Sari K. Ishii (ed.)


It has been established that marriage migration is often driven by migrant women’s motivations to alleviate their adverse economic status back home, and to attain greater socioeconomic status and an increased authority in decision-making. They often migrate from the Global South to the Global North to enter into an international marriage. Driven by the developmental hierarchies between the sending and the receiving countries, these marriages are often hypergamous in which the wives marry up (Jones and Shen, 2008). Constable (2005) uses the term “global marriage-scapes” to describe this unique migration flow. Research in this stream has been rich. However, even though global hypergamy has been the most prevalent, there are other crucial, nuanced and complex patterns in marriage migration that have not received enough attention.

This volume is an innovative and impressive collection of research that expands the discussion on marriage migration beyond the “marriage-scapes” perspective, and examines more complex and diverse migratory trajectories and experiences. Specifically, this volume moves beyond research on the “global-hypergamy”-dominated marriage migration by accounting for the following three aspects in its ten chapters:

In the first section “Beyond Global Marriage-scapes”, the first three chapters jointly argued that the directions of marriage migration are heterogeneous. Aside from the conventional move from the Global South to the Global North, marriage migrants also flow from wealthier countries to poorer ones and move within the two regions. These migration experiences have led to diverse consequences in socioeconomic status, cultural assimilation and legal issues.

In the second section “Reversed Geographies of Power”, Chapters 4 to 6 jointly conveyed the message that marriage migration is not a one-way street. Rather, it may involve a combination of reversed, return and circular migration, due to the dynamic interactions between the migrants, the spouses, the receiving society and the sending society. These non-normative migration trajectories have been accompanied by economic uncertainties, problematic legal status and tremendous cultural shocks.

In the third section “Multi-marginalised Marriage Migrants”, the last four chapters consistently show that rather than realising upward mobility, due to the cultural, economic and legal barriers, many marriage migrants end up being part of “a multi-marginalised diaspora”, suffering from multiple disad-
vantages in both the sending and the receiving communities. Even for those marriage migrants who comply with the global hierarchy by migrating from the Global South to the Global North, they may not be able to get what they expected pre-migration due to unique characteristics of the hosting population they married into. Not only their marriages may be subject to the status of non-existence, they themselves and their children may both suffer from complications of nationalities or even the status of statelessness.

All the ten chapters in this volume are drawn from empirical data based on long-term field research in East and Southeast Asia. The volume includes a wide variety of migration types, themes and trajectories. Specifically, Chapter 1 discussed the diverse sojourn of transnational households between Pakistan, and several developed countries including Japan, England, New Zealand and the UAE. Chapters 2 and 3 are both intra-region migration. Specifically, the former is on the intra-North migration of female marriage migrants between Japan and Shanghai, China, and the latter is on the intra-South migration of highly educated female migrants between the Philippines and Malaysia. Chapters 4 to 6 are all about migration from the Global North to the Global South, respectively on male marriage migration from Japan to the Philippines, child return migration from Japan to Thailand, and the generational differences in assimilation to the mainstream ethnicity for Muslim migrants from England to Malaysia. Then, Chapters 7 to 10 focus on the social and legal disadvantages faced by marriage migrants and their children. Specifically, Chapter 7 is on the residential legality of cross-border marriages and the well-being of children out of these marriages in the border zone of Vietnam and China. Chapter 8 discusses the social and legal status of children who returned from Korea to Vietnam, that is, from the Global North to the Global South. In Chapter 9, the author depicts patterns of migration and marriage experiences for stateless people who have suffered from “endless sojourn” in Japan. Chapter 10 discusses patterns of migration and marriage for stateless people who have experienced migration within the Global South from Myanmar to Thailand.

This volume provides a comprehensive and nuanced discussion on the consequences of marriage migration in living arrangements, socioeconomic status, cultural assimilation and legal situations. The consensus was that those who chose to migrate due to marriage and family reasons, regardless of migration trajectories, may be subject to tremendous complications and struggles. However, related to these consequent patterns, the original motivations and mechanisms of decision-making have not been sufficiently addressed in this book. It is understandable that during early stages of the global migration trend, people may still hold highly optimistic views toward what marriage migration may bring them. However, as increasingly more international marriages subsequent