

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Working Paper Series No. 269

**THE UNDERBELLY OF THE TIGER:  
GENDER AND THE DEMYSTIFICATION OF THE  
ASIAN MIRACLE**

Thanh-Dam Truong

January 1998

**Comments are welcome and should be addressed to the author:**  
c/o Publications Office - Institute of Social Studies - P.O. Box 29776  
2502LT The Hague - The Netherlands

The Institute of Social Studies is Europe's longest-established centre of higher education and research in development studies. Post-graduate teaching programmes range from six-week diploma courses to the PhD programme. Research at the ISS is fundamental in the sense of laying a scientific basis for the formulation of appropriate development policies. The academic work of the Institute is disseminated in the form of books, journal articles, teaching texts, monographs and working papers. The Working Paper series provides a forum for work in progress which seeks to elicit comments and generate discussion. The series includes the research of staff and visiting fellows, and outstanding research papers by graduate students.

For a list of available Working Papers and how to order them see the back of this Working Paper.

For further information contact:

Publications Office - **Institute of Social Studies** - P.O. Box 29776  
2502LT The Hague - The Netherlands - FAX: +31 70 4260799  
e-mail [#publication\\_dept@iss.nl](mailto:publication_dept@iss.nl) (Attn: Publications Assistant)

# THE UNDERBELLY OF THE TIGER: GENDER AND THE DEMYSTIFICATION OF THE ASIAN MIRACLE

by

Thanh-Dam Truong

## Abstract:

*This paper analyses the debate on the Asian Miracle both as an ideological construct as well as an empirical experience. As an ideological construct, the Asian Miracle is an expression of a complex web of power relations forged mainly by a struggle between East and West over industrial achievement, the meaning of industrial progress and governance. As an empirical experience, industrialization in East Asia bases itself on gender as a central organizing principle in production and reproduction as manifested in the four-tier system of industrial work. The paper suggests that until the framework of evaluation of the Asian Miracle seriously takes on a more complete understanding of the economy as an integration between two systems, i.e. production and reproduction, the metaphor Asian Miracle has more significance in capacity to clone previous patterns of industrialization rather than in producing a 'mega-transformation' in the cultural, social and political realms.*



## I. Introduction

The emergence of the Asian 'miracle' as a metaphor in development studies stands at crossroads between the decline of dominant paradigms of industrial and social development (Fordism and State-led socialism) derived from the Western history of industrialization, and new paradigms in the making. In this twilight zone of transition of paradigms and mentalities, considerable academic attention has been drawn to the spectacular and sustained economic performance of a number of countries in East Asia since the 1960s as evidence of an alternative path of 'development'. In this regard, it is important to examine more closely the Asian Miracle as a metaphor and as a reality.

From the standpoint of gender, no paradigm of industrialization and social development has so far been free from gender bias. In fact, it is not too far fetched to claim that the history of industrialization in itself has been an ongoing process of gender subordination. As Elson and Pearson have observed (1981), the interactive relationship between gender and industrial capital has shown the following tendencies: 1) intensification or decomposition of existing gender relations which may intensify some dimensions of gender subordination while decomposing others; 2) recomposition of new forms of gender subordination based on a combination of old and new elements. As this interaction can be and has been mediated by other lines of social stratification, it tends to produce conflicting effects on gender relations and consciousness (Chhachhi and Pittin, 1995). In many ways, gender conflicts in the process of industrialization has provided the conditions for women's rebellion in this century as their consciousness widens and as they begin to relate and connect their issues with each other.

In the current context of industrialization and restructuring of national economies, it appears that gender conflicts remain eminent. Many authors have noted that the rise of a new phase in industrialization since the 1970s is characterized by 1) the re-discovery of women's labour as a special source of labour (e.g. cheap, flexible, easy to control) in the initial process of industrial relocation (Lim, 1978; Elson and Pearson, 1981; Safa, 1981; Jokes, 1987), and 2) the subsequent 'feminization' of industrial relations, i.e. the application of the principles regulating female labour (part-time, temporary, irregular contracts, piece rates) across many industrial activities regardless of the gender of the work force (Standing, 1989; Chhachhi and Pittin, 1995; Rowbotham and Mitter, 1993; Howes and Singh, 1995).

In East Asia, there has been a re-awakening of the women's movements in the last decade particularly in Japan and South Korea<sup>1</sup>. These movements were initially concerned with issues women had to face at the work place, in homes and communities. Increasingly, they sought to link such issues with the broader process of industrialization in East and South Asia as a region. Emerging intra-regional issues include sex trafficking and prostitution, ranging from earlier forms of forced prostitution in military expansion (i.e. comfort women) to new forms of intra-regional female migration (i.e. in the context of paid domestic services, mail-order-bride system and sex entertainment), industrial relocation, female labour

---

<sup>1</sup>Women's resistance in Taiwan and Singapore are less known to foreign scholars. To what extent this is related to the Internal Security Act in Singapore requires an explanation. As for Taiwan, the fact that the country's path of industrial development has been based mainly on small and medium enterprises which are family owned, may have generated different forms of women's resistance which are not fully understood to outsiders.

redundancy, and home working (Asian Exchange, Volume 11, N. 1; Ching, 1995, Yayori, 1996).

In many ways the East Asian experiences of female participation in industrialization confirms the view that pre-existing gender norms have been present in production relations and hence do not simply 'evaporate' once countries reach a certain stage of industrialization. In this vein, this paper raises queries about the Asian Miracle as seen through a feminist lens. This lens is characterized by one major claim, i.e. that the social field of women's emancipation must transgress not only the realm of practices, but also the realm of problem definition and naming, i.e. the mental realm. Hence, the orthodox parameter used to assess the Asian Miracle must be challenged from two vantage points that are crucial to the interpretation of women's experiences: (a) the ways in which the domain of reproduction and care is visible, named and problematized in relation to the rhetoric of gender equality, (b) the extent to which the linkages between sexuality and economy are recognized, i.e. how regimes of economic development are related to regimes of sexual control, and how women's experiences as socio-sexual beings<sup>2</sup> are related to specific economic policies and practices. Influential as the social construct of 'Asian Miracle' is at this stage, a narrow view of East Asia as the success model will likely re-enforce the parochialism of future policy frameworks and maintain the negation of women's experiences. For this reason, it is important to recognize that the social field of women's emancipation must transgress the definition by governments and industries of the Asian Miracle.

The paper will mainly address the context of the four countries which have been classified as Asian NICs (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore), henceforth ANICs. National and regional references will be made as and when necessary. The paper is organized as follows. First, the debate of the Asian Miracle will be contextualized in order to clarify the main issues. Second, the paper will discuss the economic performance of the four ANICs from a gender standpoint. Third, the paper will raise gender-specific issues with regional ramifications and will point to their implications on women's strategies for change.

## **II. The Asian 'Miracle': the material basis of an ideological construction**

The term 'miracle' in the debate on Asia contains complex dimensions of competition and confrontation between East and West which cannot be negated. Notwithstanding the historical interaction between two ends of the Euro-Asian continent, the contemporary metaphor 'Asian Miracle' may be located in a two-dimensional process:

- (a) the ideological dimension in which prejudices, built up since the last century and exposed by Edward Said in his book 'Orientalism' (1978), finds new forms of expression in Western-based norms and standards of assessment of Asian societies;
- (b) the material dimension in which Asian countries<sup>3</sup> are becoming economically stronger, and hence their leadership are becoming more inclined to adopt new patterns of behaviour, e.g. to defy Western imposition on norms of conduct and interpretation seen as an extension of earlier forms of colonialism, to assert their own norms and evaluative standards, and to forge a new approach to industrialization and social progress based on their own experiences.

---

<sup>2</sup> as biological reproducers and as providers of sexual services

<sup>3</sup>this term refers mainly to East and South East Asia

In so far as the ideological realm is concerned, a major old line of opposition may be traced in the Self-Other dichotomy, expressed by the metaphor 'Asian Miracle' itself. Here, the Other, i.e. Asian societies, are assumed to be different from the Self, i.e. Western societies, and hence it is a 'miracle' that the Other can perform like the Self. However, in the last decades, there has been a convulsion in which the metaphor 'Miracle' becomes inverted from its prejudicial origin to a reification of a new 'Asian' identity. In this reification, the term 'Asian Miracle' ceased to be a mere representation of Asia constructed in the West. It becomes a 'project' of social change in itself, and hence a terrain of struggle over the meanings and practices of industrialization and progress.

Initially, the term 'miracle' was used in the debate in the US about Japan<sup>4</sup>. It referred to the economic performance of Japan in the 1960s and 1970s which succeeded in maintaining a high rate of growth, a low rate of unemployment, a high average life expectancy at birth, and a high level of social security compared to other OECD countries (Steslicke, 1987). As pointed out by Eccleston in Preston (1995: 361), the Japanese economic experience during this period was mainly studied by 'development' theorists who were interested in the speed of Japanese economic recovery in the post-war period. In this analytical framework Japan was located within the universe of development, i.e., a post-colonial universe, albeit its historical irrelevance. The term 'Japanese Miracle' is a logical outcome of this location, i.e. a miraculous deviation from established conventions<sup>5</sup>.

By the early 1980s, the trend in Western scholarship on Japan begun to shift out of the developmentalist framework and move into the 'learning from Japan' framework. This stemmed initially from the business community in the US interested in the Japanese style of management which was first applied in the automobile industry in 1983 through a joint venture between General Motors and Toyota (Kagami, 1995: 71). The sustained economic success of the four ANICs, including South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore throughout the last decades, which took place with considerable Japanese foreign investment contributed much to the increased analytical attention given to what may possibly turn out to be a major transformation in the region<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Jan Nederveen Pieterse pointed out to me that debates on economic miracle (Wirtschaftswunder) also took place in Germany between 1955-1960. Such debates were framed in terms of successful stimulation of savings and re-investment.

<sup>5</sup>For example, in the last century Max Weber posited the thesis that the ethics of Confucianism promote forms of social control that obstruct instead of facilitate any significant industrialization in East Asia. Post World War II thinking in development economics in the 1960s and early 1970s also tended to portray Asian economies as being in constant stagnation. Theories based on the Modernization paradigm see stagnation as an outcome of tradition and culture, whereas neo-marxian theories locate the causes of stagnation in the colonial legacy and the international division of labour. This last body of theory was more relevant for ANICs than Japan (see: Vogel, 1991).

<sup>6</sup>Total Japanese investment in the four ANICs between 1951-91 amount to US\$ Million 23 274 or 7.5 percent of total Japanese investment in the world. The largest share of investment is found in North America (43.8 per cent), followed by Europe (19.1 per cent) and Latin America (13 per cent) (Kagami, 1995: 32-33). The role of concentrated Japanese direct foreign investment and ANICs growth performance captured by the 'flying geese'

Indeed, if judged along the conventional standards of structural change, understood as change in the structure of economies and not necessarily as change of imbalance social relations which may have structural origins (class, gender, ethnicity), ANICs achievement has been established as outstanding. As shown in Table 1 on basic economic indicators (in two periods 1973-83 and 1980-91) of the first and second generation of potential ANICs, excluding China, countries belonging to the first generation of Asian NICs have maintained a GNP growth rate above 7 per cent in the decades of 1970s and 1980s<sup>7</sup>. Although the performance of ASEAN countries has been fluctuating, with the exception of the Philippines, GNP growth rate has remained above 5 per cent during the same period.

In so far as structural changes are concerned, data presented in table 2 and 3 show that in three decades, the South Korean and Taiwanese economies, which were primarily dominated by the agrarian sector in the 1960s, have managed to reduce their dependence on this sector and increase the industrial and service sectors as two major contributors to GDP. As city states and former trade entrepôts without natural resources, Hong Kong and Singapore have managed to build up a strong economy based on a broad variety of labour-intensive and more sophisticated industrial activities, as well as high value added financial and non-financial services. Primary goods with low value added input represent the lowest share of total exports. South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong are shifting their textiles industry for export out of their economy and replacing them with machinery, transport facilities and other manufactures.

All ANICs have emerged as major exporters, and have contributed to intra-regional trade which has expanded at an unprecedented rate during the last decade, particularly between the four ANICs and ASEAN countries, and between the ANICs and China (Kagami, 1995). The degree of industrial inter-dependence in the region is becoming more significant, and hence is changing previous patterns of trade relations in which former colonial powers have played a dominant role.

Since the second half of the 1980s, all four ANICs have begun to invest abroad due to changes in the local labour markets, including rising wages and a halt to the rural-urban migration flow. In the second half of the 1980s, Taiwan lifted martial law and South Korea adopted the declaration of democratization, both of which stimulated labour action and pushed investment abroad. Although no overt labour action has been taken in Hongkong and Singapore, rising labour costs also stimulated investment abroad, mainly involving an outward processing arrangements of labour-intensive and low-value added production. Hong Kong's capital went mainly to Southern China as well as South East Asia. For South Korea, the total amount stood at 1, 096 million US dollars in 1988, and rose to 7, 497 in 1994 (Baek, 1996: p. 150). For Taiwan, the figure of total foreign investment was US \$ 100 million in 1987. In 1994, the total value of foreign investment averaged at US\$ 3.9 billion (Chang, 1996). Accessible information indicate that industrial relocation from Singapore to Malaysia, China and Vietnam involves mainly labour-intensive operations due to labour conditions in Singapore (Lam, 1996: 155).

---

metaphor remains so far an inconclusive issue of debate, particularly in regard to the recent economic crisis in the region.

<sup>7</sup> The classification of ANICs into first and second generation is purely based on basic indicators such as GNP and GDP. As such, this classification is not meant to compare industrial structural changes.



Behind this impressive performance lies a multi-layered process of identity construction, which closely reflects the changing nature of intra-regional flows of trade, finance, information, commodities, and people. Initially, the identity of ANICS was constructed around several metaphors which reflect the falsification of conventional thinking about East Asian societies and industrialization. These are the 'Four Little Dragons', the 'Gang of Four' and the 'Four Tigers'. Gradually, these were eclipsed by what commonly is known now as the Asian Miracle.

The term the Four Little Dragons which was introduced in the late 1970s stresses the resemblance of social institutions in ANICs derived from Confucianist ethics imported through historical interaction with China, the Big Dragon. Here, the main attempt was to establish a link between cultural values and social change. The merits of cultural values that are specific to Confucianism<sup>8</sup> are given a prominent place in the framework of analysis (Lee, 1993; Chen, 1979, 1985; Xia, 1996). Here, rather than placing 'tradition' as a negation of 'modernity'<sup>9</sup> as in the case of conventional development theory, the idea is to demonstrate the crucial role of 'tradition' in the process of modernization.

The term 'Gang of Four' suggests the notion of 'deviancy'<sup>10</sup>, and reflects the fierce debate on the role of the state in development. Neo-classical policy prescriptions suggest that development may be achieved by government policies directed at: 1) the maintenance of a stable macro-economic and political environment, 2) the adherence to free market principles. However, ANICs experience show that their success is based not only on meeting the first condition, but also on a reformulation of the second, i.e. ANICs governments have been selectively intervening in private investment decisions targeted at industries they want to foster. In addition, they have been strongly involved in setting up physical and social infrastructure (health and education), research and development, and training (Hughes, 1988). As such, from the perspective of neo-classical policy, ANICs deviated from a fundamental principle, i.e. the state should provide the conditions for economic development rather than intervene and distort market functions. For this reason, their practices were seen as deviating from established neo-classical norms.

The term the Four Tigers signifies a clear shift from a monolithic cultural interpretation to a more pluralistic one, i.e. the recognition that non-Confucianist values in Asia may also have an important role. This shift is correlated with the fact that ASEAN countries, with the exception of the Philippines also showed signs of a major 'take-off'. There is an increasing awareness on intra-regional variation and potentials for the

---

<sup>8</sup> e.g. propensity to save, emphasis on education, work discipline, and family values such as loyalty, benevolence, trust and reciprocity, based on which authority and cooperation are formed.

<sup>9</sup>the concept of Modernity embraces many realms of social and cultural changes. However, this debate initially gave more prominence to industrialization as one dimension of social change.

<sup>10</sup>the term was taken from the label given to an outlawed group of dissenters who emerged after the death of Mao-Tse-Tung.

achievement of the status of Nic-hood<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, the notion of 'deviancy' related to the nature of state intervention is also abandoned. It is now generally accepted that to the extent that markets are rarely perfect, governments 'must sometimes intervene to achieve an efficient outcome' (Hawes and Liu, 1993: 631). The area of contestation lies in the methods and instruments of intervention. It appears that this contestation owes itself to the differing approaches in the conceptualization of the economy, the state, the market, economic actors, and to different emphases given to institutions, economic entities and the interaction between them.

As pointed out in Amsden (1989: 12), states in modern history have always intervened to spur economic activities. Hence, the assumption that there exists a non-interventionist state is based more on a certain conception of the state which separates it from the economy, and less based on empirical realities. By shifting the analytical lens away from this assumption, and by acknowledging that an economic agent, individual or collective, is constituted by the state through regulation, it is possible to understand how state policies can foster (un)successful economic agents. ANICs experiences show the merit of a sociological and political approach to the state and market.

For its part, the World Bank, which launched the much debated publication *The East Asian Miracle* in 1993, offers a framework for growth that emphasises the vital role of the so-called fundamentals (i.e. stable macro-economy, high human capital accumulation, openness) and of competitive discipline. Both state and market continue to be treated as *a priori* ideal forms that in themselves have some universal validity, i.e. the state continues to be regarded as a separate entity from the economy, and the market an arena for free competition. The only difference in the World Bank's position as reflected in this publication is the broadening of the scope for competitive discipline among private economic agents, i.e. it acknowledges the role of government-managed incentive and coordination schemes as having a limited role in preventing market failures. Furthermore, the Bank also consciously disconnects the debate on Asian values in its official stand on the Asian Miracle, to avoid ethnocentrism<sup>12</sup>(Wade, 1995). Cultural factors are accepted as having an indirect rather than direct role. Hence, the blind spot in the World Bank framework may be located at the meso level which concerns the social constitution of markets, fostered by the interaction between different economic actors, including the state.

From the perspective of East Asian governments, the term 'Asian Miracle' conveys different sets of issues. The first set of issues, which is primarily articulated by Japanese scholars, focus on the above mentioned blind spot. They highlight the following: (a) the virtue of the old East Asian philosophical principles of co-existence and co-prosperity (Kagami, 1995: 40) which has been reformulated in 'modern' terms as 'shared growth', and (b) the institutional capabilities of governments to use these principles to foster a particular structure of industrial organization which is efficient at the intra-firm level and which can

---

<sup>11</sup>For example the experience of Thailand was referred to as the Fifth Tiger (Muscat, 1994), and Vietnam's relatively successful transition to market economy was referred to as Tiger on the Bicycle (Fforde and Vylder, 1996).

<sup>12</sup>It should be noted here that the neo-classical paradigm is in itself ethnocentric since it is an invented tradition in the West with the rise of the modern state. Hence, it appears that once it is accepted that the conception of an economy must be socially grounded, an ethnocentered conception cannot be avoided.

generate shared growth at the inter-firm level (Yanagihara, 1997). Through the principles of co-existence and co-prosperity, a different corporate culture has been created, based on a multi-layer subcontracting system organized in a pyramid shaped hierarchy. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) stand at the lower end of the hierarchy and form the main base for industrial outsourcing in service of large corporations. In this perspective, the state is viewed as a benevolent actor who takes an active interest in enhancing the capabilities of economic agents to cooperate amongst each other and to create market-niches for particular tradable products and services which benefit an industrial cluster as a group.

Through Japanese ODA which, in itself, is lodged 'within the concept of comprehensive national security' urging that 'national security depends on regional security and, this in turn, is helped by economic growth in the area' (Preston, 1995: 369), industrial networks have been fostered and developed with considerable regional impacts (Kagami, 1995). Thus, it is possible to speak of a regional industrial configuration of Pacific Asian economies which has been shaped by the actions of governments and firms, fostering two types of division of labour. One cuts across products with high-end products in high-income countries and low-end products in low-income countries. The other cuts across production processes, with high-tech processes carried out in high-income countries, and low-tech processes in low-income countries (Yanagihara, 1997: 33).

It is at this meso level of industrial networks that social norms play a central role in constraining or enhancing the choices of economic actors, and thereby places the notion of benevolence into question. In this regard, the extent to which the new corporate culture forged by industrial configuration is really something new, or simply a recreation of old patterns of social and economic life is an issue that merits further analysis. For present purposes, it suffices to point out that the social origins of the Japanese sub-contracting system dates back to the rise of merchant capital at the end of the *Tokugawa* period. In the early phase of Japanese industrialization, economic activities surrounded specific locales, called *joka-machi*, or castle town, where a feudal lord constructed a castle and people gathered around to organize their economic activities in service of the lord (Kagami, 1995: 42). Given the feudal relations prevailing at the time, such activities must have been unavoidably organized along the lines of existing social norms. Traditional social division of labour was structured around the notion of 'shared tasks' which often determined the position and relationships between members of the group. Over time, this division of labour grew into a multiple tier of cooperative relationships which is conducive to the sharing of information (and hence technological innovation) and the sharing of profits within a cluster of industrial activities (Kagami, 1995: 37).

Three central traditional values which may have been active in fostering the Japanese style of management and industrial relations are: *on* (gratitude), *giri* (obligation) and *wa* (harmony). According to Wang (1994: 27-29), gratitude and obligation express the fact that within the vertical superior-inferior there is also reciprocity, i.e. the person of a superior rank must provide adequate security and tangible rewards to the inferior in return for his obligation to be submissive. *Wa* (harmony) emphasises the quality of accommodation, conformity and unity, i.e. each person must know his status in relations to others and behave in terms of the goals of the group. These values are frequently emphasized in modern industrial production settings. Modern *joka-machi* are found around the Toyota principal factory near Nagoya, the one around Matsushita near Osaka, and the Honda factory near Hiroshima. With the emergence of high-tech industries, clusters of industrial activities are not necessarily connected to particular centres in Japan. In fact, the trend is to decentralize production through the use of industrial and technological parks constructed and planned by

other Asian countries (Kagami, 1995: 42).

In its 'modern' reconstitution, the *joka-machi* may have lost its initial local configuration, but it retains the principles of co-existence and co-prosperity based on the clustering activities oriented towards the needs of one or more principal of economic agents. It is here that the transformation of traditions from the values mentioned above into a specific corporate culture of sub-contracting may be understood. In themselves, the relations between different economic agents in this corporate culture reflect what Sen calls 'co-operative conflict' (1990), i.e., they can make gains through co-operating with each other but have different and conflicting interests in the distribution of benefits and 'fall-back position'. In this regard, this corporate culture may have re-enforced rather than changed the old tradition, i.e., patron-client communitarism or survival and security built around patron-client networks.

The second set of issues is related to the above-mentioned 'co-operative conflict' and concerns the relationship between human rights and economic development. Socially and politically engaged non-governmental organizations in Pacific Asia often refer to 'development' as structural violence against marginalized social groups (Yayori, 1996: 59). This process either pulled such groups in development activities and pushed them out in selective and sometimes violent ways, or undermined their livelihoods (Phongpaichit a.o., 1996; ACFORD, 1993; ANGOC, 1993). Scholars have also shown that the Asian Miracle may have resulted in equity among some but not others, e.g. indigenous people of Taiwan, Indian immigrants in Singapore, indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak (Nederveen Pieterse, 1997: 135). Hence, even patron-client communitarism has limited relevance to those who have been expelled from the process of industrialization or those whose livelihoods have been ignored all together.

Many Asian governments, on the other hand, tend to rationalize state violence against dissenters on the grounds that authoritarian governance is a necessary condition for the economic miracle. When exogenous support is provided to dissenters, several governments, including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and China are ready to denounce such efforts as 'Western imperialism', hence collapsing the state and civic groups in the West into one entity. There appears to be a growing intra-regional alliance to respond to external and internal pressure on human rights issues, based on the claim that there exists a special Asian form of benevolent political rule which is alien to the Western-inspired human rights framework, but which has been extremely successful in the drive towards industrialization. The Asian Miracle comes conveniently as evidence.

Several governments have jointly and separately developed their positions on human rights stressing domestic jurisdiction and state sovereignty, the primacy of economic development over political freedom, and the specificity of Asian values which emphasize the community over individuals (Ghai, 1994). More recently, Singapore's recent policy of 'constructive engagement' with Burma may be seen as a gesture of defiance against the US administration, i.e. if the US could adopt a 'constructive engagement policy' with China after the Tiananmen massacre, there is no reason why ASEAN countries cannot follow the same course of action in regard to Burma (Douglas and Douglas, 1995). France's decision to block the European Union consensus on China was praised by the Chinese government who confirm lucrative business contracts for the Airbus consortium. 'With millions of dollars on the line, any commitment to human rights principles just faded away' (Amnesty International Home Page, Press release April 1997). In this regard, the Asian Miracle begins to exhibit signs of a collusion between state and capital interests at the expense of more fundamental principles regarding human dignity and freedom.

Against this background, the Asian Miracle as a metaphor must be understood as an expression of a complex web of power relations forged mainly by a struggle over industrial achievement, the meaning of industrial success and governance. East-West tension manifested through the Asian miracle as a metaphor may be located in the competing claim to interpretation of what constitutes a just course of action by governments to achieve social progress. What kind of parameter should be used to evaluate social progress, based on what kinds of values? Who should set up evaluative standards, and who should be evaluating whom?. Behind this immediate visibility of a conflict of identity and representation between East-West, lies a whole range of other conflicts such as gender, class and ethnicity which *do* interact with processes of economic changes, but are suppressed by those who are in control of the formal framework of interpretation.

The real challenge of the Asian Miracle is not whether Asian governments can succeed in making governments in the Western world 'kowtow' to their indignation over intrusion, but whether the Miracle can stand the test of a miracle of social transformation, rather than merely industrial transformation. This requires more than competition with the West for recognition. It also requires an internal process of self-reflection on the shadow of its own industrial progress, where the contradiction lies. One major issue in this shadow of progress concerns the concept of human right. Whereas during colonial times, nationalist leaders of Asian countries used the concept of human right as a powerful weapon to mobilize broadly-based support for struggles of national independence, once these countries have become industrialized, the new leadership have increasingly shown signs of withdrawing this concept from their own people, on the basis of it being liberal and 'Western'. Although so far these signs have remained limited to specific countries, their ramifications may be much wider and deeper. As intra-Asian industrial, trade, and political inter-dependence grows, it may be expected that a process of homogenization of political cultures in the region will emerge and will have repercussions on the socially excluded (e.g. indigenous tribal communities, ethnic minorities, low-income groups and selected groups of women). Externally, new standards on human rights and inter-state relations may also be erected and legitimized. Such standards can present a potential threat to the aspirations to human rights by men and women who are structurally alienated from the 'Asian Miracle'.

For this reason, it is important to point out here that although it is not possible to separate morality (hence social norms and notions of rights) from cultural contexts, it must also be acknowledged that in today's world no culture operates as an insulated entity from another. All cultures contain sub-cultures and are being increasingly prised open to interaction at the global level. In that sense, a more sensible exercise would seem to be an inter-cultural dialogue that seeks a new foundation for ethical discourses on rights and duties based on current realities rather than allowing specific cultural frameworks to dominate ethical discussions on universal rights. In short, the relationship between economy and polity must remain open to inquiry and debate rather than being allowed close.

### **III. NIC-hood and Industrialization in East Asia: The Logic of Practice of a Gendered Miracle**

In the process of the creation of NIC-hood as a 'developed' status in East Asia, it has become clear through many studies how cultural values, sanctioned by the symbolic meanings of gender, are circulating in state policies and industrial practices to conceal women's contribution to industrialization, and create patterns of social relations that are oppressive to them. So far these studies tend to focus on a particular country with some comparative

insights (Brinton, 1993; Cho and Chang, 1994; Elson and Wright, 1996). On the whole, they point out that the success of the Japanese and Korean models is based on a successful management of women's labour through their life cycle. This has created many manifestations of gender inequality at the work place and in the home. Since it appears that there is a homogenizing process of social and economic life in East Asia, it is important to find out whether there is a general logic of practice within ANICs experiences pertaining to gender equality, and how such a logic may have become amplified at a regional level.

There are two possible venues to explore the relation between gender and industrialization, and the logic of practices which conceal the contribution of women's labour. One is to look at their industrial structure, the contribution of industry and services to GDP, the trends and patterns of women's employment, forms of work, contractual norms and wage-systems. The other venue is to look at the area of reproduction, how reproductive systems are organized at the family, community and state levels which facilitate specific patterns of maintenance and socialization of the labour force, and how such patterns re-enforce or change women's conditions at their work place and in communities.

Industrialization in ANICs has clearly shown two major tendencies. As pointed out earlier, one tendency is the general integration of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in mainstream industrial development. The other is massive deployment of female labour which dovetails the specific industrial and service activities as major export earners over time<sup>13</sup>. In the initial period of industrialization, the tendency has been to incorporate young unmarried women at pre-child bearing age in industrial activities under gender-specified contractual arrangement (e.g. non-renewable contracts up to five years during which marriage is forbidden). These women would discontinue factory work after marriage, and take up home working (or domestic outworking) so as to be able to combine their productive and reproductive obligations. However, over time the trend has been shifting towards women's re-entry in wage work during child-bearing age and after. This re-entry is primarily based on flexible work patterns. This trend corresponds with: a) the relocation of labour-intensive manufacturing overseas, b) the rise in services, c) the rise in educational level of female workers, and e) the rise of female wages relative to men.

The effective integration of SMEs in mainstream industrialization is induced by specific government policies, which have helped SMEs to carve out a significant role for themselves over time in manufacturing, trade, exports as well as overseas investment. According to the latest figures<sup>14</sup>, in Hongkong, 98.43 percent of the total enterprises in manufacturing are SMEs employing 63.27 per cent of the employed population (Leung, 1996: 132). In Singapore, the figure is 72.7 per cent, absorbing 19 percent of the employed population (Kagami, 1995:40), although Lam (1996:152) cited 44 per cent. In Taiwan, in

---

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that interpreting gender and the labour force is ridden with difficulties particularly due to the nature of data. Intra- country and inter-country comparison of patterns and trends in labour force participation over time or during the same period face an additional problem because the definition of sectors and the year of data may vary. As such interpretation of aggregate data must remain at the level of approximation rather than establishing clear causal linkages.

<sup>14</sup> data on SMEs do vary according to different sources, particularly with regard to the size and the number of people employed. The figures are used only to illustrate the aggregate significance.

Table 1

## Basic Economic Indicators

Countries	GNP (million US \$)	GNP Real Growth Rate		GNP per Capita (US \$)		Share of Agriculture in GDP (1991) percentage	Share of Export in GDP (1991) percentage	Share of Investment in GDP (1991) percentage
		1972-1983	1980-1991	1982	1991			
Korea	274,464	7.2	10.0	1,910	6,340	8	29	39
Taiwan	179,763	7.4	7.9	2,653	8,788	4	48	23
Hong Kong	77,302	9.5	6.9	6,150	5,980	0	141	29
Singapore	39,249	7.9	7.1	5,980	12,890	0	185	37
Malaysia	45,787	7.4	5.6	1,870	2,490	-	81	36
Indonesia	111,409	7.7	5.8	580	610	19	27	35
Thailand	89,548	6.5	7.8	790	1,580	12	38	39
Philippines	49,138	5.8	1.2	820	740	21	30	20

Source, Institute of Developing Economies (1994): 136.





Table 2

## GDP Growth Rate By Sector

Countries	Gross National Product		Agriculture		Industry		Manufacturing		Services in Units Percentage	
	1970-80	1980-91	1970-80	1980-91	1970-81	1980-91	1970-81	1980-91	1970-81	1980-91
Korea	9.6	9.6	2.7	2.1	15.2	12.1	17.0	12.4	8.8	9.3
Taiwan	9.7	7.7	1.7	1.1	12.6	7.1	9.4	7.0	12.9	7.3
Hong Kong	9.2	6.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Singapore	8.3	6.6	1.4	-6.6	8.6	5.8	9.7	7.0	8.3	7.3
Malaysia	7.9	5.7	-	3.7	-	7.7	-	9.6	-	4.7
Indonesia	7.2	5.6	4.1	3.1	9.6	5.9	14.0	12.3	7.7	6.8
Thailand	7.1	7.9	4.4	3.8	9.5	9.6	10.5	9.4	7.2	8.0
Philippines	6.0	1.1	4.0	1.1	8.2	-0.5	6.1	0.4	5.1	2.8

Source: Institute of Developing Economies (1994): 138



Table 3

## Structure of Production

Countries	GDP 1970 (Million US \$)	GDP 1991 (Million US \$)	Agriculture		Industry		Manufacturing		Services	
			1970 (%)	1990 (%)	1970 (%)	1990 (%)	1970 (%)	1990 (%)	1970 (%)	1990 (%)
Korea	8, 887	282, 970	26	8	29	45	21	28	45	47
Taiwan	5, 670	175, 397	16	4	37	43	29	34	48	54
Hong Kong	3, 463	67, 555	2	0	36	25	29	17	62	75
Singapore	1, 896	39, 984	2	0	30	38	20	29	68	62
Malaysia	4, 200	46, 980	29	-	25	-	12	-	46	-
Indonesia	9, 657	116, 476	45	19	19	41	10	21	36	39
Thailand	7, 087	93, 310	26	12	23	39	16	27	49	49
Philippines	6, 691	44, 908	30	21	32	34	25	26	39	44

Source: Institute of Developing Economies (1994): 139



Table 4

## Percent of Labour Force who are Unpaid Family Workers

Countries	Circa 1970 Female	Circa 1970 Male	Circa 1980 Female	Circa 1980 Male	Latest Female	Latest Male
Korea	52.4	11.5	43.0	8.5	25.5	2.8
Taiwan	39.8	9.9	13.2	5.2	-	-
Hong Kong	3.7	1.3	2.9	0.7	-	-
Singapore	5.8	2.6	3.7	1.8	1.8	1.4

Source: Asian Development Bank (1993), 188-190



Table 5

## Gender Composition of Labour Force and Percent of Labour Force in Agriculture, Industry, Services who are Age 15 and Over.

Countries	Circa 1970						Circa 1980						Latest			
	Agriculture		Industry		Services		Agriculture		Industry		Services		Agriculture		Industry	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Korea	59.8	46.1	15.4	22.7	24.8	31.2	46.5	32.8	22.8	31.4	30.7	35.8	21.7	18.1	30.7	38.0
Taiwan	48.4	35.1	19.8	21.0	31.8	43.9	15.7	22.1	42.5	35.2	41.7	42.7	-	-	-	-
Hong Kong	4.2	3.9	60.8	50.6	35.0	45.5	1.9	2.0	55.3	47.4	42.8	50.5	-	-	-	-
Singapore	3.1	3.6	33.7	29.0	63.2	67.4	0.8	2.0	42.3	35.3	56.9	62.7	0.1	0.6	34.3	40.2
															65.6	59.2

Source: Asian Development Bank (1993): 1978-1980.





Table 6

## Female/Male Ratio/Ages 15 years and Over of Percent of Labour Force in Agriculture, Industry, Services.

Country	Agriculture			Industry			Services		
	Circa 1970	Circa 1980	Latest	Circa 1970	Circa 1980	Latest	Circa 1970	Circa 1980	Latest
Korea	1.80	1.42	1.20	0.68	0.73	0.81	0.80	0.86	1.08
Taiwan	1.38	0.71	-	0.94	1.21	-	0.72	0.98	-
Hong Kong	1.08	0.93	-	1.20	1.17	-	0.77	0.85	-
Singapore	0.88	0.71	0.19	1.16	1.21	0.85	0.94	0.98	1.11

Source: Asian Development Bank (1993); 184-186.



Table 7

## Female/Male Ratio of Percent Active by Age Groups

Country	Circa 1970				Circa 1980				Latest	
	15 and Over	30 - 34	50 - 54	15 and Over	30 - 34	50 - 54	15 and Over	30 - 34	50 - 54	
Korea	0.51	0.38	0.49	0.53	0.34	0.54	0.63	0.50	0.65	
Taiwan	0.38	0.29	0.24	0.41	0.32	0.24	-	-	-	
Hong Kong	0.51	0.37	0.40	0.60	0.51	0.47	0.60	0.56	0.41	
Singapore	0.36	0.23	0.20	0.54	0.45	0.23	0.64	0.65	0.39	

Source Asian Development Bank (1993): 169-171



1993 SMEs accounted for 96.3 per cent of all total business units generating 78.7 per cent of total employment, and generating 33.9 per cent of total sales. The share of Taiwanese SMEs in overseas investment account for 20.2 per cent of total overseas investment in 1994, a jump from 5.7 per cent in 1988. Taiwan's manufacturing industry accounted for 56.4 per cent of total cases of foreign investment (Chang, 1996: 158).

In South Korea, according to Baek (1996) industrialization policies which favoured the creation of large firms between 1963-1973, have met with structural problems of supply. Hence, since 1976 the government initiated assistance programmes and provided incentives through credit to promote SMEs, the share of SMEs in manufacturing has increased in terms of number of establishments, employment and added value. Between 1963 and 1990, the number of large firms had grown from 237 to 1,193 and were reduced to 951 in 1993. In 1963, 98.7 per cent of firms in South Korea were classified as small and medium. In 1973 this was reduced to 95.5 percent, and since then the percentage share has been growing. By 1993, 98.9 per cent of all firms had been classified as small and medium, absorbing 68.9 per cent of the employed population, compared to 10 per cent in 1984; and of the 7.5 Million US dollars in South Korean investment, above 20 per cent come from SMEs (Baek, 1996: 150).

Many SMEs originated as family production units, drawing on unpaid female family labour, or low female wages (Salaff 1981; Spencer, 1988) or subcontracted work to home workers (Kim, 1995). Data presented in Table 4 on percentage of the labour force who are unpaid family workers show that South Korea had the highest percentage of unpaid female family workers, over 52 per cent in 1970, 43 percent in 1980, and 25.5 per cent in 1990. Taiwan follows with about 40 per cent in 1970 and down to just over 13 per cent in 1980. Hong Kong and Singapore have by and large reduced the volume of unpaid family labour to a minimum level. In how far the trends in reduction of unpaid family workers in Hong Kong and Singapore is related to their being city states with a smaller population, or how far it is due to active legislation, or to industrial relocation should be explored. At this stage, it appears that a reduction in unpaid family labour is correlated with a relatively higher level of female wage and a higher degree of female upward mobility in the occupational structure in Hong Kong and Singapore as compared to South Korea and Taiwan.

Data on the gender composition of the labour force between 1970 and around 1990 (Table 5) shows two conflicting trends, namely an increase in female participation and a decrease in male participation<sup>15</sup>. Female labour initially predominated the manufacturing sector, but is now moving steadily into the sector of services.

In South Korea, female workers predominate in agriculture with a ratio of 1.08 in 1970, 1.42 in 1980 and 1.20 according to the latest figures. In industry, female workers were less predominant than males, although the trend is increasing from 0.68 in 1978 to 0.73 in 1980 to 0.81 in 1990. In services, female workers were under-represented in 1970 and 1980, and according to the latest figures they have taken over with a ratio of 1.08. The figures show that women predominate the agricultural and service sectors in the 1990s, and that they are moving towards a more equal representation with men in industries. However, given current restructuring of industries, workers are increasingly being pushed into irregular work and part-time employment. According the Korean 1993 industrial census (National Statistical Office, 1995: 70-71), between 1988 and 1993 due to automation the number of production

---

<sup>15</sup> This trend correlates with an higher increase of male enrolment in higher education (ADB, 1993)

workers decreased by an average of 3.4 per cent, and the number of female production workers decreased by an average of 6.6 per cent. Between 1985 and 1995, the total number of people employed less than 18 hours per week has more than doubled, the majority of whom were women. In 1985, women constituted 40 percent of the total number of such workers employed for less than 18 hours per week, and in 1994 they constituted 60 percent (Korean Statistical Year Book, 1995: 65). Hence, while part-time and irregular work has generally increased in Korea, women seem to be more affected by this trend.

In the corporate sector, the strategy has been the selective incorporation of young unmarried Korean women mainly into production and clerical functions, where their wages vary between 49.6 percent (in production work) and 63.1 per cent (in services) of male wages (Cho, 1986). With the general annual increase in industrial wages by 15.7 per cent between 1989 and 1993, women also benefitted from a reduction of the gender wage gap. Average female wages across occupations rose from about 35 per cent of male wage in 1980 to about 51 per cent in 1994 (National Statistical Office, 1995: 102). An increase in female wages was correlated with an increase in automation and a retrenchment of women workers who must find alternatives in 'informal' work where wages are much lower. The wage disparity between workers on production lines, i.e. factory level, and non-production lines, i.e. 'informal work' was 37 per cent in 1988 (National Statistical Office, 1995: 72). The average female wage for home-working is even much lower, i.e. 26.3 per cent of the average wage of male factory workers performing the same jobs (Young-Ock, 1995). Young-Ock argues that in industrial work, home working has become an increasing option for women, mainly married women with dependents (young children and disabled family members).

As table 5 shows, the Taiwan case exhibits a similar trend as in Korea, with some notable differences. There has been a decrease in the female/male ratio in agriculture from 1.38 in 1970 to 0.71 in 1980, which means while in the initial process of industrialization, women predominated the agricultural sector. But unlike Korea, in Taiwan men are returning to the agricultural sector, whereas women are more drawn to industry and services.

In industry women workers are over represented by a ratio of 1.21 in 1980, and in services they are under-represented by 0.98. Information on Free Trade Zones (FTZ) compiled by the Export Processing Zone Administration of Taiwan (1992: 18) shows the following features: (a) women workers are over-represented by 4 women to 1 man, mainly on production lines and supporting services, (b) women's representation in the administration is about 2 per cent of the total number of employees in this section, (c) age groups 20-24 and 30-39 constitute the highest figures of female workers, (d) the majority of female workers have an education at the level of junior high school or vocational school. As Tam (1996) has shown, the average male wage is 46.7 per cent higher than female wage, with a high probability of the status of a housewife being accountable for this discrepancy, irrespective of women's work experience and educational attainment. In SMEs Gallin (1995) illustrates how in industrial work in Taiwan, managers gendered the work-place by using existing gender ideology which defines women as less able, dependent and weak in order to pay them lower wages than men. Furthermore, since SMEs in Taiwan are family-owned and inheritance is through the male line, many married women work in family businesses without wages.

Table 5 shows that Hong Kong has a higher female/male ratio in industry (1.20 in 1970 and 1.17 in 1980) and a lower one in services (0.72 in 1970 and 0.98 in 1980). However, in spite of the under-representation of women in services as compared to men, the absolute number of women was on the increase in this sector. This indicates that women are shifting out of industry and moving into services. Data on wages (Hong Kong Monthly

Digest of Statistics, September 1996:19) suggests that in 1996, the overall gender gap has narrowed, with the average female wage being about 80 per cent of the male. Discrepancy by sector is much wider, most noticeable in manufacturing where female wages is 60 per cent of male. By contrast, in finance, insurance, real estate and business services female wage exceeds male wage by one per cent. Female wages are lowest in personal services (presumably domestic work) or about 1/6 less than in manufacturing, and 60 per cent less than finance. It appears that in Hong Kong, the demand for qualified female labour in the financial sector is higher than male.

Also shown in table 5, Singapore experienced a declining female/male ratio in industry from 1.16 in 1970 to 0.85 according to the latest figures, with the exception of 1980 where this ratio stood at 1.21. In services, the female/male ratio is on a constant increase, 0.94 in 1970, 0.98 in 1980 and 1.11 according to the latest figures. According to official sources (Report on Wages in Singapore, 1992: 35-39), Singaporean female workers earn about 60 per cent of male wages in management, 70 per cent in professional activities, 55 per cent in technical work, 60 per cent in production and craftwork, and about 90 per cent in service and sales.

Data on labour participation shown spread through different age groups presented in Table 6 shows that women do withdraw from the labour market at child bearing age. However, the number of women who remain in the labour market during child bearing age is increasing, with some variations between countries. A constant increase may be observed in Hong Kong and Singapore where the ratio almost double. In Taiwan, the increase is marginal. By contrast, in South Korea this ratio dropped from 0.38 in 1970 to 0.34 in 1980 and picked up again to 0.50 in 1990. Hence, it may be interpreted that during the 1970 and 1980 the M shaped curve of women's employment was sharper in Korea and it is now beginning to ease up.

Evidence suggests that many high wage earning women, who continue their employment in Hong Kong and Singapore, are transferring their reproductive burdens to paid domestic servants who are migrants from other countries in the region (Heyzer et al, 1994). As Phongpaichit (1988) has shown, where family support for child care exists, as in the case of Singapore, it does enhance the possibility for women to continue to remain in the paid labour force after marriage and to acquire the necessary skills to move along with the trends in industrial restructuring and to benefit from them. Higher earnings also open the option to hire domestic services rather than relying on family support. In South Korea organized women's action has led to state responses in setting up child care facilities in the 1980's, which has partially helped solve the double burden for women working full-time who cannot rely on relatives (Young, 1983). To what extent effective state policies or family strategies in South Korea have helped minimized the inflow of migrant domestic servants is not known. For present purposes, it suffices to note the close relationship between the various forms of support women have been able to acquire for their reproductive functions, and their ability to move upward in the occupational ladder.

In addition to these trends in women's work visible through statistics, there is another spectrum of shadow work which tend to be eclipsed by other issues in policy discussions. Although prostitution has ancient roots in these societies, the recent historical legacy of Rest and Recreation and sex tourism has left South Korea (Lie, 1995), Taiwan (Senftleben, 1986) and to some extent Hong Kong with an organized base of sexualized entertainment where women's employment stands between the nebulous distinctions of public and private, vice and virtue, work and sex. As pointed out by Truong (1990) and Leheny (1995) sex tourism in Asia is a result of specific political and policy choices in the promotion of the travel

industry. Due to the nature of investment and managerial practices, the possibility of an externalization of sexual mores by outbound travellers was enhanced and hence recipient countries also adapted their own mores (which tacitly tolerate prostitution) in response to market demands. In this process, gender relations at the work place have been restructured to ensure that the clients get the 'special services', the entrepreneurs the profits needed, and the state the income from foreign exchange.

To recapitulate, the patterns of women's work in ANICs shows that industrial practices in East Asia have forged over time a four-tier system of industrial work, with four different sets of regulations. The first tier consists of the wage-earner constructed along male norms with a formal wage system and protection. The second tier consists of the casual worker constructed along female norms and confined to temporary or part-time contracts, piece rate and irregular work. The third tier consists of the dependent housewife responsible for the maintenance of the work force, the future generation, the retired and disabled members. According to class position, the notions of rights and duties for housewives differ (Kim Myung-hye, 1995, Kim Young-Ock, 1995, Nakano, 1995). Among the working class, the dependence of housewives has been forced on them by industrial retrenchment, and hence they tend to take up casual work to help increase family income. Among families whose wage earner belongs to the first tier, the dependent housewife becomes a professional consumer ruled by rigid norms of social etiquettes. Despite such variations, the social identity of housewives do differ from the reproductive worker who can take up different forms of sexualized services (prostitutes, entertainers) or domestic services. Sexualized female workers sustain the virility and affective needs of the mobile male work force who usually belong to the first tier, are single or temporarily detached from their families. Domestic servants take over the reallocated domestic burden of the women engaged in the paid economy. Women who perform either type of reproductive work share a relationship the state and community which is different from the housewife. Whereas a housewife may enjoy a social and legal status derived from the husband's, a reproductive worker under a wage-system often has no legal status. Her social status is often marked by stigmatization, particularly if she is a migrant (Truong, 1996).

The extent to which the emergence of this four-tier system is connected with specific patterns in industrial relations is an important area for analysis. What has transpired so far is the issue of flexibility which emanated from the growing inter-linkages between SMEs into a chain of subcontracting from large firms down to the household level. In this chain, efforts to save on labour costs is built into each layer of production which translate themselves into two different wage systems and contractual norms. One for the external labour market (flexibility, irregularity) which enables firms to restructure their workforce in response to changes (e.g market contractions, technical changes, and shift in the structure of the industry). The other one is for the labour market within firms, i.e. its core workers (i.e. professional and managerial) whose contractual norms stand in opposition to the external labour market (long-term employment, skill enhancement) due to the need for intra-firm innovation. The core workers occupy the top of the apex, enjoying benefits far beyond wage levels as the norm, and the flexible workers occupy the lower layers of production relation, to cushion industrial and labour market contractions<sup>16</sup>.

From a gender standpoint, women's reproductive obligations would in principle lead

---

<sup>16</sup> Data from Japan shows that 78.9 per cent of all part-time and flexible workers are women.



to their allocation in the external labour market for many reasons. First is the common practice derived from the ideology of domesticity and motherhood that pressures women to stop engaging in waged employment after child-bearing and to take up flexible work. Second is the common assumption that married women depend on husbands and that if their husbands must transfer jobs women would follow. Hence, it is not in the interest of firms to incorporate women as their core workers, unless they are single or have a dependent husband, or can transfer their reproductive obligations to others, usually other women. Thus, irrespective of women's achievement in education and skill development, the ideology of domesticity and dependency may still exclude them from intra-firm mobility.

As regards the last tier which concerns commercialized sex, a common assumption has been that only poor women would turn to the provision of sexual services under commercial relations as entertainer or 'rented wife'<sup>17</sup> catering to mobile company executives. However, evidence suggests that educated young women who are not from poor families are now taking up work in commercial sexual services (The Guardian Weekly, December 8, 1996: 11). To what extent this trend is a manifestation of women's dissatisfaction with the rigid four-tier system which limits their mobility, and to what extent it is an outcome of a deeper current of social change requires an answer. Currently, the sex industry in Asia camouflaged in various manners is a cause for concern not only from the standpoint of female migrants working in this sector, but also from the standpoint of the qualitative dimension of gender relations in this region. Rather than attributing the rising trends in commercial sexual services to effects of 'Western' vices which disrupt family values, as some countries have done, it may be wiser to re-examine the deeper structures of patriarchy embedded in local institutions and the extent to which these may have contributed to the current realities of gender relations.

To sum up, it may be stated that the Asian Miracle in so far as industrial transformation is concerned is a fully gendered process. While industrial policies targeted at specific sectors which were assigned a dynamic role at each stage of industrial growth may appear to be gender neutral, female labour was mobilized on a mass scale to respond to labour needs in those sectors. Efficient domestic capital formation has been achieved by maintaining a significant wage discrepancy between genders. In the later stage of growth and diversification, the tendency is to externalize the principles that underlie the process of domestic capital formation through overseas investment, particularly those industrial activities which are met with considerable domestic resistance<sup>18</sup>, and to reform gender relations at the national level.

While gender relations may be modified to some extent through such reforms, gender reforms remain incomplete in two ways. One is the shifting of the logic of industrial capital formation elsewhere rather than changing it. The other is refusal to deal with forms of male sexual expressions which contribute to the fourth tier of industrial work, and hence indirectly to endorse the continuation of finding substitutes for the sex industry, as local women may shift out of activities in the sex industry which are low-paid and dangerous. In this regard,

---

<sup>17</sup> For 'rented Wives' in South Korea, see Asian Exchange Vol. 11, N.1, 1995.

<sup>18</sup> Domestic limits may include one or a combination of the following: 1) sheer workers' exhaustion, 2) limits placed on time for skill enhancement which eventually reduces the quality of human capital and hence the level of productivity, 3) organized social protests or diverse forms of subtle resistance (see: Pyle and Dawson, 1990).

rather than reducing the sphere of influence of the four-tier system, the tendency is to enlarge its sphere of influence beyond national boundaries, and thus to homogenize social and economic life based on a specific patterns of gender hierarchy on a grand scale.

Currently, the social costs of industrialization seem to be played down, while the technocratic truth of progress proven by a statistical correlation between rapid growth of GNP, industrialization, and high levels of social development predominate the discussions. That such effects are suppressed or bypassed in the construction of a new model of development based on the Asian Miracle, signifies the forging of a collective will to achieve growth and industrialization in the region regardless of the social costs. While such social costs may appear trivial to planners at this stage, they contain the seeds of future conflict between nation-states in the region<sup>19</sup>, and may wake up old feelings of hostility between different ethnic groups and nationalities.

#### IV. Conclusion

The patterns of industrialization in ANICs merit serious reflection with regard to its claims to social progress. Despite its economic success, there are areas in which governments may expect more assertive and organized responses from civil societies, which may converge and strengthen each other at the national and regional level. As pointed out (Tickell and Peck, 1995) for all the claims about flexible production, flexible labour systems and new industrial spaces, limited attention has been given to the political and social institutions that are needed to respond to flexibility as a principle of industrial organization. In the absence of any process indicating a stabilization of social regulation, the tendency for civic groups to interact more closely with each other to protect their interests becomes greater. Furthermore, while flexible production based on a chain of subcontracting linking small units together may have enhanced some countries's competitiveness in the world market, it may also have created diffused effects on gender relations, the environment and societies at large. This is due to decentralized production and quality control which makes it difficult for the state to monitor labour, environmental and health standards. Finally, small unit production does tend to get enmeshed in the underground economy and can lead to an increase of 'white-collar' crime (e.g money laundering, selling companies' secrets etc., trade in illegal foreign workers), and hence does pose a potential threat not only to workers' security, but also to established enterprises, communities and eventually the state.

There seems to be a serious contradiction between the search among nations for a secure position in the world market and the threat to the security of people as women, workers, producers, consumers and members of communities. Theoretically, an intensification of flexibility and casualization of production relations can induce new strategies within production units as regards resources mobilization and costs transfer. Such strategies may be based on pre-existing power relations (class, gender, ethnicity, generation)

---

<sup>19</sup> examples include 1) the tension between Malaysia and Thailand in the 1980s about sex tourists from Malaysia and Sexually Transmitted Disease, 2) the tension between Singapore and the Philippines about the death sentence of a Filipino working as a migrant domestic servant in 1996, 3) the tension between Japan and South Korea about the issue of 'comfort' women, 3) the tension between Vietnam and South Korea about the corporal punishment of Vietnamese female workers by Korean managers in 1996.

and can either impede progressive potentials inherent in industrialization, or plant seeds of social conflicts with much wider ramifications, or a combination of both.

In this regard, engendering the official interpretation of the Asian Miracle is one of the major task ahead. This must extend beyond national gender reforms, i.e., requiring more than a change of policy towards more gender-aware and gender-responsive objectives within nations. It also demands an epistemological transgression i.e., a transgression across the boundaries of knowledge and mentality based on which industrial development policies are framed and evaluated at a national and regional level. Until such policies and frameworks of evaluation seriously take on a more complete understanding of the economy as an integration between two systems, i.e. production and reproduction, and accord more serious attention to the relationship between the economy and sexuality, the metaphor 'Asian Miracle' has more significance in its capability to clone previous patterns in industrialization, rather than in producing a 'mega-transformation' in the cultural, social and political realms. The East-West battle for recognition may be won, but the battle for social equality and cultural meaning of industrial progress may not be put to rest.



## References

Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD) (1993) Our Voice: Bangkok NGO Declaration on Human Rights, Edison Press: Bangkok.

Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) (1993) Economy, Ecology and Spirituality: Toward a Theory and Practice of Sustainability, ANGOC: Manila

Amsden, A.H. (1989) Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization, Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Asian Development Bank (ADB), Gender Indicators of Developing Asian and Pacific Countries, ADB: Manila.

Baek, N. (1996) 'Internationalization of SMEs and Human Resource Development: The case of Small and Medium Korean Enterprises', in Proceedings of the International Seminar on Internationalization of SMEs and Human Resource Development in the Asia-Pacific Region, Institute of Developing Economies: Tokyo, December 6-8, 1995.

Brinton, M. C. (1993) Women and the Economic Miracle: Gender and Work in Post War Japan, University of California Press: Berkeley.

Chhachhi, A. and R. Pittin (eds) (1995) Confronting State, Capital and Patriarchy: Women Organizing in the Process of Industrialization, McMillan Press, in Association with the Institute of Social Studies: London/The Hague

Chang, H. (1996) Panel discussion: Challenges and Issues- Impact of Internationalization of SMEs and Human Resource Development, in: Proceedings of the Internationalization of SMEs and Human Resource Development in the Asia-Pacific Region, Institute of Developing Economies: Tokyo

Chen, E.K.Y. (1979) Hyper-growth in Asian Economies: A Comparative Study of Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, Mcmillan: London.

Chen, E.K.Y (1985) The Newly Industrialized Countries in Asia: Growth, Experience and Prospects, Hong Kong University, Department of Economics, Discussion paper 55: Hong Kong.

Ching Yoon Luoie, M. (1995) "Minjung Feminism: Korean Women's Movement for Gender and Class Liberation, in Women's Studies International Forum, Vol 18, N. 4.

Cho, H. (1986) 'Labour Force Participation of Women in Korea' in Challenges for Women: Women's Studies in Korea, Ewha Women's University Press: Seoul

Cho, U. (1994) 'Economic Growth and Poverty in Korea: A Gender Perspective,' in Gender, Economic Growth and Poverty: Market Growth and state planning in Asia and the Pacific,

edited by N. Heyzer and G. Sen, International Books: Utrecht Netherlands, and Kali for Women: New Delhi

Cho H. and P. Chang P. (1994) (ed) Gender Division of Labour in Korea, Ewha Woman's University Press: Seoul

Douglas A. and S. Douglas, (1995) 'Economic Implications of the US-ASEAN Discourse on Human Rights' Pacific Affairs, Vol. 69, N.1

Elson, D. and R. Pearson (1981) 'The Subordination of Women and the Internationalization of Factory Production' in K. Young, C. Wolkowitz and R. McCullagh (eds) Of Marriage and the Market CSE Books, London

Elson D. and C. Wright (1996) Gender Issues in Contemporary Industrialization: An Annotated Bibliography, A Working Paper, Centre for Comparative Labour Studies, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick: Coventry.

Essential Statistics (1992) Export Processing Zone Administration, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Republic of China

Fforde, A. and S. de Vylder (1996) From Plan to Market: The Economic Transition in Vietnam, Westview Press: Boulder, Colorado.

Gallin, R. (1990) 'Women and the Export Industry in Taiwan: The Muting of Class Consciousness', in Women Workers and Global Restructuring, Ward. K (ed.) Cornell University; Ithaca.

Gallin, R. (1995) 'Engendered Production in Rural Taiwan: Ideological Bonding of the Public and Private' in Engendering Wealth and Well-being: Empowerment for Global Change Westview Press, Boulder Colorado

Gelb, J. and M. Lief Palley (ed) Women of Japan and Korea: Continuity and Change, Temple University Press, Philadelphia

Ghai, Y. (1994) Human Rights and Governance: The Asia Debate The Asia Foundation, Center for Asian Pacific Affairs

Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics, September 1996, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong

Hawes, G. and H. Liu (1993) 'Explaining the Dynamics of the Southeast Asian Political Economy: State Society and the Search for Economic Growth' in World Politics, Vol. 45, N. 4.

Heyzer, N. et al. (eds) (1994) Trade in Domestic Workers: Causes, Mechanisms and Consequences of International Migration, Asian and Pacific Development Center: Kuala Lumpur.

Howes, C. and A. Singh (1995) Long-Term Trends in the World Economy, World Development, Vol. 23, N. 11

Hughes, H. (ed) (1988) Achieving Industrialization in East Asia, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge etc.

Jokes, S. (ed.) (1987) 'Women and World Economy', Oxford University Press, New York

Kagami, M. (1995) The Voice of East Asia: Development Implications for Latin America, Institute of Developing Economies, Tokyo

Kim, M.H. (1995) 'Gender, Class, and Family in Late-Industrializing South Korea', Asian Journal of Women's Studies, Vol. 1.

Kim, Y. O (1995) 'Homeworking in South Korea', in Chhachhi and Pittin (eds) (1995) Confronting State, Capital and Patriarchy: Women Organizing in the Process of Industrialization, McMillan Press, in Association with the Institute of Social Studies, London/The Hague

Korean Statistical Year Book 1995, National Statistical Office, Republic of Korea

Lam, D. (1996) Panel discussion: Challenges and Issues- Impact of Internationalization of SMEs and Human Resource Development, in Proceedings of the Internationalization of SMEs and Human Resource Development in the Asia-Pacific Region, Institute of Developing Economies, Tokyo

Lee, K. (1993) New East Asian Economic Development: Interacting Capitalism and Socialism, East Gate Books, Armonk, New York

Leheny, D. (1995) 'A Political Economy of Asian Sex Tourism', in Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 22, N. 2.

Leung, E. (1996) Panel discussion: Challenges and Issues- Impact of Internationalization of SMEs and Human Resource Development, in Proceedings of the Internationalization of SMEs and Human Resource Development in the Asia-Pacific Region, Institute of Developing Economies, Tokyo

Lie, J. (1995) 'The Transformation of Sex Work in 20th-century Korea', in Gender and Society, Vol. 9. N.3.

Lim, L. (1978) 'Women's Work in Multinational Corporations: The Case of Electronics Industry in Malaysia and Singapore', Michigan Occasional Papers N. 9, University of Michigan

Muscat, R. J. (1994) The Fifth Tiger: A Study of Thai Development Policy, United Nations University Press: Tokyo.

Nakano, Y. (1995) The Experience of Japanese Expatriate Wives in Hong Kong: The

Reproduction of Conservative Social Patterns, Master of Philosophy Thesis, University of Hong Kong, Faculty of Art, Department of History

Nederveen Pieterse, J. (1997) 'Equity and Growth Revisited: A Supply-Side Approach to Social Development', in The European Journal of Development Research, Vol. 9, N. 1.

Phongpaichit, P. (1988) 'Two Roads to the Factory: Industrialisation Strategies and Women's Employment in South-East Asia' in B. Agarwal (ed) Structures of Patriarchy: State, Community and Household in Modernising Asia, Zed Books: London.

Phongpaichit et al (1996) Challenging Social Exclusion: Rights and Livelihood in Thailand, ILO: Geneva.

Preston, P. W. (1995) 'Domestic Inhibitions to a Leadership Role for Japan in Pacific Asia', Contemporary South East Asia, Volume 16, N. 4.

Proceedings of the International Seminar on Internalization of SMEs and Human Resource Development in the Asia-Pacific Region (1995) Institute of Developing Economies: Tokyo.

Proceedings of the International Seminar on Industrial Structural Change and Human Resource Development in the Asian-Pacific Region, December 7-8, 1994, Institute of Developing Economies: Tokyo.

Profile of Labour Force of Singapore 1983-1994 Ministry of Labour, Research and Statistics Department, Singapore

Pyle, J. L. and L. Dawson (1990) 'The Impact of Multinational Technological Transfer on the Female Workforces in Asia' in Columbia Journal of World Business, Winter 1990.

Report on Industrial Census of 1993 (whole country) (1995), National Statistical Office, Republic of Korea, Seoul.

Report on Wages in Singapore 1992 (1993), Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Labour, Singapore

Report on the Work Experiences Survey in Taiwan Area Republic of China 1987 (1987), Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, Republic of China

Riedel, J. (1988) 'Economic Development in East Asia: Doing what Comes Naturally?', in Hughes (1988)

Rowbotham, S. and Mitter, S. (1993) (eds) Dignity and Daily Bread: New Forms of Economic Organizing among Poor Women in the Third World and First, Routledge, London

Said, E.W. (1978) Orientalism, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Safa, H. (1981) 'Runaway Shops and Female Employment: The Search for Cheap Labour', in Signs, Vol 7. N. 2



Salaff, J. (1981) Working Daughters of Hong Kong: Filial Piety or Power in the Family?, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Salaff, J. (1988) State and Family in Singapore: Restructuring a Developing Society, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Sen, A. K. (1990) 'Gender and Cooperative Conflicts' in I. Tinker (ed) Persistent Inequalities, Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Senftleben, W. (1986) 'Tourism, Hot Spring Resorts and Sexual Entertainment: Observations from Northern Taiwan' in Philippine Geographical Journal, Vol. 30, N. 1 & 2.

Standing, G. (1989) 'Global Feminisation Through Flexible Labour', in World Development, Vol.17, N. 7.

Steslicke, W. (1987) 'The Japanese State of Health: A Political Economic Perspective' in Health, Illness, and Medical Care in Japan: Cultural and Social Dimensions, E. Norbeck and M. Lock (eds), University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu

Spencer, R. (1988) Yogong Factory Girl, Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch: Seoul.

Tam, T. (1996) 'Reducing the Gender Gap in an Asian Economy: How Important is Women's Increasing Working Experience?', in World Development, Vol. 24, N. 5.

Tickell, A. and J.A. Peck (1995), 'Social Regulation after Fordism: Regulation theory, Neo-liberalism and the Global-local Nexus', Economy and Society, Vol. 24, N.3.

Truong, T.D. (1990) Sex, Money and Morality: Prostitution and Tourism in Southeast Asia, Zed Press: London.

Truong, T.D. (1996) 'Gender, International Migration and Social Reproduction; Implications for Theory, Policy, Research and Networking', in Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, Vol. 5, N. 1

Vogel, E. F. (1991) The Four Little Dragons: The Spread of Industrialization in East Asia, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Wade, R (1995) 'Japan, the World Bank, and the Art of Paradigm Maintenance: The East Asian Miracle in Political Perspective', in New Left Review, N 217

Wang, J. C. (1994) Comparative Asian Politics: Power, Policy, and Change, Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

World Bank (1993) The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York.

Yanagihara T. (1997) Economic System Approach and its Applicability, in Yanagihara T. and Sambommatsu S. (eds) East Asian Development Experience: Economic System Approach

and Its Applicability, Institute of Developing Economies: Tokyo

Xia, G. (1996) 'Confucianism and Modernity', in Critical Sociology, Vol. 22, N. 2.

Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1995 Ministry of Labour, Republic of Korea

Yearbook of Labour Statistics: Taiwan Area, Republic of China 1994 (1995) Council of Labour Affairs, Executive Yuan.

Yayori, M. (1996) 'Economic Development and Asian Women', in Voices from the Japanese Women's Movement, M.E. Sharpe: Armonk, New York.

Young, R. W. (1983) 'Korean Women's Participation in Economic Activities and the Problems of Child-Rearing', in Proceedings of '83 Tokyo Symposium on Women, IGSW: Tokyo and APDC: Kuala Lumpur.