

Negotiating masculinities: Taiwanese men's use of commercial sex

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Introduction

Although commercial sex is criminalised, '*mai chuen*' (literally 'buying spring') is nevertheless widely practiced and well-tolerated in Taiwan. As a gendered social practice, buying sex for heterosexual men is taken for granted to the extent that wives are expected to turn a blind eye to it. While the term '*piao ji*' (that is, 'go-whoring') conveys strong moral condemnation, '*mai chuen*' is a neutral term to describe men buying sex on the market just like any other commodity. The inconsistencies between criminalised prostitution and the prevailing practices of buying sex in Taiwan are inseparably related to the ways in which gender, morality and sexuality interweave with each other to shape commercial sex.

While men's use of commercial sex is taken for granted, these clients are seldom the focus of academic research. According to Hwang (2003: 75–76) earlier scholars either theorised men's sexual consumption in terms of cultural and social changes in post-1960s Taiwan (that is, in terms of gender hierarchy, growing economic prosperity and lack of urban leisure), or have adopted a functionalist position to make sense of it. Chiu (1991), for example, considered clients to be 'marginal' men who have failed to get married (or could not obtain sexual satisfaction in their marriage) or businessmen who use sexual consumption to build relations with clients. The functional/pathological model chimes with earlier western studies which sought to identify who the clients were, what they wanted from prostitution, and what drove them to purchase sexual services. This line of enquiry however was succeeded by studies that claimed clients are not perverted, but are rather just 'ordinary men' (for example, Høigård and Finstad 1992; Sharpe 1998). As buying sex for men has been considered a rite of passage into manhood in Taiwan, we must dig under the surface to examine the ways in which hegemonic masculinity and the idea of manhood serve to shape Taiwanese men's sexual consumption, and how men across different socio-economic backgrounds manage to negotiate or perform masculinities in commercial sex.

In this chapter I will draw on in-depth interviews with 40 Taiwanese male clients of sex workers, in order to discuss the diverse ways in which men make sense of their usage of commercial sex, and to uncover the ways in which buying sex is interwoven with social hierarchies such as gender, class, nationality and international economic disparity. Data reported in this chapter has been collected in the past decade. All interviewees lived in cities of the west coast of

Taiwan where sexual establishments are highly visible. Moreover, Taiwanese heterosexual men's diverse sexual consumption patterns (ranging from body-selling, pleasure-selling, to sex tourism) were covered. In this chapter, I review the existing literature on clients of sex workers, and then examine the ways in which Taiwanese men construct their first visits to sex workers in terms of the idea of being a man or attaining manhood. I then examine the ways in which the cultural and social practices of *'wan nu ren'* ('playing women') are carried out to conform to a masculine consumerist identity, and embody the idea of hegemonic male sexuality identified by Plummer (2002). In addition to the discussion of the 'typical' client, I will also examine narratives of 'inexperienced' clients (or 'duped' clients). I also consider the collective consumption of commercial sex (for example, *he hua jeou* [literally drinking flower wine] and sex tourism) which is notorious in Taiwan. I then look at the ways in which collective sexual consumption relates to broader social, economic and political power relations. Finally, the ways in which organised sex tourism by Taiwanese men relates to broader social, economic and power relations in the region is examined.

Background to sex work in Taiwan

The current Taiwanese sex industry has its roots in Japanese colonialism. During the Japanese colonial period (1895–1945), licensed prostitution was adopted to make sex available in a regulated manner to both the Japanese colonisers and local Taiwanese men. According to Lin (1995), during the colonial period, prostitution was organised in terms of race and social class. Prostitution was divided into two systems: one was Taiwanese prostitution which provided sexual services for Taiwanese men, and the other was Japanese prostitution which served Japanese only. Both systems were further divided into hierarchical systems (that is, *yi dan* [geisha] and *tu chang* [prostitutes]) by services provided and the social classes of clients. Usually *yi dan* were expected to provide all kinds of entertainment to please the gentry, while *tu chang* provided explicit sex only and their clientele were mainly lower-class men. To some extent, the body-selling (*mai shen*) and pleasure-selling (*mai xiao*) in the current Taiwanese sex industry can be tracked back to the differentiation between *yi dan* and *tu chang*.

When the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-Shek came into power in Taiwan after the Second World War in 1949, attempts were made to abolish prostitution, but they succeeded only in driving commercial sex underground and making it more difficult to control sexually transmissible diseases (Lin 1995). Moreover, there were many young 'snatched soldiers' from mainland China who followed Chiang Kai-Shek's army as it retreated to Taiwan after the war. In the name of 'counter-attacking the communists and recuperating the nation', these soldiers were forbidden to get married throughout the entire 1950s in Chiang's regime (Chao 2004). Reasoning that these soldiers had sexual urges, the Taiwan Province Council passed laws in 1951 decriminalising 'special bars' (*te joong jeou ba*) to meet their needs. These special bars were in effect licensed brothels of another kind, and the special-bar waitresses were licensed prostitutes. The government passed the Act of Management of Prostitution in Taiwan Province (*Taiwan Sheng Chi Guan Li Ban Fa*) in 1956 to control commercial sex. Thereafter, Taiwan shifted back to adopt licensed prostitution where commercial sex was rigidly confined to licensed brothels where only licensed prostitutes were allowed to provide sexual services. From 1962, the Regulations of Management of Special Businesses (*Te Joong Harnng Yeh Guan Li Ban Fa*) have regulated the bars, tearooms, special coffee shops and dance halls that make commercial sex available to Taiwanese men. Since then, (licensed) brothels and '*te joong harnng yeh*' ('special businesses') have constituted two different sex sectors in Taiwan. The former provide explicit sex in terms of '*mai shen*' ('selling body'), while the latter subtly combine urban leisure and sexual services

in terms of '*mai xiao*' ('selling pleasure'). In many cases, *mai chuen* (buying sex) takes place in the body-selling sector, while *he hua jeou* (literally 'drinking flower wine' in which men hire women to play, chat, sing and dance with) happens in the pleasure-selling sector. As these facilities cut across age, class and ethnicity, both sectors are well-developed to cater to their different clientele (Chen 2006).

While Taiwanese men can legally buy sex from (licensed) prostitutes and seek sexual enjoyment from special businesses, the women who sell sex without being registered as a licensed prostitute are criminalised (according to Article 80 of the Social Order Maintenance Act [SOM], enacted in 1991). This sexual double standard of policing prostitution confirms the male right to buy sex, while criminalising the women who sell sex to them. This remained unproblematised until late 1997 when the Taipei City Government decided to abolish licensed prostitution in its jurisdiction – leading to both heated debates and the development of a prostitutes' rights movement. In 2009 The Justices of the Constitutional Court overruled the SOM declaring that it violated both men's and women's equal rights as protected by Article Seven of The Constitution of the Republic of China. Thus currently, both buying and selling sex are criminalised in Taiwan.

Taipei's abolition of licensed prostitution encouraged debates among Taiwanese feminists about sex work. The ways in which clients were thus theorised is deeply linked to the ways in which Taiwanese feminists tended to perceive commercial sex. For example, thinking of prostitution as an institution oppressive of women, Hwang (2003) argued that Taiwanese men's sexual consumption served not only as a means of male-bonding, but also as an embodiment of male domination and female subordination. Chen (2003) and Peng (2007), however, in describing sexual services as sex work, argued that clients differed greatly and thus different clients might invest different meanings in their visits to sex workers. Most of all, both Chen and Peng concurred with Anglophone scholars (McIntosh 1996; O'Connell Davidson 1995, 1998; Plumridge et al. 1997; Chapkis 1997; Sanders 2008) in terms of emphasising the clients' emotional demands in commercial sex and that clients might consider their relations with sex workers to be reciprocal rather than exploitative.

It is important to locate clients' usage of commercial sex in the context of modern consumption practices where the diversity of the marketplace means that some individuals can transgress traditional social divisions (class, race, gender and sexuality) by engaging in specific types of consumption (Featherstone 1991; Evans 1993). As far as race or ethnicity is concerned, Han-Chinese are the majority ethnic group of Taiwan while indigenous people and newly arrived marriage migrants (mostly women from Southeast Asia and China) constitute less than four per cent of the total population. Thus, it is claimed that Han-Chinese constitute the vast majority of sexual consumers in Taiwan (Hwang 2003). Social class is also a major element that shapes heterosexual men's differing usages of commercial sex. When locating class at a local level, Chen (2003) argued that upper- and middle-class men not only use commercial sex for erotic pleasure, but also as a way to demonstrate their social status, power and tastes. Meanwhile their working-class counterparts may treat it as a part of social life.

Conversely, in studies which situate class in global processes (as global sex tourism grows rapidly) there is a tendency to analyse the ways in which first-world men use sex tourism to pursue sexual pleasure in third-world countries (Truong 1990; O'Connell Davidson 1995, 1998; Singh and Hart 2007; Brennan 2004). Taiwan was once one destination for sex tourism for American soldiers on so-called 'rest and recreation leave' between the 1960s and 1980s; even today it is still a popular destination for Japanese sex tourists. Since the mid-1990s, however, Taiwan has become a prosperous country which sends tourists overseas, some of whom travel to purchase sexual services.

Visiting sex workers as a social ritual to build manhood

According to Yang's (2001) research, about 70 per cent of male respondents in Taipei had visited sex-related establishments on at least one occasion. It has been argued that the use of commercial sex in Taiwan not only serves as one of the ways men build up male bonds and/or brotherhood, but also as a rite of passage whereby boys become men (Hwang 2003: 104). Thus, men who are not interested in (or who do not 'dare' to) buy sex are the butt of jokes by peers and may be suspected of being homosexual. Yet as far as mainstream sexual morality is concerned, men who buy sex are still considered to be 'deviant' or 'problematic'. Some interviewees thus reported being 'stared at or laughed at by passersby' when walking into brothels. The sexual stigma of being a *piao ke* (punter) can thus make buying sex intimidating for first-time customers.

Men's first visit to a brothel is rarely undertaken alone. Most interviewees described their first visits to sex workers as motivated by peer pressure and attempts to protect their masculine identity (in terms of not being seen as 'unmanly' by friends). Alcohol was usually involved in these first visits. Some interviewees reported that experienced friends would propose to '*wan nu ren*' ('go play with women'), so a night out drinking thus ended with visiting sex workers.

For me, the first time was due to friends' taunts ... They said something like 'Ha, you don't dare to do it, do you?' ... It's a very common growing-up ritual among young men, you know. (Lin, 33, Internet studio owner, married)

Could you believe that I kept my virginity till 29? ... One night I got drunk and then it was done to me. I didn't even notice what the woman looked like! (laugh) ... Later, my attitudes toward buying sex were a bit weird. I mean, once someone invited me to '*piao ji*' ('go-whoring'), I would just go with them. It seemed to tell people '[Y]eah, I can do it, too!' (Ho, 38, sales, married)

Fracher and Kimmel (1995: 142) have argued that it 'is through our understanding of masculinity that we construct a sexuality, and it is through our sexualities that we confirm the successful construction of gender identity'. This suggests that 'going-whoring' can function as a site where (young) men negotiate their masculine identity and simultaneously manage the social stigma of being a lascivious '*piao ke*'. Hence the social pressure of peers in the growing up ritual justifies 'going whoring'. As one informant, Ho, described it, 'since every man commits the same crime, no one is guilty'. Nonetheless, the sexual stigma of '*piao ke*' is deep-rooted, so 'whoring' frequently happens after significant alcohol consumption has reduced inhibitions.

Buying sex as *wan nu ren*

Personal sexual interests are highlighted in accounts of Western men's purchase of sexual services. McKeganey and Barnard (1996: 50), for example, listed five reasons that drive men to use commercial sex: seeking particular sex acts, having sex with different women, seeking women with specific characteristics, the thrill of doing something socially condemned, and sex without emotional attachments. Many interviewees in my study reported without hesitation that they had experienced poor sex lives when they were compulsorily drafted into military service, being without sexual partners or their wives/girlfriends not offering enough or good sex. Their sexual consumption was justified in terms of 'sexual needs' that could not be satisfied by masturbation:

When you have experience of *wan nu ren* (literally 'playing women'), and you know that *wan nu ren* ... is much more interesting than masturbation ... If you could afford it, you definitely would choose to *wan nu ren*. (Hong, 35, manager, engaged)

It was impossible [to masturbate] when I was young. I had many [girl]friends and was very popular when I was young, you know. I definitely wouldn't think about it [masturbation]. (Lai, 44, truck driver, separated)

'*Wan nu ren*' is a universal phrase that Taiwanese clients use to describe buying sex from women. Considering the cultural and social practices of '*wan nu ren*' in Taiwan, the term serves to 'other' sex workers as sexual objects who can be flirted with, gazed upon, chatted up and used sexually by men (even if this does not necessarily end in penetrative sex). Being a sexual consumer means that a man is guaranteed the 'right to choose' which makes prostitution use a 'thrill' (O'Connell Davidson 1998). Indeed, the commodification and objectification of the bodies and sexualities of sex workers are especially manifest in the process of 'picking up' sex workers, especially when '*xuan fei*' (literally choosing concubines) during sex tourist trips to China. A client laughed lasciviously when talking about how he and a friend picked up two Chinese sex workers who had 'big breasts, good body shape and pretty faces' from among hundreds of sex workers in Shanghai. The ways women were coded by numbers, lined up and displayed to clients, serves to present sex workers as commodities among which clients have a 'right to choose'. This interviewee 'others' Chinese sex workers as pure sexual commodities to the extent that he does not care if they are working in the sex industry in coercive conditions:

I don't care. I choose women. ... by their physical features. It doesn't matter whether she was trafficked or not. ... I only think about my sexual pleasures – whether I come or not. This is their job. (Hong, 35, manager, engaged)

When considered in this way, the client–prostitute encounter is extremely sexualised, commercialised and depersonalised. The exchange of money for sexual pleasures is the key theme in this type of sexual consumption. The social boundary between 'respectable' clients and unrespectable 'other' whores is clearly maintained by sexual contracts within which clients are consumers and prostitutes are workers. Nonetheless, as far as paying for '*wan nu ren*' is concerned, moving beyond the contract to enjoy additional sex is not only a way to reconfirm the social boundary between the 'respectable' self and the other so-called 'whores', but also a way to perform hegemonic male sexuality in which men's penises are the center of heterosexuality both physically and symbolically (Plummer 2002). Ho talked about how he 'conquered' a sex worker in a skin nutrition salon where penetrative sex is not allowed:

Both men and women are naked in the salon. In that situation ... it is working women who should be subjected to the regulations of the salon. They are not allowed to have intercourse with clients, so women have to control the situation. Eventually every man wants intercourse. ... I didn't force her [to have intercourse], but ... I used my body to ... approach her. ... Of course, she had her line of defense, but eventually she gave up defending it. She gave it up. It was she who gave it up! (Ho, 38, sales, married)

It is more accurate to call this a rape than commercial sex. As McIntosh (1978) put it, women are expected to be responsible for their 'sexual attractions' because men's 'sexual urges' are uncontrollable, as Ho says, '*eventually every man wants intercourse*'. Moreover, the representation of the sexual encounter is heavily dependent on a widely accepted biological discourse in which the penis is an active weapon that embodies male sexual drives, while the vagina is a passive container that needs to be aroused. In this way, clients successfully convince themselves that prostitutes are conquered by their masculinity, while conveniently ignoring the known reality

that women are usually subjected to rigorous working conditions that require conceding to male demands.

Romanticisation of commercial sex

The phenomenon of clients seeking emotional comfort through commercial sex is widely documented. Moreover, clients tend to think that their relations with sex workers are reciprocal rather than exploitative. Lever and Dolnick (2000: 96) went further to suggest that *talking* is a way in which clients seek to establish a 'limited reciprocity' with sex workers. In my study, apart from clients who simply want to 'give vent' to their sexual urges, some interviewees claimed that they were not seeking 'just sex':

Oh, I do not want to take a woman out only for having sex. I mean just for having sex. It [sex] must be mutually enjoyable and with some feelings, then the sex could be interesting. (Liu, 48, truck driver, married)

I emphasized carnal desire earlier. It's a physical need, because one's dick cannot stand it. But, it would be better if there were something more than that [sex] ... It might not be love. I think maybe an illusion of love or something. (Lee, 33, Internet studio owner, married)

I think that sex is not just about doing that thing or just about ejaculation. I need emotional attachment. That makes you feel that you are not so ... It's right that it is very comfortable, but it will make you feel that you are not so ... lonely. (Chen, doctor, 38, single)

These quotes challenge the hegemonic model of sexuality in which male sexuality is constructed as genitally focused, autonomous and unemotional and female sexuality as diffuse, relational and emotional (Plummer 2002). In saying '*sex must be mutually enjoyable and with some feelings*' clients express a need to blur the boundary between commercial sex and non-commercial sex. An affluent doctor described paying between NT\$15,000 to NT\$25,000 per hour [US\$517 to US\$862 per hour] to see call girls at his house, serving them red wine and playing erotic music to create a romantic atmosphere to make the encounters 'not so commercialised'. Through this blurring of the boundary between commercial and non-commercial sex, clients can differentiate themselves from 'terrible' clients who are rude and arrogant. This also enables clients to enjoy a fleeting feeling of being 'cared for' and 'loved' by sex workers.

Accordingly, we can discern that men do not expect 'just sex', but 'good sex'. Moreover, according to current heterosexual norms, 'good sex' is seen as 'a series of stages to be gone through before the final output: foreplay leading to coitus culminating in orgasm' (Jackson and Scott 1997: 560). Apart from some clients who preferred to accept sexual services passively, the majority of interviewees emphasised that 'good interaction' was important in terms of having 'good sex':

... [S]he served me and I served her. Um, I think we treated each other equally. That's co-operation. ... Of course, you could just lie down there and let her rub or stroke you, but it's very different ... Oh, it's much higher than making love, you know. Yeah, I just used my fingers and let her come two or three times. It wouldn't be possible, if the two parties didn't have a good interaction. (Ho, 38, sales, married)

Many punters think they are buyers, so they simply lie down there and don't do anything. I think many men do it. But, for me it would be very bad sex. ... It won't guarantee a good interaction. (Lee, 33, Internet studio owner, married)

The majority of interviewees in this study reported that 'good sex' demands both men and women co-operate with each other in terms of physical positions and dichotomised gender performativity. Therefore, instead of doing nothing or passively accepting sexual services from female sex workers, men who actively engaged in those sexual encounters are more likely to obtain 'good sex'. Hence, according to Lee, the supreme power of the buyer, which is frequently used to justify the various bad behaviours of clients, is better restrained for the sake of having 'good sex'. Moreover, Ho's narrative shows that *giving* sex workers orgasms constitutes an important part of 'good sex'. This reflects the way in which discourses of heterosexual orgasm are very much gendered – to the extent that heterosexual women's orgasms are not achieved on their own but, rather, through men's 'hard work' or 'excellent sexual skills' (Roberts *et al.* 1995; Jackson and Scott 2001). Being able to make sex workers orgasm thus not only provides the illusion of *mutual* sexual satisfaction, but also makes the client feel he is a skilled sexual partner.

As the female orgasm is seen as an indicator of men's sexual skills, most interviewees could not help but focus upon the responses of sex workers in commercial sex. All interviewees reported that they could *tell* whether working women came or not. Thus sex workers' fake orgasms, in most cases, irritated these interviewees:

I can tell it [orgasm]. Later on I was very annoyed when prostitutes pretended to make some noises. I told them 'Don't bother to fake it!' ... I know women's orgasms very well. (Hong, 35, manager, engaged)

Sometimes I felt annoyed. (he, he, he ...) I got bored. I really want to slap her face and say something like 'Yeah, keep faking!' Yeah, it's very boring. ... When you are concentrating so much on it, while she is faking ... Your thing [penis] shrinks immediately. (Chen, 38, doctor, single)

These two quotes clearly mark out a political economy of demanding *mutual* sexual satisfaction in commercial sex. By claiming 'mutual satisfaction', clients not only present themselves as 'good' clients, but as men with good sexual skills. The price, however, is that sex workers have to fake orgasms. As many interviewees reported, most working women do not have an orgasm; as one interviewee put it, '[I]t is all about good or bad performance'.

Falling in love with sex workers as 'yun chuan'

Studies of sex workers have shown that Western sex workers may provide a proxy 'girlfriend experience' (Sanders 2008). Chen (2006; 2008) argued that Taiwanese sex workers are self-trained to perform emotional labour and successfully create the illusion of 'falling in love' with clients to 'keep' them as clients. Ho, who suffered from long-term frustration in pursuing heterosexual women, argued that using prostitutes served to fill up his 'psychological lack', that is, lack of heterosexual intimacy. As Ho had never experienced heterosexual intimacy before he visited sex workers, his visits to them were very emotionally invested encounters:

I visited her frequently, and I got to spend more and more time with her ... I then began to miss her all the time. How can I say it, I mean, at that time I didn't have any experience of [heterosexual] intimacy at all. So, ... it was like people put it, *yun chuan* [literally 'seasickness']. *It's yun chuan because I was inexperienced. I told her 'I want to redeem your life!' (ha, ha, ha ...)* [emphasis by Ho]. Just like the old-fashioned lines of soap operas ... It's not love, it's a feeling that I wished I could possess a woman who belonged to me ... I had no idea of

being depended on. The feeling of being depended on. ... Even now I feel it was a kind of lack or incompleteness. It's a bit similar to being mentally disabled. (Ho, 38, sales, married)

The ways Ho talked about how he missed the woman from the brothel and how he invested emotion in her were very similar to narratives of ordinary heterosexual love. This emotional narrative provides an example of how clients make efforts to negotiate intimacy in commercial sex. Nonetheless, in Taiwan, men who put themselves in this situation are called *yun chuan* (literally seasick) to indicate that they have lost their mind and failed to differentiate commercial sex from heterosexual love. Therefore, men who are 'seasick' can expect to be laughed at by their peers. They are taunted as 'inexperienced' clients who are 'fooled' by the 'falling-in-love' scripts of sex workers. Ho's denial of the possibility of 'love', and claiming 'seasickness' and 'inexperience' are thus ways of reclaiming the social position of a masculine consumer.

Some others, who considered themselves to be 'clear headed' understood the 'falling-in-love' script differently. Liu reiterated that sex always 'happened naturally' when both hostesses and he had 'sexual needs' and proudly said that 'I seldom pay for sex'. Liu 'gives' money to his regular women, but it is understood as a mutuality of friendship rather than a commercial transaction:

I don't want to buy sex with money. However, sometimes I consider that she is working for survival, so I more or less give her some money ... It is because I feel ashamed; otherwise, women usually do not talk about money when I take them out. ... Although it is based on her consent, but, at least, as a consumer I am prepared to spend money while she is struggling to make money. (Liu, 47, truck driver, married)

This account is complicated and contradictory because heterosexual love relations interweave with sexual consumption and masculinity. 'Authentic' sexual encounters won by masculinity are supposed to be pure and not to involve money, while financial reward is the basic principle of sexual consumption. As Liu is always aware of his social status as a consumer, the intimacy will not be *just* like any other heterosexual relationship. The working woman was personalised as his lover, but yet she still existed as the 'other' whore who lived by prostitution. Above all, any 'mutuality' is always subject to the whim of clients' arbitrary preferences (Plumridge et al. 1997: 172), especially when their economic situation and the calculation of gains and losses come into play. In fact, client-prostitute relationships, even in those long-term relationships, are mostly, at best, an intimacy without commitment. This was illustrated by how Liu described relating to a working woman:

I told her, 'if you forced me to do anything, I would just leave you'. I mean, since we are friends and are together, you then cannot make things difficult for me. Neither would I make things difficult for her. So, she still kept working there. She needed to survive, you know. It was impossible for me ... According to my personality, it is impossible for me to raise a cow simply to have some milk to drink! (laugh) You did your job, and I ran my own business. That's it! (Liu, 47, truck driver, married)

Although Sanders (2008) argued that the relations between regular clients and their sex workers might be able to achieve what Giddens (1992) called a 'pure relationship' in that 'the explicit boundaries of commerce are freed from the strains placed on conventional relationships' (Sanders 2008: 110), I found that the long-term intimate relationship is not reciprocal, nor is it transgressive. It is the man who decides how far the working woman can cross the boundaries to have an intimate relationship and it is the woman who should always remember her place and not trespass.

Collective sexual consumption at home and abroad

O'Connell Davidson (1998) has observed that clients' public uses of prostitution can act as a social ritual to build up manhood (for example, the collective uses of prostitutes in the armed forces). Currently, sex tourism and *he hua jeou* are the most conspicuous modes of collective sexual consumption among Taiwanese men.

In the 1960s Taiwan was once a destination for sex tourism. Yet, as a rising economic power in East Asia, Taiwan has increasingly enjoyed a higher living standard and modern lifestyle since the 1980s. Gradually Taiwan has turned itself into a prosperous country which exports sex tourists to less developed areas in East and Southeast Asia. According to government statistics, the number of Taiwanese outbound tourists has accelerated dramatically in the past two decades. The number of tourists traveling overseas was estimated to be around 640,669 trips in 1982, which dramatically increased to 9,415,074 in 2010 (Tourism Bureau, Republic of China 2010). More than 82 per cent of the trips were to Asian countries (Tourism Bureau, Republic of China 2008). Among Asian destinations, Hong Kong is the most popular (2,851,170), followed by Japan (1,309,847). Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam where sex tourism has been relatively popular, attracted 1,076,182 trips made by Taiwanese tourists. Recently, using the dataset from the East Asian Social Survey of 2008, Chang and Chen (2013) found that nearly 47 per cent of Taiwanese respondents reported that they know of friends, colleagues or neighbours who have engaged in sex-related entertainment abroad. Chang and Chen argue that globalisation, the economic hierarchy of East Asian countries, and increasing Taiwanese business investments in Southeast Asia and China have made these areas the top two destinations of Taiwanese sex tourists.

According to Chen's (2012) qualitative research on 30 Taiwanese men's sex tourism in China, Taiwanese men have tended to draw on a huge amount of military language (such as calling each other 'general' or 'colonel', organising a 'troop' to 'conquer' China, and 'liberating' Chinese women et cetera) when describing their trips to China. This 'militarisation of sex tourism' in some way parodies the political situation between Taiwan and China due to the Nationalist government's claims that they would launch a counter-attack against China sooner or later. That these trips are 'cheap' provides part of the reason for Taiwanese men's sex tourism in China. Cultural intimacy (in terms of shared languages and a perception of a shared 'race') and geographical closeness are also attractions for Taiwanese men. In addition, similar to research on sex tourism from other parts of the world, Taiwanese men tended to see subordinate 'others' as desirable sexual objects. Given that tremendous choice exists in China's sex industry, Taiwanese men frequently represented modern China as a huge brothel, and sexualised all women and girls as whores. Hence, the majority of my informants claimed that 'It's impossible for men not to visit sex workers when visiting China!'

Compared to sex tourism that dramatically increased in the past two decades, the social practices of *he hua jeou* have been embedded in Taiwanese men's daily life for decades. Taiwanese society is well organised by interpersonal networks based on traditional kinship or blood ties. Therefore, it is claimed that building up *guan xi* (literally relations or connections) with people of shared interests is very important to get one's job done. Hwang (2003) claims that the prosperity of the sex industry owes a great deal to small and medium enterprises which have been eager to earn contracts to create the Taiwanese 'economic miracle'. Bedford and Hwang (2013) argue that treating business contacts, colleagues, contractors, and politicians to *he hua jeou* is indeed the major way to build up *guan xi*. Studies on the social network of Taiwanese enterprises also found that companies allocate budgets for treating business contacts to *he hua jeou* in order to win contracts (Chang and Tan 1999).

Treating *he hua jeou* as a business tool can also make it an extension of the workplace. Allison (1994), in her research on Japanese hostess bars, suggests that flirtation with hostesses serves to blur the boundary between senior colleagues and junior employees. Nonetheless, my interviewees subtly talked about how the hierarchy in the workplace creates the tension in this cultural practice. Lin for example reported:

The thing is that my boss was looking at me and waiting to see whether I dared to play [girls] or not. Did I think about clients when I played with bar girls? That's part of what business means. You need to think about how to please those clients; passing hot girls to clients and letting them have a good time. For me, that's an extension of the workplace. (Lin, 33, Internet studio owner, married)

As masculinity is not self-evident, there is always a question as to whether a man is 'man enough' (Seidler 1989). Above all, studies have shown that masculinities are varied in terms of work and social class (Connell 1995; Morgan 2005). Lin complained of the ways in which his masculinity was put under scrutiny (*whether I dared to play or not*); however, he prided himself on demonstrating manhood and/or brotherhood by 'passing hot girls to clients', and in behaving as a well-trained and experienced employee. In other words, it is not only the hierarchy in the workplace that burdens younger employees, but also the competition between masculinities in terms of the cultural practices which produce the pressure to conform. To be lustfully heterosexual is one of the ways to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity, but self-control, particularly in middle-class occupations, is also a core element of this masculinity (Seidler 1989; Connell 1995). Hence, company men who are able to control their 'innate sexual drives' and 'pass hot girls' to clients are also considered to be 'real men'.

Comparing the motives of middle- and upper-class men who used *he hua jeou*, working-class men (who mostly lacked social, cultural and economic capital) usually claimed that they visited affordable sexual establishments simply for 'relaxation' after long working hours. It is part of their daily lives or lifestyle rather than just using prostitutes:

When visiting a bar, I would go with friends. It is a kind of social life, you know. We chat to each other in the bars. You know, killing time and having someone to talk to ... If I like a woman, I will chat with her and make friends with her. (Lai, 44, truck driver, separated)

It is common that working-class men hang out together and visit down-market karaoke bars where they can have fun and flirt with hostesses. Single working-class men in particular, who were frequently considered 'not good enough' for marriage, reported that they were 'wooing girlfriends' in these hostess bars. Another working-class respondent also talked about how, when he ran a small gambling business and won an amount of money six years ago, he visited a *gong dian* (literally grandpa's shops; that is, low-ranking drinking places for middle-aged or elderly men) almost every night and always ended up sleeping with different hostesses or massage workers. Most importantly, he was proud of himself for having convinced his wife that his 'nightlife' was simply 'healthy entertainment'.

As *he hua jeou* is treated as social entertainment among Taiwanese men, it plays a significant role in organising the wider gendered social relationships between men and women. Usually wives are expected to 'understand' that their husbands are playing social games with working women but not betraying the marriage. Clients, however, taking advantage of this gender hierarchy, benefit from both sides and can live the male dream of 'having an angel in the kitchen and a whore in the bedroom!'

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored Taiwanese clients' sexual consumption in terms of class and gendered sexuality. I contest the ideology of the 'male sexual urge' which underpins some explanations for Taiwanese prostitution and argue that some sexual consumption is a covert but also well-planned form of consumption, especially among respectable middle-class men. I found that respondents who visited prostitutes just to 'give vent' (to sexual urges) were more likely to see the client-prostitute encounter in purely commercial terms whereby rules of 'the exchange of money and sex' mark the client-prostitute relationship. At the other extreme, some respondents used prostitutes as substitutes for 'romantic lovers' in a context they described as more personalised and less commercialised.

As far as collective sexual consumption is concerned, I have examined both *he hua jeou* [drinking flower wine] and newly developed sex tourism. The social and cultural practice of '*he hua jeou*' creates a spectrum of different client-prostitute relationships and complex power struggles. Firstly, '*he hua jeou*', as a way of 'playing women', is very class-stratified. Middle- and upper-class businessmen use '*he hua jeou*' for both work related reasons and their own sexual interests. '*He hua jeou*', however, is plainly part of everyday social life for their working-class counterparts.

Finally, I found that respondents' conceptions of 'good sex' also have a strong impact on shaping client-prostitute encounters. Although the 'good sex' is represented in slightly different ways, one thing in common is that most respondents demand some kind of 'emotional' comfort from prostitution. Thus, prostitutes are expected to perform diverse emotional tasks including chatting, flirting with clients, performing femininity, faking orgasms, and even 'falling in love' with clients. Nonetheless, sex workers also manage to manipulate clients' emotions by creating an illusion of 'falling in love' with the clients. Therefore, the relationships between clients and sex workers are far more complex than that suggested by a purely monetary transaction. It is very important for feminists to contextualise these different encounters between sexual consumers and sex workers, and to understand the ways in which both clients and sex workers invest diverse meanings in them. Exploring these details further might help us to map out different landscapes of prostitution in Taiwan and throughout the East-Asian region.

Further reading

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