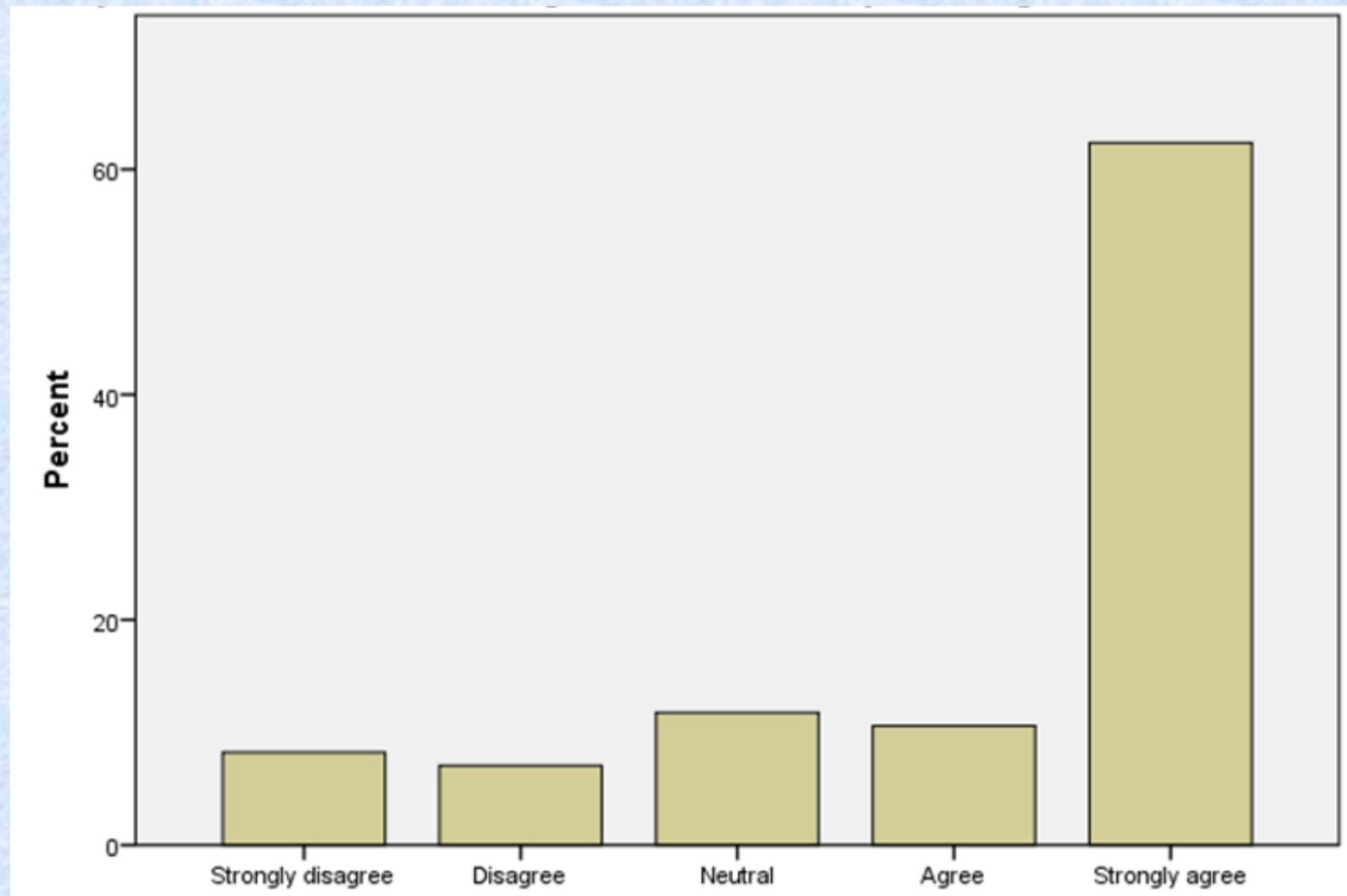
more than 60 per cent of Thai women in Austria are married to Austrian men (Statistik Austria 2010)

Female Ratio of Thai migrants in:

- Germany: 84% (Ruenkaew, 2003)
- Denmark: 80% (Suksomboon, 2009)
- Netherlands: 80% (Suksomboon, 2009)

Paradise found – preliminary results

The marriage with a foreign husband has increased my living condition?



Own survey,
n=85

Socioeconomic mobilities

Educational achievement (in %) in Thailand and Austria	
Basic education: 52.9	
Secondary school: 17.6	
Higher Education: 29.5	+ 1,2%
Basic or higher English skills: 84.7	
Basic or higher German skills: 7.1	+ 91.7% (70.6 with certificate)

Most referred occupational status before and after migration (%)	
Employee: 55.3	Employee: 44.7
Business owner: 18.8	Business owner: 23.5
Sex worker: 12.9	Unemployed: 10.6
Singer: 3.5	Housewife: 9.5
Housewife: 3.5	

Socioeconomic mobilities

- Economic gains and dependencies in Austria
 - 40.2% earn less than 850 EUR/month (monthly minimum wage 882.78)
 - 82.2% receive economic support from their husbands
 - Statements of ‚blocked occupational mobility‘
- Remittances
 - 77.4% frequently remit to Thailand
 - ‚Secret remittances‘ (as some Austrian husbands do not understand or do not support familial obligations)
- Downward mobilities:
 - A minority experienced economic downward mobility

Conclusions

- Financial betterment goes along with economic dependencies
- Having their own good, regular income would help marriage migrants to be more independent from their husbands, but language barriers and levelling pressures from their husbands block occupational upward mobility or work outside the home.
- Remittances to left-behind families still play a major role in the context of family obligations
- Further research and analysis may reveal whether Thai women from different socioeconomic backgrounds experience differential downward or upward occupational mobility and shall
- And qualitative data derived from in-depth interviews and participant observation can offer a deeper analysis of migrant's social status and emotional state in marriage migrant destination areas.

Thank you very much