

control over mobility enhance the power of some while diminishing that of others. However, as I have tried to show here, the geometries of power cannot always be clearly delineated. In the case of Chosŏnjok brides who marry to South Korea, the complex and conflicting ways in which constructions of 'nationality, gender, and geography intersect in these marriages make it difficult to distinguish those "in charge" of migratory processes from those who are not, those who benefit from those who are deprived. It is equally difficult to determine to what degree mobility through marriage offers liberating returns for the women who pursue these strategies. Some Chosŏnjok brides succeed in using their marital potential in South Korea (and beyond) to expand their opportunities for social mobility, while others experience downward mobility and disappointment. No matter what the outcome, their stories highlight the paradoxes and contradictions with which women must contend as they maneuver between and across the shifting boundaries of the global economy.

Chapter 6

A Failed Attempt at Transnational Marriage: Maternal Citizenship in a Globalizing South Korea

Nancy Abelmann and Hyunhee Kim

This chapter considers a rural and poor South Korean mother's valiant, and ultimately failed, attempts at marrying her only son, who is disabled, to a Filipina woman through the Unification Church. Understanding that the prospect of this marriage—that of the son of a poor farming family to a Southeast Asian woman—is a very recent prospect in South Korea, one facilitated by both transnational geopolitical developments and local transformations in the late 1990s, we ask what this case can tell us about changing social and cultural formations into the new millennium in South Korea. We consider how it is that family is being imagined anew such that foreign, non-Korean brides are rendered viable marriage partners. We take up this mother's story in the broader social field of transnational marriage in South Korea, and more broadly still in the changing landscape of South Korean discourses of its place in the world.

The story we discuss in this chapter diverges from many in this volume because it does not draw on the voices or perspectives of those directly involved in the prospect of transnational marriage; indeed, we had no direct communication with the bachelor in question about this marriage attempt, and only a seconds-long phone encounter with the fiancée. As such, we offer no commentary on a critical debate on transnational marriage: the agency of the parties involved (see, for example, Constable and Freeman in this volume). We do, however, take up questions of gender and agency through the mother's story. Although we understand that ours is a very specific tale—that of the mother of a disabled son—we think that this story speaks to a larger truth: that men and women most often do what they do in concert and consult with a range of other con-

sociates (for example, family members). A number of contributors in this volume argue for a nuanced appreciation of the play of structural forces and personal agency; to this we contribute consideration of what we might call "dispersed agency,"—in this case, along the lines of family. With this contribution, we echo a large literature on emigration generally in its family nexus (for example, attention to remittance economy) (see Schein 2000, Small 1997).

This mother's story—its strategies and narration—reflects both old and new projects: the valiant attempts of a farming woman from a relatively underdeveloped region to reproduce her husband's patrilineage and in so doing to care for her son; and her own struggles to achieve a particular maternal subjectivity or "maternal citizenship" in a transforming and globalizing South Korea. This mother's efforts for her son cannot be parsed as either/or (that is, old or new). Rather, the very acts that reflect highly traditional maternal efforts can also be seen as new because of their transnational nature. We hope to sustain precisely such an analytical edge, as we interpret the mother's words and acts. The term "maternal citizenship" suggests that a constellation of maternal efforts (e.g., securing a child's marriage partner) can produce what Ann Anagnost describes as "a measure of value, self-worth, and citizenship" or "becoming a fully realized subject" (2000:392). Renato Rosaldo similarly describes "cultural citizenship" in terms of "notion[s] of dignity, thriving, and well-being" (1994:410). Although the constructs of maternal and cultural citizenship appreciate the importance of state and national affiliation, they highlight membership that exceeds legal status (legal citizenship, voting rights, and so on). The maternal project in this story is distinguished for having extra-local (beyond the mother's local world) and transnational coordinates (transnational communication and travel abroad) (see Anagnost 2000:412 on "cosmopolitan subjecthood"). The mother's marriage efforts afforded her participation in—albeit very partial—some acts of transnational consumption and movement that evoke middle-class or mainstream belonging in South Korea (see Berdahl 1999 on consumption and cultural citizenship). We do not claim that the mother had any real sense of significant upward mobility due to the transnational arrangements that afford the possibility of an international marriage. Rather, these practices, precisely because of their middle-class and transnational nature, offered the mother an enhanced sense of belonging in modern South Korea—namely, in a South Korea that is increasingly prosperous and global. While appreciating the ways in which her travel and arrangements reflect a sense of mainstream participation, we will also underscore the palpable ways in which her travel was of a quite different variety from that of the urban middle class. It is critical not to lose sight of hers as

the story of a poor farming woman, however transnational some of its coordinates might be.

Precisely because this marriage attempt reveals multiple and competing meanings, we understand it as an instance of "transnationalism from below" (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). With Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith, we see the "'local' specificity of various socio-spatial transformations"—the "micro-dimension of transnationalism" (Guarnizo and Smith 1998:25, 26). In our consideration of maternal citizenship in this woman's story, we see the most local site of the story—namely, a village of about fifty households where the mother resides—while appreciating the transnational "imaging, planning, and strategizing" (Pessar and Mahler 2001:8) that enabled her efforts toward her son's marriage.

We begin with our own encounter with this failed marriage so as to introduce the story, key events, and persons. We then consider transnational marriage and hypergamy (with a focus on U.S. military men, Korean Chinese women, Southeast Asian men, and Southeast Asian women) in the final years of the twentieth century in South Korea. We consider the discursive coordinates of transnational marriage in the broader social field of South Korea's sense of its global membership. Next, we return to this chapter's marriage story to consider the mother's strategies, actions, and narratives both in terms of South Korea's global yearnings and her own project for maternal citizenship in the context of her considerable social marginalization in South Korea. This mother's case and narrative are particularly rich for analysis because of the ways in which her son's disability—a severe speech impediment and some mental impairment—both reveals and masks the coordinates of her marginalization (poverty, regional underdevelopment, social isolation, lack of cultural capital): on the one hand, the course of her son's disability speaks to that marginalization; on the other hand, the disability can be seen as a parameter that operates independent of economic circumstance. Finally, we turn to the narratives of two of the bachelor son's sisters on their brother's failed marriage. The sisters' distinct narratives deploy quite different transnational marriage imaginaries from that of their mother, imaginaries that speak to generational transformations and to the specificities of their life experiences. We conclude with thoughts on family, class, and transnationalism in South Korea, highlighting how South Korea's poorer men and women entertain international marriages in ways quite foreign to their more privileged brethren in South Korea's ever globalizing present.

A Village Evening

It is 2000, a late May evening in a farming village in South Korea's southwestern North Chŏlla Province. Like most villages in the southwestern

part of South Korea, this village has long been poor. It comprises some fifty houses of agriculturalists, many of them elderly. In a country that is now less than 15 percent rural (Koo 2001), it is widely understood that villages such as this one can hardly reproduce themselves. For decades, South Koreans have been hearing about the marriage problem of rural bachelors (nongch'on *ch'onggak*). Most South Koreans could easily recite the basis of the problem: young South Korean women are reluctant to marry farmers because of the labor, social, and cultural demands of rural-life. After many generations of rural exodus, the dramatic story of South Korea's rapid social transformation, South Koreans have left the countryside behind. To marry a farmer is, in a sense, to run against the historical grain of the times: hardly a desirable option for a young woman in South Korea's ever more prosperous and global times. The city—Seoul—beckons.

We traveled to the farming village on a social visit to the bachelor's mother featured in this chapter, whom we call here, as would be customary in South Korea, "Min's Mother." Nancy has known Min's Mother since the late 1980s, when Nancy resided in her village conducting dissertation field research on a farmers' land struggle that had enveloped a cluster of villages in the region (see Abelmann 1996). Min's Mother had been among the most active women participants in that struggle and Nancy has been in touch with her ever since. Our visit in May 2000 was not well-timed: the rice planting was not yet over, and that evening Min's Mother had to host her husband's elder sister and her brother-in-law for ancestral services (*chesa*). Moreover, one of Min's five sisters, Yun-a, had recently left her husband and was now living at home with her mother, her three-year-old daughter in tow. Yun-a had planned to leave her daughter with her mother while she went to Seoul to live temporarily with one of her married sisters until she could secure a job and a room of her own.

During our two-day visit, Yun-a asked us many questions about life in the United States—most specifically, she wanted to know about monthly costs and student and work visas. Although she never said so directly, it seemed as if she had entertained the prospect of emigration. She also told us quite a bit about one of her friends who would soon emigrate after marrying the U.S. serviceman with whom she already had a child. Yun-a did not mince words about her friend's likely prospects in the United States. The days in which South Koreans imagined the "American dream" that would meet the emigrant wives of U.S. servicemen are long gone, shattered by the popular understanding of the often social and economic marginalization of U.S. servicemen (for being poor, black, and so on). Thus, the "United States" in our conversations with Yun-a was an ambivalent United States (J. Kim 2001). At the margins of

her imagination, Yun-a seemed to be entertaining the remote possibility of making her way abroad (whilefully understanding the logistical barriers), but she was also keenly interested in reaffirming with her American (Nancy) and student-abroad (Hyunhee) audience that her friend's future in the United States would not likely be rosy.

We had caught Yun-a at a difficult juncture in her life: a marriage gone awry and considerable worries about the future of her daughter, whose father was threatening to take her away to be raised by his parents (this is not atypical in the case of marriage dissolution in South Korea, even though it is no longer the legally sanctioned solution) or even to place her in an orphanage. Min's Mother insisted that she would fight tooth and nail for her granddaughter—that at all costs, she would raise this little girl so as to help her daughter begin anew in Seoul (later, however, Yun-a did lose custody of the child). There was much to be said that first evening together. Min's Mother told Nancy the latest news about her then late-twenties son, whom Nancy had known in the village a dozen years earlier: she had secured his marriage with a Filipina woman through the Unification Church in the subprovincial capital (an hour or so away by bus); she had accompanied her son to the Philippines (a very costly venture for a poor farming family) because his disability had precluded his going alone (she had been the only mother to tag along with the group of farmer bachelors); her son had become engaged in the Philippines; and he had been "stood up" at a mass wedding in Seoul. In the meanwhile (nearly a year had passed), the fiancée had not come to South Korea, and it was becoming less and less clear whether she would ever come. For Min's Mother, the trip to the Philippines had been particularly burdensome (about 500,000 won, or \$4,167) because two people were traveling. In addition to the airfare were presents—cosmetics, clothes, a ring, and even dollars—for the bride-to-be and her family. Although these expenditures can be counted as transnational signs of Min's Mother's economic achievement, they were hard-earned.

Needless to say, the failed marriage had disastrous consequences: that the money, effort, and time had likely come to naught was no small matter for Min's Mother. At the time of our summer visit, she continued to hold a glimmer of hope that the Filipina fiancée might still come. Min's Mother had been able to speak with the fiancée by phone (although the fiancée had no phone, she could be reached via a church in her remote rural area in the Philippines), and she had proclaimed her love for Min and her steadfast plans to join him. Coincidentally, the Filipina fiancée called the first evening we were staying with Min's Mother. Knowing that the fiancée had more command of English than Korean, Min's Mother put Nancy on the phone. Indeed, in accordance with the story's telling,

the fiancée proclaimed her love, referred to Min's Mother as *umjini* ("mother" in Korean), and indicated her desire to join them in South Korea.

Later that evening, Min's Mother's husband's elder sister and her husband arrived. With their arrival, Min's Mother placed the suspended marriage of her son in its familial history (parts of the story were already familiar to Nancy). Min is a so-called *samdae tokcha*, a third-generation only son. In Korean patrilineal logic, third-generation only sons are uniquely valuable and vulnerable: nothing short of the continuity of the "family" (patrilineage) hangs on their getting married and bearing a son. Although the significance of this kinship niche is waning in South Korea today, it remains secure by public measures, including the provision that *samdae tokcha* can fulfill their mandatory military duty by commuting to safer posts close to home. In the course of our conversation, Min's Mother turned the clock back one generation, to the trials of her deceased mother-in-law and father-in-law to secure the future of the patrilineage. Not only had her mother-in-law gone to great lengths to bear another child, but another woman had been brought in to bear a child (neither effort produced a second son). Unspoken in these stories was the fact of Min's father's disability (both Min and his father are disabled); Min's paternal grandparents had wanted a "normal" child to continue the family line. In South Korea, there is considerable social prejudice against those with disabilities that are classified as in any way biological; that disability is a debit in marriage is a South Korean commonsense.¹ Min's father's unnamed disability is a severe speech impediment that makes him all but incomprehensible to anyone who is not accustomed to his communication; although marginalized in the village for the disability, villagers were nonetheless at ease communicating with him. Amplifying the speech impediment are the husband's drinking habit and untoward manner. Min's own disability is an uncanny double of his father's; likely this has strengthened the local sense of the hereditary nature of the disability. Growing up with the identical speech impediment as his father, Min remained almost entirely unschooled and illiterate. Less clear was the matter of Min's intelligence—or, for that matter, his father's—or the more exact etiology of the disability.

In her village, it is well known that Min's Mother's marital life has been hard and that the family's economic gains (modest though they are, even in the context of a relatively poor village of small farmers) are all the fruits of Min's Mother's hard work, savvy, and intelligence. Min's Mother offered that her father-in-law (the honored "guest" at the ancestral services later that evening) had been eternally grateful to her for having married his son. Over a decade earlier, Nancy had heard the story of the marriage deception that had brought Min's Mother as a very

young woman to marry Min's father (whom she had never met): Min's Mother had not known that he was disabled and property-less (see Kendall 1988 on marriage deception). Against this family history, and in the flurry of the food preparation required of an ancestral service, the efforts of Min's Mother to secure a wife for her son and male progeny for her husband's (and late father-in-law's) patrilineage echoed the efforts of her mother-in-law before her and spoke to pervasive Korean cultural and familial logics; how could anyone be surprised? To this story, however, we will add other skeins of meaning because of the particular transnational character of the marriage that Min's mother imagined and sought to realize.

South Korea's Fin-de-Siecle Marriage-Scape

In this section, we consider the broader social field of South Korean transnational marriage in the context of the changing landscape of South Korean policy debates on ethnicity, citizenship, and rights. Within this field, we consider marriages to American servicemen, Korean Chinese women, non-American foreign men, and, most recently, Southeast Asian women. We end with a discussion of hypergamy, considering how various international marriages are conceptualized in terms of social mobility.

Several contemporary policy issues index the question of South Korean global or cosmopolitan membership, including: the rights of (and South Korean responsibility for) Korean ethnics abroad (for example, in China); the voting rights of South Korean citizens residing abroad; and the naturalization policies for foreign residents and spouses in South Korea. Each of these issues is enlivened by competing conceptions of South Korea's place in a global community of nations. Broadly, we consider two visions of global membership—both similarly nationalistic. First is a homogeneous ethnic vision that imagines a "Korean" transnation that is centered in South Korea. Second is a multi-ethnic vision that calls for diversity in South Korea as an index of its stature among nations. We argue that the prevailing approach to national or ethnic difference in South Korea has been assimilationist such that some foreigners are permitted to become "Korean." Whether multi-ethnic or assimilationist, the idea that South Korea can in some fashion deal with racial or ethnic difference also serves to qualify South Korea as a modern state in a global state system in which internal difference of states is an international norm. Both visions, South Koreans abroad and foreigners at home, reveal a parallel nationalism in which either a "Korean" transnation or an assimilable foreigner speak to South Korea's global

stature. It is precisely the strivings of this stature that are implicated in Min's Mother's own transnational marriage attempts, as we detail below.

A number of legal and policy issues concerning Koreans abroad and foreigners in South Korea reveal the tension between multi-ethnic or cosmopolitan yearnings and deep-seated nationalism. The 1990s witnessed the enormous expansion of the labor and marriage immigration of Korean Chinese to South Korea. Some argued that these Korean Chinese (as well as other Koreans displaced during the colonial period, for example, to the former Soviet Union and Japan) should be accorded citizenship precisely because of the colonial histories implicated in their dispersion—namely, their status as the former patriotic subjects of the colonial-period provisional government (JoongAng Ilbo editorial 2002:53). Revealing of the times, however, an editorial (originally printed in 2001) was quick to point out that "embracing Koreans worldwide" by granting citizenship should not be understood as the "revival of narrow-minded nationalism" (JoongAng Ilbo editorial 2002:54). The voting and citizenship rights of long-term foreign residents and foreign spouses in South Korea also reveal ambivalent consideration of South Korea's global membership. In a multi-ethnic or cosmopolitan vein, one recent editorial argued that the voting rights of long-term foreign residents can be taken as a "yardstick for measuring a country's maturity" in a world of nations (Ha 2002). In a nationalistic vein, the same editorial went on to assert that the voting rights of Korean ethnics abroad are the far more pressing issue. On the matter of regulating national membership, a key issue has been the naturalization rights of non-Korean spouses. Important here is the gendered history reflecting patrilineal kinship logics. Although it was only in 1998 that non-Korean husbands gained legal rights to naturalize, non-Korean wives on the other hand have been able to do so for decades. Implicit in this history is that non-Korean women have been assimilable into South Korean families, while non-Korean men have been understood to produce non-Korean households.²

We turn now to the primary instances of transnational or so-called international marriage (typically referring only to interracial marriage) in the South Korean marriage-scape. With the exception of marriages to non-American foreign men, the primary transnational marriage possibilities are all implicated in Min's Mother's management of her son's marriage prospects, including those to American servicemen, Korean Chinese women, and, most recently, Southeast Asian women.

Marriages of South Korean women to American servicemen, like that of the friend of Min's sister Yun-a mentioned above, run parallel to the entire course of South Korean history, beginning with the American military occupation in the immediate postliberation period (after 1945)

(see Yuh 2002). These marriages are largely understood to be the unions of poor women, some of them tainted by images of the sexual-service industry (for example, the *yangkongju*, or "Western princess," a derogatory term for South Korean women serving American military men) (Cumings 1992; H. Kim 1998). These marital unions have not been understood to secure the continuity of Korean families; rather, it can be argued that their contours are off the Korean map entirely. Moreover, these women hardly figure on the map of the Korean diaspora, the diaspora having been largely imagined as populated by struggling co-ethnics in China (and other places of colonial dispersion) and by middle-class immigrants in the United States and other countries in Europe and the Americas (Abelmann and Lie 1995).

In contrast, the marriages of South Korean men, primarily bachelor farmers, to Korean ethnics from China (Chosŏnjok) have been signified both in terms of the maintenance or reproduction of South Korean families and in terms of the assertion of a global Korean ethnic community uniting the South Korean homeland and its diasporas (see Freeman in this volume). The romance of ethnic brotherhood, however, has been marred by images of ruggedly individualist Korean Chinese women who forsake their newlywed families in what has been imagined as the instrumental pursuit of their own private ambition (see Freeman in this volume). A partial counterdiscourse (with feminist overtones) asserts that the patriarchal excesses of South Korean farmer husbands have driven these co-ethnic women away. Although critical of the vilification of the Korean Chinese women, this feminist call similarly engages the nationalistic imperative for South Korea's "modern membership": namely, they argue that South Korean patriarchal excesses must be curbed to allow for membership in a global community of modern advanced states. A recent progressive weekly magazine report on the high incidence of violence against international brides reveals that a feminist position does not preclude an assimilationist perspective. The article offered that, given the situation in which many farmers will need to marry non-Koreans, it is imperative that Korean patriarchy be curbed and that the South Korean state tend to the needs of these women. The article ended with a description of the group of foreign brides who had gathered to discuss their plight: the writer, the director of the Yongkwang hotline for women, observed that these foreign women brought to mind the image of a circle of Korean farming women gathered at the village corner to pick through red peppers for traditional Korean food preparation (T. Yi 2002). On the one hand, this article speaks to the special circumstances of these women, marking their exclusion and difficulties, but on the other hand, it easily assimilates them into an old-fashioned image of the feminine, subservient, rural wife. These images and this gendered con-

test aside, these marriages have been fraught with considerable marriage fraud and domestic violence, high divorce rates, and cultural tension (see Chōng 2003 for a media report on domestic violence in the case of Filipina and Vietnamese brides).

In the late 1990s, Southeast Asian women began arriving in South Korea for work in the sex industries and as rural brides. We surmise that Min's Mother in 2002 was not familiar with the by-then pervasive image of the Filipina hostess or sex worker (Cheng 2002). But the term "foreign brides" has now taken on new meaning because of the growing awareness of a marriage market for those who can pay and because of the prominence of foreign prostitution rings (particularly tainting the image of Filipina women). But in the time in which Min's Mother was making her calculations, Filipina brides could still easily be posited as traditional women to answer to the call of family continuity.

In the 1990s, the ethnic/racial landscape of South Korean cities (and, more recently, of farming villages) was transformed with the entry of foreign laboring men. They married South Korean working-class women—another case of marriages outside the prerogative of Korean patrilineage, but inside the South Korean polity. Little research exists to suggest the cultural logics of these marriages.

To address this book's focus on global hypergamy, we briefly consider the above transnational marriages in relation to social mobility. The marriages of the daughters of farmers to American GIs could be—at least in the early years—considered ambivalently hypergamous: on the one hand, they offered a way out to a presumed more prosperous country and living situation; on the other hand, the marriages were considered disgraceful for being interracial and were tainted by their association with sexual services and the sex industry. In addition to the negative connotations of these marriages over time, and with the growing awareness of the often poor backgrounds of U.S. servicemen, even this ambivalent confidence in some sort of class mobility has been called into question. In the case of the rural bachelors in the recent past and into the present, the imagined hypergamy is rather that of the brides who are from less developed countries, and presumed to be from less prosperous families. Caren Freeman (in this volume) documents that some Korean Chinese women have hardly found their dreams of hypergamy satisfied in the South Korean countryside (see also Thai in this volume on parallel disappointments of Vietnamese men marrying emigre Vietnamese women in the United States). In the case of non-Korean women from Southeast Asia, it appears that the South Korean presumption of their hypergamy is even greater, obscuring again the specificities of the women's backgrounds independent of national GDP and GNP figures (see Constable in this volume for the case of highly educated,

prosperous Chinese brides). Likewise, the often marginalized position of the South Korean farmer in relation to those national figures is obscured.

That Min's Mother and other women like her can claim membership in that national community of relative prosperity is precisely what allows her to sustain the possible fiction of the Filipina's presumed hypergamy. And it is the sense of that hypergamy in conjunction with her claim on South Korean prosperity that contributes to her strivings for maternal citizenship. Min's hypergamy is complicated by his disability: the presumed hypergamy of the Filipina fiancée must be considered alongside Min's hypergamy for the chance to marry an able-bodied woman (the imagined South Korean partner would have been, it had been implied, a disabled woman).⁹ However, even for nondisabled farmers, their low marriage prospects in South Korea challenge any simple calculation of the foreign brides' upward mobility. Also, if we consider the presumed traditional feminine assets of women from less developed Asian countries (their gendered capital), the directionality of the hypergamy for South Korean farmers and Southeast Asian women is not entirely clear.

To return to Min's Mother, her calculations for Min speak to the assimilationism of international marriages reviewed above and to the nationalism implicated in the imagined hypergamy of foreign women. Min's Mother was optimistic about the prospects for her son's and her own life after marriage. She figured that in any case, her son would not be alone. She had heard that after about two years in South Korea, Filipinas were usually comfortable with the Korean language. Min's Mother was determined to be good to her future daughter-in-law; she resolved to teach her Korean and many other things about life in South Korea. Min's Mother was entirely satisfied with Min's Filipina fiancée, even wondering if Min was deserving of her. Of course, she realized that she could not know "the girl's true character," but based on what she had seen, she determined that the fiancée was a "fine girl." Min's Mother did acknowledge, however, that it was not ideal for husband and wife not to share a language. But she stressed that the fiancée seemed pure and lovable. Critical to this marriage imaginary is Min's Mother's sense of South Korea's economic achievements *vis-à-vis* the Philippines: she described the Filipina fiancée as "pure" for having lived in a less developed social reality that maps easily onto South Korea's (and, more particularly, Min's Mother's) past. Noticeably absent was any talk about a second generation of biracial children.

We turn now to Min's Mother's marriage activities and extend our discussion of both her traditional labor and her transnational efforts at a maternal citizenship in which South Korea's ascendance in the world of nations is implicated.

A Mother's Struggle for Her Family, Her Son, and Her Own Maternal Citizenship

Having reviewed the ambivalence about transnational marriage and other new membership in South Korea, we reassert that Min's Mother's ability to envision—and indeed, her tireless efforts to secure—a foreign bride for her son must be understood as combining long-standing and new social projects. What does it mean that Min's Mother could think about recruiting a foreign bride for her son, and yet imagine that the bride could become a Korean wife (a married rural woman, an *ajumma* or *sigol* anak) who could secure the future of the patrilineage and serve as a daily partner for Min? With these imaginaries, Min's Mother is realizing a very local and traditional project, while partaking partially of membership of a transnational nature that is a feature of fuller participation in a modern South Korea. This is not to say that with these activities, Min's Mother has illusions of upward mobility, but rather that in spite of her situation as a poor farmer from a marginal area, she has mobilized her resources in a purposeful and meaningful way. The marriage that Min's Mother was securing was an arranged group marriage, a mass wedding organized by the vilified Unification Church. These mass weddings are familiar to most South Koreans, although the Unification Church has been less successful in South Korea than in many other countries.

The attempted recruitment of a Filipina wife to be assimilated into the South Korean countryside is hardly a transnational project; rather, it can be seen as the fulfillment of a socially and culturally conservative project—the continuity of the Korean patrilineage. In this sense, the irony is that it is the "foreign" bride who can redress this local problem. The fact that Min's Mother set her sights on a Filipina bride, rather than a Korean Chinese bride—the more common solution—can be similarly understood as the contingency of strategy rather than an attempt to exceed the national or ethnic. Min's Mother calculated that a Filipina bride was more likely to fulfill her local project. In her cultural imaginary, a pure, "traditional" rural Filipina girl is posed in contradistinction to a scheming Korean Chinese girl. With these calculations, Min's Mother echoed the prevailing South Korean understanding of Southeast Asia as less developed than South Korea and as culturally legible. She presumed that the Filipina would be like South Korea's yesteryear brides, perhaps like she herself was as a young bride who married into difficult circumstances. Unfortunately for the case of this failed marriage, we know nothing about the Filipina in question other than that she is from a remote area where she did not have direct access to telephones, the sort of detail that impressed Min's Mother of her unfortu-

nate circumstances. It was Min's Mother's sense of the fiancée's hard life and extreme isolation that perhaps sustained her conviction about the young woman's purity and good intentions. That a personal telephone was hardly on Min's Mother's horizon fifteen years ago does not change the calculation. Furthermore, with these calculations, Min's Mother drew upon long-standing Korean gendered understandings of marriage mobility, in which men can marry up on account of their personal assets (beyond family background, educational achievement) while women can marry up on account of their feminine assets (see Abelmann 2003). Beyond the former image of a woman securing a patrilineage, Min's Mother's project was also about arranging an attractive daily life for her son, one including a partner—a project that exceeds her interest in her own social standing or future social security. The efforts for a daily life partner speak to economic and practical imperatives, intensified by Min's disability, and perhaps to Min's Mother's own burgeoning sense (in step with the times) of the integrity of the conjugal unit itself (something that was stressed by Min's two sisters).

Min's Mother's efforts, activities, and narratives also reflect changing geopolitical circumstances (South Korea's economic ascendance, legal changes, and so on) that have made it possible for a poor and even disabled bachelor farmer to contemplate marriage to a foreigner who is imagined to be a feminine woman willing to sacrifice for the family (the image of the traditional Korean bride). Cosmopolitan membership in a global community as a cornerstone of maternal citizenship (in the village and national community) is at work in Min's Mother's story, independent of her son's marriage prospects and eventual failure. Min's Mother's story must also be understood as her own story, albeit inextricable from that of her son. Min's Mother is mobilizing capital with cosmopolitan and middle-class or mainstream characteristics (movement, travel, and consumption): in each task entailed in her management of this marriage, Min's Mother was exercising her savvy, knowledge, and confidence. What is new in Min's Mother's story is not the possibility of a Filipina bride per se, but rather Min's Mother's social and cultural membership which relies on the possibility of a foreign bride and the necessary international arrangements, including travel, to secure one. Although Min's Mother had no pretenses of full-fledged middle-class membership—as an unschooled poor farming woman, how could she?—nonetheless, this marriage story reveals her attempts at belonging and respectability, what we have called "maternal citizenship."

Min's Mother's marriage strategies for her son took her to a larger stage beyond her village—first to the subprovincial capital, and then to the Philippines—and extended her horizons and her participation in South Korea's rapidly transforming modernity. The significance of the

eventual failure of the marriage must be seen in relation to these expansive efforts. In Min's Mother's narration of the course and causes of this failure, more is at stake than simply her son's failed marriage or the loss of her economic resources. At stake is her own stature in the village as well as her sense of belonging in South Korea. We will argue below that Min's Mother's placement of blame on the Unification Church—in spite of the many variables and contingencies of the story—is an effort at face-saving that speaks to the humiliation she suffered in her project toward maternal citizenship.

We turn now to the chronology of events and decisions that constitute Min's Mother's marriage plan for her son. Min's Mother's consideration of a Filipina wife for her son began with her visit to the Koch'ang Punyŏnhoe, or Women's Club, where she had been a member, a quasi-governmental group organized at the subprovincial level that typically gathered at a quasi-governmental building. Min's Mother had first attended the Women's Club hoping to participate in a paper-flower-making course. As it turned out, because those classes were held quite far from her village—and because they met during the day and thus competed with her agricultural and supplementary work duties—Min's Mother had to give up the course. Nonetheless, it was through her attendance there that Min's Mother had learned that the umbrella organization of the Women's Club, the Nongch'on Chidoso (Farming Village Association), could facilitate her son's marriage prospects. Specifically, she had learned that the head of the Farming Village Association had contacts with the Unification Church, which could help bachelor farmers meet Filipina women. Apparently, the head of the Farming Village Association facilitated these unions by providing a meeting space. This could have given Min's Mother the impression that these unions were officially sanctioned by a South Korean quasi-governmental organization. Min's Mother had been drawn to the flower-making classes to assert her membership in a wider world beyond the confines of her village, and it was there that she would begin to mobilize her new social capital: namely, the knowledge of new extra-local networks (via the head of the Farming Village Association) that might help her address her local problem, her unmarried only son.

By 1998, the possibility of a foreign wife was a fixture in the rural imagination. There were many stories of foreign wives, and indeed, the nearby South Chŏlla Province had by then the highest number of *émigré* brides in the country. Min's Mother was already familiar with the stories of several Filipina brides in the nearby subprovincial capital. The possibility of a Filipina bride must be understood against the widespread images of Korean Chinese brides: images of instrumental "ethnic" brides who were motivated to use poor farmers as stepping-stones to

more gainful employment and prosperous lives in the city, and who were strong-willed and willing to stand up to their husbands (T. Yi 2002). Drawing upon her new extra-local resources, Min's Mother decided to go to the Philippines with her son who was about twenty-nine. In the company of many other farmer bachelors, her son was the only one who traveled with a family member. She had never been abroad so a trip to the Philippines promised a big adventure; to some extent, it secured Min's Mother a place—if fleeting—in the company of women with the time and money to travel (Abelman 2003). However, by this time there was a boom in onetime group travel abroad of villages (tanch'e *kwan-kwang* or group tourism). Although it is not inconceivable that some women from Min's Mother's village might have taken such a trip, it is unlikely, given the prosperity of the village; it is less likely still that Min's Mother would have joined them. In any case her independent travel for Min's marriage was different from such a village trip. Although Min's Mother understood that the trip used all her savings, that it was made solely for the purpose of her son's marriage, and that it proved a dismal failure, it still reflected her savvy and afforded her an international experience and thus offered her a heightened sense of cultural membership or belonging in South Korea. Min's Mother's narration suggested that her own hard life and achievements had given her the necessary resolve to prepare for the challenges of such a trip. A trip from one nation's periphery to another nation's periphery, Min's Mother's travel was hardly a conventional tour.

Min's disability complicates this story. On one occasion, Min's Mother said that she decided to accompany her son to the Philippines because he is not "normal." Min's Mother referred to Min's disability variously—as "not smart," not "able-bodied" (*sŏnghan*), and mentally "five years behind" his age-mates. As for his speech impediment, she said that, like her husband, her son has difficulty communicating with people—specifically, that he could not finish sentences (*mal i ttokttok* 말이 툇툇툇 *annŭin*). We suggest that Min's Mother's variance on her son's disability indexes her conflicted estimations of the articulation between Min's marriage prospects and his disability. In thinking about Min's inability to marry in South Korea and about his failed marriage to the Filipina woman, Min's Mother left open the question as to whether it was his disability that had mattered or simply his position as a farmer's son, as a really poor farmer's son, and as an illiterate and largely unschooled young man. Indeed, it is hard for the listener to sort out the characteristics of her son's marginalization: biological, social, and economic. Min's Mother was aware that Min's disability as a marred speaking subject could render him invisible in a transnational marriage across the boundaries of language and nation. Min's Mother did recognize his disability

in her assessment that he would never be able to secure a bride had he traveled to the Philippines alone. When she elaborated upon this situation, she spoke more vaguely about Min "having no mind of his own" and about "only succumbing to the will of others." That Min's disability and other disadvantages were not distinct in Min's Mother's narration of his failed marriage speaks to their inextricable articulation in her mind. Min's disabilities took on social life in relation to the family's poverty: if not for their poverty—Min's Mother seemed to be saying—Min could perhaps have become better educated and literate. The able-bodied Filipina bride would symbolically redress the very marginalization that rendered Min's marriage prospects so weak in South Korea. She would thus answer to Min's fine character and person, independent of his social and economic fate in South Korea.

In light of Min's disability, Min's Mother had gone against the grain to persist with her transnational marriage plan. Two of her daughters (discussed below) had recommended against it: because of misgivings about the Unification Church and because of the calculation that a South Korean disabled bride would make much more sense for Min. To her decriers (including several village relatives), Min's Mother was steadfast that hers was a "mother's heart"—going to great lengths to secure an able-bodied marriage partner for her son. Min's Mother repeatedly claimed that no one can stop a mother from doing as much. For Min's Mother, travel to the Philippines was charged with emotions about the exercise of maternal responsibility. It was as if opposition to her actions did not matter because she understood that one strain of cultural logic would allow for the celebration of her heroic actions. Min's Mother's evocation of a "mother's heart" is all the more convincing in the context of her own poverty and her suffering from an abusive husband. She described her life as one continual sacrifice for her family, explaining that seven people's well-being relied on her suffering (her children's and husband's).

Min's Mother spent three days in the Philippines, staying at the Unification Church quarters in the area. In the Philippines, Min's Mother was struck most of all by the life circumstances that recalled the South Korea of decades earlier; these were the sorts of observations that fueled her sense of the traditional Filipina *fiancée* and correspondingly of her own stature for traveling there. The Filipina women and South Korean bachelor couples exchanged words through two translators, one for Korean and the other for the local dialect. Min's Mother said that all the couples spent most of the three days together, except when they slept. They visited the local museum and took walks together. The couples' engagements were celebrated with the exchange of rings.

Reckoning the Marriage Failure

Min's Mother's narration of the failure of Min's marriage was simpler than her account of all she had done to secure its possibility. This reduced narrative of the failure is revealing: namely, it speaks to her unwillingness to erase her considerable accomplishments. By placing blame on one cog in a considerably more complicated wheel, Min's Mother sustains the narrative and hope of the sort of maternal citizenship we have been describing here. While Min's Mother evoked the authority of the Farming Village Association in narrating the first chapter of her marriage attempt, based on her (mis)understanding that the association had played a formal role, by the time she was describing the disastrous failure of her arduous efforts, Min's Mother laid the full blame on the intervening Unification Church. Similarly, in her narration of her trip to the Philippines, it was as if the Unification Church, like the Farming Village Association, was simply a stepping-stone in her own skillful management of her son's marriage. It was thus only from the perspective of the eventual failure that Min's Mother reinscribed her path to the Philippines as wholly a church matter.

Min's Mother spoke of having been deceived by the church. She described a church that is interested only in extracting money from poor South Korean farmers and in its own proselytizing efforts for which the Unification Church is particularly notorious in South Korea. She described, for example, having been forced to present a sack of rice when she attended the church—something that she resented deeply. Min's Mother drew upon what appeared to be her own long-standing feelings about rural churches as useless organizations that merely extort funds from poor farmers. On the other hand, she dismissed rural churches for being poor and hence of little use to rural people; in talking about the rural church on an unpaved path near her home, she did note that the church has offered food to the elderly and managed to hold small parties, but criticized the pastor and his family for being dirt-poor themselves. Min's Mother had come to think of the entire trip to the Philippines as the church's moneymaking stunt. As evidence, she noted that over the years the Unification Church keeps changing the country from which it recruits brides—proof, she thought, that the church was evading authorities. She insisted that she should be reimbursed for the cost of her travel, since the marriage had not truly come to pass.

Min's Mother understands that her son returned to South Korea alone, in spite of having become engaged in the Philippines, because the church had wanted more time to further proselytize the bride; this is a sticking point for Min's Mother because she is confident that she

could have brought the fiancée back herself and secured the marriage. To make matters worse, when Min's Mother complained about the missing bride at the collective marriage ceremony, the Unification Church said that Min could travel to the Korean autonomous province in China, Yŏnbyŏn, to meet an ethnic Korean woman. A church representative told her that this time she need not join Min because they would tend to him. She was outraged: if the marriage had not worked when she had accompanied him, how could it ever work if she did not go? She saw this as yet another attempt on the part of the church to extract money from her—for her son's travel, which would lead to nothing. Min's Mother was also offended at the callousness of the Unification Church; its disregard for Min's engagement and for the very real attachment—in her opinion—of Min and his fiancée.

For Min's Mother, the bride was similarly the victim of the Unification Church—thus leaving the narrative of courtship, engagement, and the promise of marriage and a particular imaginary of transnational romance unsullied. Nonetheless, Min's Mother complained about Filipina fiancées in terms of the remittances that the South Korean husbands are expected to pay to their extended families back home. But Min's Mother held fast to her positive impressions of Min's fiancée and even to her romantic dream of her union with Min. It is perhaps because Min's Mother has sustained an untainted image of the Filipina fiancée that she could continue to preserve some hope of the young woman's eventual marital union with Min, keeping alive the romantic narrative of the trip and engagement, and preserving some measure of pride in her own deft arrangement and abilities.

Min's Mother's anger at the Unification Church aside, the marriage fiasco registers both as her own failure and her son's misfortune. It signals her inability to enact the membership that the promise of her son's marriage had seemed to offer: namely, membership in the company of women who fashion their family futures; of women who travel in wider social circles, with requisite networks; and of women who can travel internationally. Furthermore, the failed marriage halted the more local village project; Min's Mother imagined that such a marriage would have literally and metaphorically "normalized" her son and her stature. Were Min to marry and constitute a household, her precarious position between a disabled husband and disabled son would have been altered. Despite the eventual failure (the no-show bride), Min's Mother retains her having exercised a maternal cultural citizenship with this marriage plan (and activities) and its narration. As for her son, Min's Mother felt sorry for him. Min had traveled to Seoul for the marriage ceremony where the cohort of bachelor farmers who had visited the Philippines together would all marry in the same mass ceremony. It was only Min's

fiancée who did not appear there; Min stood by alone, with a bouquet for his no-show bride.

Did Min's Mother wonder about his disability in relation to the no-show bride? This is not something that she mentioned overtly. Certainly, the thought must have crossed her mind: as far as we know, she was the only mother to need to accompany her son, and his was the only no-show bride. But we take her silence as a defiant refusal to blame her son's deficiencies. Or her silence could reflect her understanding of her son's disabilities as standing metonymically for his (and her) larger marginalization. Her laments about her and her son's failures index this broader social stage. In reflecting on the whole process, she matter-of-factly said that she had merely tried to find a partner for her twenty-nine-year-old son. She had figured that she would start this endeavor early and work hard at it, but, as she put it, "Even though I've been working hard since then to find a bride, I have not been able to find a girl." She reflected on her situation as doubly frustrating because it indexes the general situation of bachelor farmers. As she put it, "If even the smart ones among them could not find a marriage partner in South Korea, what chance would the likes of my son have?" In spite of it all, Min's Mother remains committed to the project of making a "normal" life for Min, a cornerstone of her claim to maternal citizenship.

In 2000, as we noted, Min's Mother still retained her affection for the Filipina fiancée. In 2001, she recalled the phone calls from the fiancée—like the one we had witnessed during our village visit—as indications of the woman's commitment to Min and her desire to come to South Korea. During one of her phone conversations with the fiancée, she told her, "I will go myself and bring you here." But she wondered aloud to Hyunhee whether she could make good on her word: there was likely little economic backing to the bravado of her words. With this narration, Min's Mother asserted that it was imperfect communication, transportation snafus, and financial limits that had thwarted the fiancée's travel—snafus that she thought to cut through. Min's Mother had indeed mobilized a transnational imaginary as well as a transnational network, but only partially, imperfectly, and at one moment in time. We cannot completely erase the significance of her work, in part because of the healthy and spirited way in which (at least in 2000 and 2001) she was still narrating the story. When Nancy met her in 2003, however, Min's Mother did not mention this past and Nancy decided not to ask.

Alternative Takes: The Sisters' Narratives

Min's above-mentioned older sister, Yun-a, who had been living with her mother at the time of our visit, understood her brother's failed marriage

somewhat differently from her mother. Yun-a reckoned that the Filipina fiancée simply had not wanted to come to South Korea. Yun-a identified with the fiancée—imagining the position of a young woman contemplating a transnational marriage; recall that Yun-a herself had seemed interested in emigration and thus reflected on the difficult situation of South Koreans married to American servicemen. Yun-a's thoughts about the Filipina fiancée extend beyond the particulars of her brother's case (his disability, poverty, and so on) while still being mindful of them. For Yun-a, her brother's marriage was an instance of a so-called international marriage (*kukche kyōrhon*), which also implies interracial marriage. Yun-a thinks of international marriages as difficult for the person displaced from his or her country. That the Filipina fiancée would have thought not to come made good sense to Yun-a, knowing that the marriage would have depended on the fiancée's sacrifices. Yun-a was well aware of how hard it is for a woman to be separated from her natal family and to live in an unfamiliar setting. In the case of Min's fiancée, Yun-a decided that it was probably also the case that her parents in the Philippines had forbidden her to come. Yun-a admitted that she had no real evidence for this, but was nonetheless convinced that this must have been the case.

Yun-a's thoughts on her brother's failed marriage draw on broader images and representations than those of her mother. While Min's Mother seemed to rely chiefly on local stories—for example, on the successful cases of marriages to Filipinas in the nearby city—Yun-a spoke about media sources, including a television documentary about Russian brides in South Korea, that had made a big impression on her. The documentary revealed that Russian brides often suffer from homesickness and depression. In the case of the documented families, all parties suffered: the mothers-in-law for not being able to communicate with their daughters-in-law; the brides, as well, because of language barriers; and the husbands for trying in vain to make the relationship work.

Yun-a's thinking on international marriage was informed by her own familiarity with the marriages or unions of a number of her friends with American servicemen—and more generally by her own experience of patriarchal excess in the case of her in-laws, and by her friend's encounter with domestic abuse. Yun-a was well aware of the often short life of international marriages. She said that international marriages dissolve after two or three years because the women "can no longer stand it." When Yun-a spoke about the perils and trials of international marriage, it was clear that her thoughts were refracted through the lens of her own situation as a young divorcee for whom international marriage did not seem to offer a way out. Yun-a was armed with many stories of South Korean women who had married foreigners. She spoke about one case

in which a South Korean woman married to an American had been unable to see her parents for over thirty years. As for the friend she spoke of during our 2000 countryside visit (Hyunhee met Yun-a a second time in Seoul in 2001), Yun-a said that the friend had been too frightened to move to the United States; it was likely that this account prompted Yun-a to imagine the Filipina fiancée's position and probable reticence to come to South Korea. These sorts of real and mediated stories wrested international marriage from any romantic notions of love that easily transcends borders. Although Min's Mother's narratives did not dwell on this sort of romantic vision, she was more optimistic about the possibility of success. For Yun-a and her mother, international marriage is mediated by class—be it the case of Min and the Filipina bride or Yun-a's friends and American servicemen. These cases are both distinct from another sort of international marriage, that of elites operating in a transcultural, transnational sphere (for example, students studying or teaching abroad and professionals working abroad for foreign companies) quite distant from Yun-a and her mother—a sphere in which romantic visions of love transcending borders make more sense.

Although Min's Mother and Yun-a were aware that their stories were those on the borderlands of other people's cosmopolitan lives, both of them felt pained at the way in which the turn of events had hurt Min. Both blamed the insensitivity of the Unification Church. Yun-a was particularly incensed that the church had so casually thought to substitute another bride.

Min's youngest sister, an early-twentiessingle worker in a small factory in Seoul who had not completed high school, understood the failed marriage differently from both her mother and sister. This youngest sister is clear that she has no intentions of returning to her village, but can still imagine her brother's future there. This sister had warned her mother from the beginning of the folly of such an arrangement, particularly through the Unification Church. She could not understand why her mother had not simply recruited a disabled South Korean woman for Min's partner. Interestingly, it was this youngest sister who seemed to feel saddest about the humiliation and suffering that Min had endured on account of this failed marriage. She is one of the so-called new generation" (*simsedae*), known for its discourses of love, happiness, and desire, so it is not surprising that she would feel this way most strongly (S. Lee 2002, Lett 1998, Y. Shim 2001 and 2002). She told her mother that there is a partner (*jjak*) out there for everyone in the world and that her brother, too, would find his mate. Although a laborer in Seoul whose life circumstances would be enviable to few in South Korea, this sister was somehow able to speak beyond contingency, to remove her brother's situation—or anyone's, for that matter—from any struc-

tural consideration of economy, nation, ethnicity, and so on. Of course, we should remember that this sister was unmarried, a recent arrival in Seoul, and unfettered by any difficult past romantic or marital history. As for her thoughts on her own future marriage, she asserted that she would only marry when she was financially secure. She stressed that she would not marry out of any necessity; in this way, she wrested mamage from instrumental calculation, delivering it to the province of love and romance.

Consider Min's Mother's maternal citizenship project in relation to the narratives of these two daughters. Although Min's Mother reserved some hope for an amorous marriage for her son, she was not shy about thinking in more instrumental terms: a successful living arrangement in which her son could more easily manage life. This logic runs against the grain of other logics in which the intimate sphere is necessarily limited to intimate matters such that instrumental calculation defies a discourse of pure and uninterested love. Such was the grist of the youngest daughter's criticisms of her mother's project: she wondered why her mother had taken what could have been an intimate local matter and delivered it to a nasty transnational plot. Yun-a is perhaps less optimistic than her younger sister, but nonetheless was quick to see the contradictions between transnational marriage and the intimate sphere. We suggest this possibility: while Min's Mother is able to sustain or at least narrate some hope of maternal citizenship, at the very least in her own small village, Yun-a has been made painfully aware of her own marginalization and is cynical about her brother's prospects and her mother's ability to navigate a larger world. The youngest sister, on the other hand, yet to have suffered in the ways her sister has and partaking of new cultural streams, recognizes her mother's limits (her vulnerability at the hands of the Unification Church) and sustains the hope of a local romance for her brother.

Conclusion: Transnational Marriage in a Global Era

This chapter has discussed the failed marriage of one poor and disabled son of South Korean farmers and a rural Filipina young woman—a case of transnationalism from below. This chapter is not the result of sustained empirical research on transnational marriage in South Korea generally or among rural men and women particularly. Nonetheless, we hope that the analysis of Min's Mother's narration and Min's story (and the thoughts of Min's sisters) reveals something about transnational marriage as it articulates with South Korean membership in a global community of nations and with maternal citizenship. Although Min's Mother's marriage prospects for Min could not have been set on a Fili-

pina woman without a host of recent transformations—among them, Min's Mother's sense of South Korea's stature in a global community of nations, her confidence in her ability to fashion the Filipina fiancée's assimilation in the South Korean countryside, and the financial wherewithal to take the trip to the Philippines—it would be problematic to argue that Min's Mother's marriage calculations are uniformly signs of a new borderless world and social imagination (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Similarly, we have cautioned that Min's Mother's transnational participation is entirely classed. Her travel from a South Korean rural village and relatively underdeveloped area to a remote village in the Philippines must be differentiated from the middle-class travel of urbanites to global hot spots and centers of cosmopolitan capital. Similarly, the nature of the international marriage that Min's Mother attempted to realize for Min is far from the international marriages of the mobile upper-middle and upper classes. While Min's was an arranged group marriage in the margins, theirs are the fulfillment of individual romances at global centers.

Min's Mother's story must also be registered as the story of a marginalized woman's valiant efforts to achieve a gendered belonging or maternal citizenship. For Min's Mother, belonging begins with her village, where she has been marginalized as the wife and mother of disabled men. Min's Mother is keenly aware of how differently she would be treated in the village if she had a "smart" (toktokhan) son—never, she thinks, would she be snubbed by a passerby. The project of belonging extends in turn to her status as a poor farming woman in a national community in which poor farmers are a veritable vanishing minority. The savvy, knowledge, networks, and resources that Min's Mother mobilized in envisioning and attempting to realize a transnational marriage—efforts that took her to the subprovincial capital, enabled her first travel abroad, and posed her as a woman from a relatively developed country bringing goods and the vision of a better life to the Philippines—can all be seen as efforts to secure maternal citizenship in a rapidly transforming South Korea. In thinking about transnational marriage, Min's Mother's story emphasizes that we cannot presume the meanings of such arrangements without considerable investigation. With this, we echo the ethnographic methods and findings of most of the chapters in this volume. In a sense, Min's Mother was enacting a profoundly local project, one "embodied in specific social relations, established between specific people, situated in unequivocal localities, at historically determined times" (Guarnizo and Smith 1998:11). As Nicole Constable argues persuasively in this volume and elsewhere (2003a), the meanings entailed in spatial, social, or marital mobility need to be locally and ethnographically researched, not assumed (see also Small 1997, Manalansan 2003).