

“DAUGHTER (-IN-LAW) OF TURKEY”: AN ACCOUNT OF INTERNATIONAL  
MARRIAGES FROM SOUTH EAST ASIAN WOMEN IN ISTANBUL

by

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Submitted to the Institute of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Sabanci University

August 2017

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MARRIAGES FROM SOUTH EAST ASIAN WOMEN IN ISTANBUL

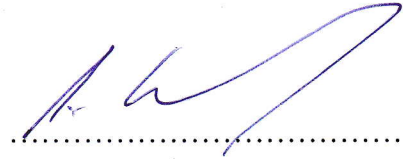
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DATE OF APPROVAL: August 1, 2017

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## ABSTRACT

“DAUGHTER(-IN-LAW) OF TURKEY”: AN ACCOUNT OF INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGES FROM SOUTH EAST ASIAN WOMEN IN ISTANBUL

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MA Thesis, August 2017

Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Tülay Artan

**Keywords:** International marriage, Migration, Gender role, Family role

Thanks to globalization and increasing geographic mobility, international marriages have become more popular in Turkey, and a growing number of Turkish men are getting married to foreign women with diverse backgrounds in terms of national identity and culture. This master thesis documents the accounts of “East Asian brides” in Turkey and the role of overlapping social media groupings among them. Oral history interviews were conducted from March 2016 to May 2017 with 20 respondents from Vietnam, the Philippines, China, Republic of China (Taiwan), South Korea, and Thailand, recording first-hand their day-to-day existence, conflicts, difficulties, and adaptation to life in Turkey. The thesis traces the roles and influences of social media (e.g. Facebook) interaction among these brides, and re-examines their lives in Turkey with a synthetic approach

## ÖZET

### "TÜRKİYE'DEKİ GELİNLER": İSTANBUL'DA EVLENEN GÜNEYDOĞU ASYALI KADINLARIN HİKAYELERİ

OI TING CHAN

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ağustos 2017

Danışman: Assoc. Prof. Tülay Artan

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Uluslararası evlilik, Göç, Cinsiyet rolü, Aile rolü

Küreselleşme ve artan coğrafi hareketlilikle birlikte uluslararası evlilikler Türkiye'de daha popüler oldu ve farklı milletler ve kültürlerden gelen yabancı kadınlarla evlenen erkeklerin sayısı giderek arttı. Bu yüksek lisans tezi Türkiye'deki Uzak Doğulu gelinlerin hikayeleri ve aralarındaki sosyal medya gruplarının rolleri üzerinde durur. Mart 2016 – Mayıs 2017 tarihleri arasında Vietnam, Filipin, Çin, Tayvan, Güney Kore ve Tayland'dan 20 katılımcı ile gelinlerin günlük yaşantıları, çatışmaları, yaşadıkları zorluklar ve Türkiye'deki yaşama uyumları üzerine sözlü tarih görüşmeler yapıldı. Bu tez sosyal medyanın (örneğin; facebook) gelinler arasındaki etkileşim üzerindeki etkilerini araştırır ve onların Türkiye'deki yaşamını bireşimsel yaklaşım ile inceler.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The concurrent development of online communications and travel mobility has made it easier for people to find life partners while travelling or working abroad. Online social media has eroded some national boundaries and provides more opportunities for people to extend their social circle and perhaps even meet their future spouses.

More and more Turkish men have met their spouses from all over the world, including Australia, North and South America, the Middle East, Europe, Taiwan and China. Most of these foreign brides have moved to Turkey after their marriage, with some naturalising as Turkish citizens. According to research on the topic by the Turkish Statistical Institute TurkStat, the number of foreign brides was 18,814 in 2015, comprising of 3.1% of total brides: breaking down by citizenship, most were Syrians (3,569) at 19%, followed by Germans (2,695, 14.3%) and Azerbaijanis (1,653, 8.8%) (TurkStat, 2017). However, marrying Turkish men and obtaining Turkish residency does not mean the foreign brides can be integrated into Turkish's lifestyle successfully, as they need to adapt to new lives in a culture completely different from theirs. The challenges are diverse and dynamic, e.g. converting to Islam, overcoming language barriers, and dealing with cultural expectations as family relations and raising children.

Social media plays a significant role in the modern world as people take to sharing information, exchanging experiences and discussing issues online. Facebook, one of the most popular social media platforms in the last decade, hosts different foreign women organizations in Istanbul, including International Women of Istanbul, Foreign Women of Istanbul, East Asian Ladies Club of Istanbul, Taiwanese Turkish Sister Club, Hong Kong Women of Turkey, and Thai Women of Istanbul. Some women's groups are organised by

foreigners in Turkey, including foreign brides and expats, while others (such as East Asian Ladies Club of Istanbul) are mainly formed by foreign brides from East Asia, including Vietnam, China, the Philippines, and Taiwan. In particular, south-east Asian brides who moved to Turkey after marrying Turkish men often met other foreign brides through social media groups to share their similar experience residing in Turkey.

In the spring semester of 2015-2016 at Sabancı university, I studied the course of Gender Issues in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic taught by Professor Selçuk Akşin Somel, understood more about the lives of foreign women in the Ottoman Palace and decided to conduct a research project about foreign brides in Turkey today. I contacted the first interviewee through a belly dance instructor whom I met through my personal social circle in Hong Kong. The belly dancer introduced me a Taiwanese bride who was also a belly dancer married to a Turk and recently reside in Turkey. The Taiwanese bride was an active social media user in different online social media groups that formed by South-east Asian women in Istanbul. Most of the group members are married with Turks and reside in Turkey. South-east Asia is a region with multiple religion. The researcher raised a question about the role of religion in their marriage. I assumed that religious differences might have been an influential factor between South-east Asian brides and their Turkish families, and they might have difficulties on daily lives due to language barriers. I found out more interesting issues about the lives of Asian brides in Turkey from the daily posts in the groups and decided to extend my research over such questions. This MA thesis focuses on Asian brides who have already been living in Turkey for a few years, and some have been married for more than ten years. The phenomenon of international marriage is becoming more popular in Southeast Asian countries, which usually play the roles of “senders” rather than “receiver” (Jones and Shen, 2008), in terms of spouses emigrating, especially China, the Philippines and Vietnam (Jones and Miller-Chair, 2012). Turkey, officially the Republic of Turkey, is a uniquely interesting destination country with a 95%+ Muslim majority population in a highly secular culture. Shortly after the Republic’s founding in 1923, Turkey promulgated a new civil code (*Türk Medeni Kanunu*) in 1926, repealing polygamy and protecting equal rights of men and women in matters of religion, marriage, divorce and child custody.

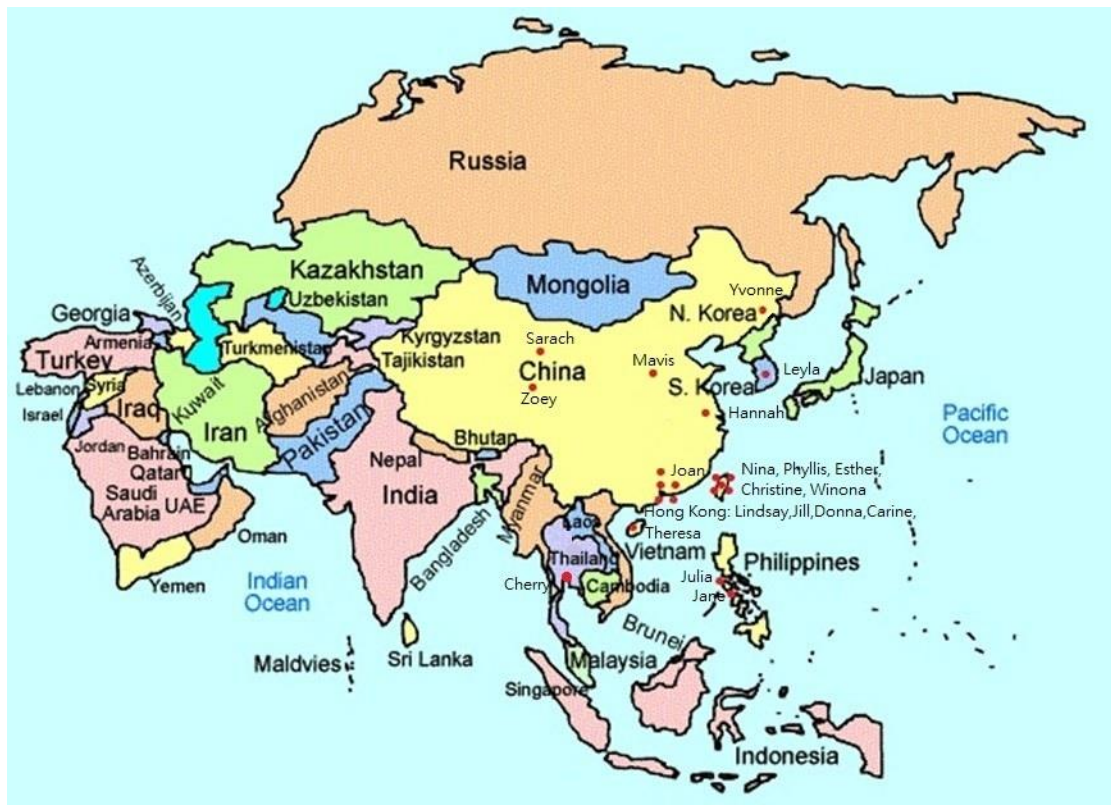
The marriage culture has since seen sea changes, especially in large cities, but modern mainstream cultures and family values in Turkey still seem very different from those in

Southeast Asian countries, especially those with Confucian values, and the brides who herald these cultural and religious heritage in Turkish society merit investigation. Can they integrate into Turkish society, and do they have good family relationships with their husband's families? Does difference of religion lead to any problems? Or problems between families of the men and wives? Is there enough legal protection or social shelters for foreign brides, and do they face difficulties? What are the joys and sorrows of residing in Turkey, and how do these women adapt to their new lives? What are the roles and influences of social media in their lives, and why do they band together under their bridal identity? Southeast Asian brides who stayed in Turkey for more than ten years seem more likely to have adapted to a life in Turkey, while newcomers struggle with cultural and language barriers.

### **Research Method**

Qualitative oral history research method was used as the main research method in this thesis. In-depth research interviews of the individual lives of the foreign brides were conducted to uncover and analyse their challenges and difficulties. "Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events." (Oral History Association, n.d.) Oral history is not only a way to preserve individual memories, according to Louis. M. Starr: the oral historian focuses on the subject to provide insights not normally found in more traditional reviews or summaries. Our society consists of individuals, and this method records the life stories of a single person and give them an opportunity to speak out their voices in the process of historical documentation and preservation. This thesis attempts to catalogue the various difficulties and coping approaches of the interviewees in a first-hand sharing.

Oral history interviews were conducted with five Chinese from Mainland China, four Hong Kongese, two Filipina, four Taiwanese, one Vietnamese, one Thai, and two Korean brides, in which they shared details of their lives in Turkey in-depth. All of them are active members of online social media group, such as the *Southeast Asian Ladies Club*.



Home Countries of Interviewees

### Background of Interviewees

According to Barbara Watson Andaya, Southeast Asia consists of eleven countries ranging from eastern India to China (Asia Society, n.d.). It can be divided into “mainland” and “island” zones, with the mainland (Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam) seen as an extension of the Asian continent. One of the distinctive features of Southeast Asia is its cultural diversity, often interspersed with Confucian influences. Southeast Asian includes the countries of China, Taiwan (Republic of China), Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Lao, Myanmar, Singapore. The backgrounds of interviewees are very diverse. They are from different countries in Southeast Asian (including South Korea) with different family backgrounds and ranging from lower to middle classes. They comprise a well-educated group of women. Most of them are university graduates. Some of them hold master’s degrees as well and the rest of them graduated from high schools.

### Detail Information of Interview Brides

Name	Country	Age	Education
Theresa	Vietnam	30-40	University-Master
Cherry	Thailand	20-30	University-Bachelor
Winona	Taiwan	40-50	University-Master
Phyllis	Taiwan	20-30	University-Master
Nina	Taiwan	30-40	University-Master
Esther	Taiwan	30-40	University-Bachelor
Christine	Taiwan	30-40	University-Bachelor
Julia	Philippine	30-40	University-Bachelor
Jane	Philippine	30-40	University-Bachelor
Yvonne	Ethnic Korean in China, then restored the identity in South Korea	20-30	University-Bachelor
Leyla	South Korea	20-30	University-Bachelor
Lindsay	Hong Kong	30-40	University-Bachelor
Jill	Hong Kong	30-40	University-Bachelor
Donna	Hong Kong	40-50	High School
Carine	Hong Kong	30-40	University-Bachelor
Zoey	China	20-30	University-Bachelor
Sarah	China	30-40	High School
Mavis	China	30-40	University-Bachelor
Joan	China	20-30	University-Bachelor
Hannah	China	30-40	University-Bachelor

The cohort nonetheless shares similarities in identification with Confucian cultures, independence for women and adherence to individualism and gender equality compared to most Islamic countries, and food preferences. The similarity contributes to some shared experiences while married to Turkish families. However, the diversity of personal backgrounds also plays an important role in influencing and leading to different levels of life satisfaction.

The Turkish husbands are also different in terms of education, family and religious backgrounds, ranging from secular to religious conservative upbringings, and working

classes to middle-upper classes.

### **First Contact between Spouses**

The brides met their grooms in diverse ways. Some met their husband while studying aboard and decided to settle in Turkey. Some met their husband while they were working and traveling in Turkey. Interestingly, with the development of online social media, people now frequently find their partners online, including some interviewees. On Facebook, there is a group calls “Turkey people find true love with Asian girls” with more than 17600 group members. It is a platform for Turkish people to meet Asian brides and develop relationships.

There is an increasing number of marriage agency websites. These online dating websites provide platforms for the men and women who are from different countries to meet their spouses. One of the most popular websites is called “ROSEBRIDE”. On this website, it describes Asian brides as follows:

*Though culture and tradition do tend to dictate that an Asian woman is more soft-spoken and devoted to family and perhaps even subservient to a male head of household, there are obviously many exceptions and variations on this theme. Remember that with an Asian Bride you can also spend your life with a thoroughly modern and ambitious person who just so happens to also be stunningly beautiful!*

International dating websites often stereotype Asian brides as “soft, obedient, subordinate to men and staying at home” to attract chauvinistic men. “Aysaligelinler” is another website focused on Asian women and Turkish men, mentioning the attractiveness of Asian women such as “patient, responsible for house works, and the cost of marriage is low”.

On Facebook, there are also different groups of foreign women in Turkey, such as “International Women of Istanbul” (WOI), “Foreign women of Istanbul” (FWOI), “East Asian ladies club of Istanbul” and “Thai women in Turkey”. WOI and FWOI are organised by foreigners in Turkey including foreign brides and expatriates. East Asian ladies club of Istanbul mainly consists of foreign brides from Southeast Asia including

Vietnam, China, the Philippines, Taiwan, etc. Most brides in this group have moved to Turkey after marriage. They reside in Turkey but it does not mean that they can integrate into the Turkish community. They need to adapt their new lives in a different culture. There are problems of language barriers and cultural shocks. With the advanced development of social technology, it is frequent for the foreign brides to use social media for meeting and communicating with other foreign brides who share similar backgrounds, and this interaction is the focus of this study.

### **Different Life Stories**

The life stories are very different among the interviewees due to a confluence of factors. Their life satisfaction levels depend on the educational background, religion, personalities and the financial ability of them and their husbands' family. However, some similarities are still apparent. The findings of this MA thesis are based on the interviewees who have participated in this research for a more in-depth research on individual life experience.

Most interviewees agreed that the beginning of their residence in Turkey was the most difficult period. Prior to their marriages, they understood and accepted each other's ethnic differences in a context of marriage and made efforts to overcome barriers. However, they still had daily problems and challenges from their husbands' family members. They found that they are not only married to their husbands but also their whole family and culture. The problems are more serious with those Southeast Asian brides who neither deeply understood Turkish society nor evaluated whether they could assimilate into the culture.

Some interviewees reported that foreign brides usually have distinctive differences with their husbands' families such as family values and the roles of family members. In most traditional Turkish families, women are expected to be responsible for taking care of children, doing housework and showing ultimate respect to their husbands, parents and families. However, the roles of men and women should be equal in all foreign brides' minds. The lack of pre-marriage mental preparation and understanding of their husband's family is one of the important factors leading to frustration in their lives in Turkey. Some foreign brides also expressed their frustration with certain things when they first came to Turkey, such as work efficiency, bureaucracy for many administrative processes, inability

to get around in English, and the traffic chaos in Istanbul. All these affect their emotions and stress levels when working in the country.

Financial dependence on their husbands is another issue that makes most interviewees dissatisfied with their lives. Most of the participants in this research are housewives rather than working women. Some of them tried to find a job in Turkey but not everyone was successful due to language barriers and educational background. Turkey is located at the strait between the East and West, and more international firms are investing in Turkey. However, these companies usually require candidates to have a deep understanding of the Turkish market, and fluency in the Turkish language. Therefore, even in Istanbul, the most cosmopolitan city in Turkey, most interviewees said that they cannot find a suitable job. The discontinuity of their careers after marriage made most of them dissatisfied with their lives.

Problems of cultural misunderstanding also play an important role in international marriages. This thesis argues that sources of conflict faced by the couples do not originate from spouses themselves. Before they got married, they already mentally prepared to accept the cultural differences with their spouses. Instead, the sources of conflicts are initiated by various external sources such as their families.

Understanding and evaluation of legal rights is another area that Southeast Asian brides need to research clearly before marriage. According to Gavin W. Jones, international marriage has received increasing attention in recent years, both from a theoretical perspective and due to practical concern with urgent policy issues arising from the emerging trends (Jones and Miller-Chair, 2012). Before marriage, it is important for the couples to understand clearly about the legal system of their spouses' country, especially marriage laws and international recognition, to protect their legal rights and validity of their marriage.

It seems that some brides did not pay attention to the legal aspect before they get married. Before foreign brides move to Turkey for residence, they should understand that the legal system is different from their own countries. They should clearly understand their legal rights, and make sure their marriage registration and residence are under legal process. Most brides did not do any research about their legal rights such as citizenship, civil rights, social security. For the marriage between two local people, both are more familiar with



the laws and legal systems. They can also seek help from their own friends and relatives. Foreign brides do not have any connections except their husband's family. It more important for them to prepare for some issues. What can they do if they have problems in their relationship, such as divorce? How can they fight for the rights of raising their children? What can they do with the financial problems? Should they stay in Turkey or move back to home countries? Can they bring the kids back to their own countries? Where can they seek for legal help? Above questions need to be researched and evaluated before their marriage.

The research findings are based on the interviewed candidates. The impression of foreign brides toward Turkish culture cannot be representative of all foreign brides, due to the limited sample size. However, these interviews can help delineate the boundaries between Turkish culture and Southeast Asian bridal identities to identify the problems they face.

## CHAPTER 2

### GLOBAL TRENDS OF INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGES IN THE INTERNET AGE

Increased affordability and accessibility of the internet, coupled with the development of social media platforms, is breaking international boundaries and traditional patterns of socialisation in “real life”. According to Michael Cross, “social media is a term that describes various technologies being used to engage people in collaboration, the exchange of information, and interactivity with web-based content” (2013). Internet personals, Facebook, live-streaming applications, chatrooms and instant-messaging (IM)/voice-over-IP (VoIP) platforms from ICQ to WeChat give more chances to people to meet online friends all over the world. International direct dialling (IDD), once the lynchpin of international voice communications, now face fierce competition from emerging IM platforms such as WeChat, QQ (China), ICQ, WhatsApp (U.S.), Line (Japan) and various other tools with instant voice messaging features (Dai et al, 2014).

As social media engagement increases, so does the number of opportunities for people to meet future spouses online without geographical restrictions. The China-based app WeChat entered the Turkish market in 2013, and the number of users has since increased dramatically. A “Shake Shake” function matches users with each other randomly all over the world, thereby frequently matching users in Turkey with those from Southeast Asia as the latter has the largest number of WeChat users.

Facebook allows users to set up publicly-viewable interest groups, and more than a hundred Facebook groups are explicitly established with dating purposes in mind. As of June 2017, “East Asian Brides Always Cheerful Looking For Foreign Grooms” and “Asian Mail Order Brides” are two such groups containing hundreds of members, in which Asian members post their photos and brief self-introductions on the group to attract other group members. “People of Turkey find true love with Asian Girls” is another Facebook group with almost 20,000 members, in which members actively post their photos on the group to make friends and express their philosophies about love and relationships. (Identities are neither verified nor vetted: while the group name mentions

that it is for “people of Turkey” to find Asian girls, some male members are from India, Pakistan, and the United States.)

Compared to text-based personals, live streaming apps provides a more immediate experience akin to real-life encounters. Long popular in Southeast Asia, these apps started reaching Turkey in 2016, with Bigo Live becoming a Top 20 Downloaded app at the Google Play Store. Bigo Live users select streamers from all over the world and start their live video chat.

### **International Marriage Brokers**

Online dating agencies run by international marriage brokers is another reason for the increasing number of international marriages. These services differ from regular online personals website in the emphasis on charging fees for referrals between nationals of one country and foreign national clients.

Asyaligelinler (literally, “Asian brides”; <http://www.asyaligelinler.com>) is a now defunct website featuring *gelin* (Turkish for brides) candidates who are mainly from developing countries in Asia such as the Philippines, claiming that it is the largest site for single people to meet other single people for friends or lover relationships through their website. “Single people” is interpreted to mean single Turkish men meeting single Asian women. This website argues against traditional views of meeting people online as untrustworthy, unreliable or downright ridiculous by listing its many successful matches made:

*Traditionalists will suggest that the internet is not a good way to meet people, but there are many individuals in all parts of the world who have made lasting friendships with people they have met on our site. This idea of dating has been well thought out and meticulously planned to ensure you have a fun life that's entertaining, educational and enlightening. (Asyalı Gelinler, 2016)*

The emphasis on credibility is notable because IMBs are not restricted by any laws nor monitored by any authorities in Turkey. The website paints a stereotyped image in recommending Turkish men to order Asian brides from their website as they are “obedient,

subordinate and dutiful with housework”. In using language that objectifies and commodifies Asian women, the website misleadingly encourages users to imagine their spouses to possess unrealistic qualities in terms of economic status or domestic arrangements, which, in the absence of mutual understanding during the courtship phase, may cause problems after their marriage such as gender inequality, conflicts, and even divorce.

Invalid and inaccurate information by IMBs cannot be monitored by the countries involved because of the difficulties of tracking down and prosecuting the owners. It involves not only the legal system of one country but also the countries in which they registered the companies. Secondly, it is difficult to collect evidence as most of them are in digital format such as screenshots and video captures which are non-permanent. First accessed by me in February 2017, this website is subsequently shut down by May, and only parts of it were archived by third-parties, further hampering evidence collection (Internet Archive, 2016).

According to the interviewees who participated in this research project, more than 1/4 of them met their husbands online. As Phyllis<sup>1\*</sup>, a Taiwanese who got married with a Turkish man recalled, *“I met my husband online and came to Turkey for visiting him. Then we got married in 2013.”*

Linsay\* who is from Hong Kong said *“In 2006, we met each other online. We were members of a website introducing Turkish Language and Culture. One day, he sent me a direct message, then we started chatting. It was long time ago. Turkish.com. I wonder if it still exists. During summer holiday, I found some flight tickets with reasonable price. So on, I traveled to Turkey for a month. ”*

Zoey\* A Chinese from Western part of China, *“After graduation, I worked in a foreign trading company. At the same time, I opened my own online clothing shop. I met him (her husband) online. We chatted on QQ (An online communication tool) for one year, then I decided to come to Turkey for traveling and visiting him.”* When I asked if she had any safety concerns of meeting an online friend. *She replied “Hmm... We chatted for one year.*

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<sup>1</sup> All asterisked names are pseudonyms.

*He is a reliable man. He started to learn Chinese because of me. It made me feel quite touching. Our first dating was in a public area...a café...haha, it was fine. No problem.”*

### **Increasing mobility between countries**

The cost of air travel has plummeted around the world as traveling, studying, living aboard, and mobility rose. Turkey is a famous country for tourism, and the number of Southeast Asian tourists increase year by year. According to TÜRSAB, the number of foreign tourists was 13,701,419 in 2003 and increased to 35,592,160 in 2015 (2017). Turkish Airlines flights to South Korea doubled to 14 per week at the end of 2014, according to Turkish Ambassador to South Korea Arslan Hakan Okcal (Iglauer, 2014). Chinese visitors to Turkey was 314,000 in 2015, a 60+% year-on-year rise, and is slated for more growth (TÜRSAB, 2017).

Romance sometimes blossoms between tourists and tourism-workers. Jill\*, a native of Hong Kong who's now settled in Turkey recalled, *“I was couch surfing when I was traveling in Turkey, and stayed in my now-husband's place in Selcuk. He is very nice and passionate. I fell in love with him. Then, got married and I moved to Selcuk with him.”* Foreign investment in Turkey also increased the number of foreign workers. In 2015, hundreds of Chinese staff have been sent to Turkey in 2015 by Huawei, one of the biggest smartphone developer in China which started their investment in Turkey since 2002, according to the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (2012). The overall numbers of Chinese workers in Turkey have increased from 3,000 in 2012 to more than 30,000 in 2015. National enterprises from other Southeast Asian countries such as Asus, Samsung, Hyundai, Toyota have also set foot in the nation. Nina\* summed it up shortly,

*I was born in Taiwan. After university graduation, I went to the U.S. to study and then worked in Asus Taiwan. I found the world is so big, so I decided to quit my job for travelling. My senior manager told me that there was a chance to work in Turkey because he didn't want me to quit the job. I had been sent to Turkey branch company to work in 2011. I met my husband at that time. He was my colleague.*

According to the interviews conducted in this research project, most interviewees

met their Turkish husband while working or traveling in foreign countries.

*Winona: I am a Canadian-Taiwanese. I was born and raised in Taiwan and finished my undergraduate and master degree in the U.S. I met my Husband in the U.S. He is a photographer. After our graduation, I came back to Canada and my husband came back to Turkey. My husband is the oldest son of his family (...) In 1993, I came to Turkey for the first time. And...I have been living in Turkey since 1998.*

*Yvonne: I am from a Korean family in China. I restored my Korean nationality after I grow up (...)After my graduation from the university, I worked in a Korean enterprise in Shanghai. In 2009, I met my Turkish husband in Shanghai and we got married in 2014. My first visit to Turkey was in 2010 with my husband, he was my boyfriend at that time. We traveled together. I wanted to know more about my boyfriend and his background.*

*Mavis: I am from Beijing China. I graduated from the University. I met my husband when I was studying at the university. He was my classmate. I was very surprised when I first met him because he spoke good Chinese. In 2010, we got married in China. My husband and his family came to China for our wedding ceremony (...)After half-a-year, we moved back to Turkey for another Turkish wedding ceremony. The ceremony was great. I liked it.*

*Sarah: I am from Gansu Province (in western part of China...but I have been living in overseas countries for around ten years. I met my second husband in Shenzhen. He was the customer of our company. I found that he was a good person and he did not have any bad habits. I was divorced once, because my first marriage was not good. After my first marriage, I went to Shenzhen (in southern part of China) and started to work in different companies and different industries. I met my second husband in Shenzhen. He was a customer of our company and after the time spent together, I found that he is a good person and I did not see any bad habits on him which I was very impressed. However, my parents disagreed with my second marriage because they thought that it was not a good choice to get married with a foreigner and they didn't want me to stay alone in foreign country. But at the end, I decided to follow my heart. We moved to Belgium after our marriage and I gave birth to two of my beloved daughters there.*

*Julia: I met him back in September 2011. I met him in a club in Manila. On the next day, I went to Bangkok with my friends and he came with me. We stayed in Bangkok for four days and that was it (...)I met my husband in September. We spent four days together, you know... After September, we came here together. So, we just said let's give it a try! If it is not...then fine! So, I quit my job and came here. I didn't do any research. My family was so worried about me because it is a Muslim country...I thought: We will just try! If it does not work, then I will just come back! So, there is nothing to lose...*

*Hannah: I am from Jiangsu, Chang Zhou. He worked in there before. We met and got married in China. I gave birth to my elder daughter in China. At*

*the beginning of our relationship, we didn't think of getting married. We just thought that we fell in love and we are girlfriend and boyfriend and that's all. I never imagined that I would marry to a foreigner and move to a place that far away from my country. I only thought I might marry a man in a different city. But never thought of moving to another country...*

The backgrounds of interviewees in this study are very diverse. They are from different countries in Southeast Asian region. Half of them are from developing economies such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand and China, and others from more developed regions such as Taiwan (Republic of China), Hong Kong (Special Administrative Area of China), and South Korea. These differences persist even if some of them hail from the same country, with disparate education levels ranging from high school graduates to master's degree-holders from the United States.

The one universal trait is that all of these women held their jobs before marriage, but only a few of them continued their businesses and jobs afterwards. Most of them gave up their career due to reasons narrated below, but they are quite uniformly discontented with their new status as housewives. They repeatedly expressed that it is very difficult to find a job in Turkey, especially for foreign women.

## CHAPTER 3: NUPTIAL AND CULTURAL SHOCKS

### **Clashing With Turkish Family Culture**

The interviewees elaborated on their conception of family, which differs from the Turkish norm. In a traditional view, Southeast Asians tended to have large extended families, and it was usual for three or four generations to live together (van Deusen et al., 1980). It is the responsibility of the elder generation to take care the younger generation and after the children grow up, they have a duty of care for their parents and grandparents, an arrangement which helped to create strong bonding between family members (Detzner et al., 2010). Most Southeast Asian families taught their children about the importance of family “reputation”, which is akin to honour and constitutes a moral code of prohibition. Furthermore, the Chinese maxim, “the shame of the family is not to be paraded” (*jiachou buke waizhuan*), forbids discussion of the matter with outsiders. Children are thus taught to be disciplined, with their aggressiveness and negative behaviour suppressed while in public.

Male chauvinism is widespread amongst traditionalist Southeast Asians, with men being accorded higher social status than women and wives being the subordinates of husbands. Sons enjoy the rights to inherit family property while daughters do not. “Traditionally, girls and boys have different roles and are treated (as such)” (Detzner et al, 2010).

These views have undergone immense changes in last few decades due to the spread of values such as individualism and gender equality, especially in regions undergoing rapid modernisation such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Manila, Shanghai, and Bangkok. Breakneck metropolitan development since the 1980s has provided opportunities for Southeast Asian women to receive higher education and participate in the job markets. Financial independence is thus strongly correlated with gender equality. In Thailand, more than one in eight women who are over 40 years old are single. Anxieties over loss of financial security after marriage is widely cited as a cause.

Female labour participation in China exceeds 70% (Wu, 2011). According to a research



conducted by Wenyi, more than 60% of Chinese women think that career should be the priority in life because men and family are untrustworthy, and therefore women should have their own income (Hai, 2015). In Shanghai, the nation's top economic city, only 19.3% of women agree that husband and children should be the centre of their lives, and only 15.3% think that they should give up their job even if their husbands are rich (Xu, 2004). All in all, women in Southeast Asia are strongly inclined to work after marriage.

Notably, the same societies have a high opinion of working mothers, as indicated by an "Outstanding Mother Election" competition in Shanghai where most candidates with the highest votes are career-oriented mothers. The new standard of "the good mother" no longer depends on how well women are taking care of the children, but how well they can balance work and family. This shift is age-dependent. Women born after the late 1970s largely reject becoming full-time housewives without other jobs and often discriminate against those who do, whereas those born earlier continue to harbour these intentions because the economic and social situation was not yet developed during their formative years. This trend has led to a sustained decrease in the birth rate the popularisation of the small family in Southeast Asia.

*Nina: I couldn't adapt to the life in Turkey at that time. You know... Turkey is a Muslim country with Male chauvinism... I don't like it because men and women are more equal in Taiwan.*

*Winona: I also found that the status of Turkish women usually lower than men in a company. It is quite different from my culture.*

## **Cultural Shocks**

Culture shock is the effect of being cut off from your familiar culture, environment and norms.<sup>3</sup> The people who move to a new environment need a certain period to recognize, understand, change their habits and adapt to the new environment. The duration of period

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/topic/culture-shock>

depends on the adaptability of the individuals. Some people need longer time for adaptation while some need a short period of time. The transition and interpretation of messages (Both verbal and gesture) are affected by individuals' life experiences. When people adapt to a new culture, they need to recognise the meaning of symbols in the new environment. It is possible that something as simple as a gesture is liable to misinterpretation. For instance, one Turkish expression for saying no is by tutting a dental click (l), a sound which is by itself neutral. However, in Southeast Asia, tutting conveys disapproval and is seen as rude. If the people do not understand the new culture well, they may have more misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

Upon arriving at Turkey, these women find that daily routine, norms, cultures and the habits of the people around them are no longer familiar. Successful adjustment during this period usually translates to long-term settlement, but perhaps unsurprisingly some opt to leave because they cannot overcome the cultural shock.

Turkey is a country with diverse cultures, and the differences are especially pronounced between rural and urban areas. Residents of mega cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, including some other cities on the west and East coast tend to be more secular and open-minded, rural populations are more traditional and conservative. The lives of these women are strongly influenced by their spouses' family background, with varying degrees of conflict between the women's contemporary family values and those of their in laws. Relative to their native countries, most Turkish families have close ties among family members, and big families or family-oriented lives are still popular. Weekly gatherings of extended families (as opposed to the nuclear family) are popular in Turkey, but increasingly rare in Southeast Asian countries which only arrange them during festivals. Interviewees expressed that they need to spend a lot of time to adapt to the family culture in Turkey. Gender roles of family members also lead to conflicts. In advanced Southeast Asian economies, it is usual for women to work after marriage, and family roles between men and women are more equal. In Turkey, it is customary that wives should be subordinates of husbands.

*Hannah: At the beginning, we had different arguments because our backgrounds are very different. Time passed, we started to know more about each other and became more tolerant to differences between each other.*

*Mavis: My mother-in-law took all my gold coins and money after the ceremony (Wedding ceremony). I was very shocked. In China, all these gifts belong to the new couple. They even took my wedding ring. I was very angry because they only took my ring but not my husband's. I was very angry so I decided to go back to China. (...) My husband was very afraid of the possibility of a divorce but my in-laws insisted. It was the most unacceptable thing for me.*

*Joan: It is all about food. He does not like Chinese food. I don't like Turkish food. I like eating rice but he likes bread. We tried to compromise. It is usual that there are some Turkish dishes and Chinese dishes on our dining table at the same time (...) I do not like Turkish food. Kebab is everywhere. Their food diversity is very limited.*

### **Gender Equity Perspectives from Older Generations and Conservative Families**

Prior to their marriages, the interviewees and their spouses usually understood and accepted each other's ethnic differences in terms of marital relations and made efforts to overcome ethnic barriers. Ongoing friction still arose from family members who were not mentally prepared to accept a foreign in-law. According to Pue and Sulaiman, "Challenges from the third party within family circle escalated in intensity when it involves spouses from two ethnic groups whose ethnicity elements were incompatible or stark(ly) different with one another" (2013). Traditional parents-in-law tend to have more conflicts about gender roles and family values.

Phyllis\*, originally from Taiwan, was 27 in 2016 at the time of interview and ran a successful education business until 2013. She first met her husband online in 2011 and came to Turkey to visit him afterward. During a two-year long-distance relationship, she did not have too many contacts with her husband's family. They married in 2013 and she moved to Turkey.

They had a Turkish wedding ceremony soon after she arrived, which came as a surprise to her. Their Turkish relatives and friends put gold or cash to their clothes and danced all day long. She was a little shocked by the dancing culture: "Most Asians are shier and passive. It is not common for us to dance in public."

After the wedding, she started to work on the administration process of her legal status, which she described as "so complicated" compared with Taiwan. After marriage, she became a full-time house wife. The couple lives with her mother-in-law because they

cannot afford renting a separate flat on her husband's salary. She started to have many arguments with her in-law in day-to-day interactions, chiefly because they have different opinions toward gender role and division of housework. She insisted that Phyllis should bear all the housework because her son already works very hard outside, and she had a high housekeeping standard for Phyllis, ranging from cleaning, cooking, and washing. Every time, after Phyllis cleaned the window, her in-law will finger the sill to check for dust. It gave Phyllis huge pressure at home, and she did not agree with her in-law's views.

*Sometimes my husband prepared tea for me. My mother-in-law asked him not to do it again as it was my responsibility. It is the responsibility of a wife to serve their husband. Why is it my responsibility? All family members should share the duties in the family. (...) My mother-in-law requested me to clean the window every day. I think it is too much.*

Phyllis' mother-in-law owns the flat. Every time, when they have arguments, her mother-in-law would ask her to leave her flat. Phyllis noted that that the rent and expenses are high and eats up her husband's income. They could neither move out nor save up. She feels that she is struggling with a dilemma. On one hand, she thought that she gave up her career because of her husband. She wanted to go back to Taiwan but she could not leave him. On the other hand, she thought that she now has a lower status as a housewife compared to her former one as a businesswoman.

*A few months ago, I prepared a big birthday party for my mother in law, and invited many of her relatives to join the party. But after the party, my mother-in-law asked why she did it, as it was so expensive. My mother-in-law said Turkish people won't do it! However, it was very common to have a big celebration for birthday or other special events in Asia. This cultural difference and the response of my mother-in-law made me felt very sad because I had put so much effort and worked so hard on that day.*

A Chinese festive greeting goes by "may you find surplus every year", or *niannian youyu*. Cooking more than is needed and having leftovers during festivities is seen as a sign of luck. Phyllis was depressed to find out that her in-law finds this wasteful, and that her efforts were for nothing. She could not communicate her views or cultivate a closer relationship as she was not fully fluent in Turkish and her husband had to interpret for them. After one year, Phyllis decided to return to Taiwan with her husband, citing failure of adaptation to her husband's family as the main reason.

Communication is defined as the complex, continuous, collaborative process of verbal

and non-verbal meaning-making (Stewart, Zediker and Witteborn, 2005). Phyllis' case shows that cultural differences—and the failure of communication—were the main deal-breaker between her in-law and her. Effective bilateral communication is integral to the exchange of ideas and subsequent development of interpersonal relationships. Once understanding has been established, conflicts can be resolved to a large extent. The language barrier between Phyllis and her in-law was terminal to their communication from the very beginning.

### **Financial Prudence**

According to a research conducted by BlackRock, one of the world's advisory investment consultant firm, more than 69% of Asians save for their retirement, compared to the global average of 62%. In Hong Kong, where I am from, the rate is even higher at 83%, and the concept of “saving up” was inculcated from a tender age (“Chuqiaan tuixiu”, 2015).

Zoey\*, originally from China, shares Phyllis' concern over lack of savings. Zoey met her husband in China in 2013. They got married in 2014 and moved to Istanbul where she became a stay-at-home housewife. She had her own clothing shop before marriage and was earning enough for a middle-class lifestyle in her small city while saving for a rainy day. At the outset, she could not adapt because she could speak neither Turkish nor English, but she thought that the most difficult part for her is that her loss of financial independence.

*My husband works in a trading company. His salary includes basic salary and incentives. In the months with low incentive incomes, the money can only cover our rent and basic living expenditure. In the months with higher incentives, we have extra money but he doesn't have the concept of saving. I don't feel secure if we use up all the money every month. I am considering to opening another online shop in Turkey, but language is a problem. I don't understand why most Turkish people I know are not saving money, my husband and his friends (...) It is very difficult to find a job here...I don't know which kind of jobs I can do in Turkey. I don't think there are many job opportunities for foreign women (...) The salaries are very low. I don't have any motivations to find a job.*

According to Zoey, neither her husband nor his friend have a saving habit, and she attributes it to high inflation and cost of living. However, the Turkish people that she

knows are not paying too much attention on this issue. She cannot understand why they do not care about their future.

### **“Too hospitable” and frequent visits**

While the author observes that the language barrier is a major obstacle to the interviewees' lives in Turkey, most of them did not feel compelled to learn Turkish. The same issue makes it very difficult for them to make Turkish friends.

Julia\*, originally from the Philippines, met her husband in a nightclub in Manila in September 2011. They went on a four-day trip to Bangkok, fell in love, and in November 2011, she came to Turkey to visit her husband's family and married him in the same year. Given the short time from first encounter to marriage, she did not do any research about Turkey. Her family was quite worried because Turkey is a Muslim country, but Julia thought that she should give it a go—and if it doesn't work, she wouldn't have lost anything. She therefore decided on a quick marriage.

She was surprised at the beginning. Her sisters-in-law often came to stay every week, and her mother-in-law sent her messages every day. When she met her husband's relatives, she was so “shocked” by Turkish hospitality. They kissed her every time when they meet, and she could not adapt to this culture. So, she raised this issue and asked the relatives to stop and keep a distance with her.

*They hugged and kissed, hugged and kissed. They said they would do this with their Turkish gelin (brides). But I was so embarrassed. They were just hugging me and kiss on the cheek when you say hello. My mother-in-law did it every day. Then I said teşekkürler (thanks)... My mother-in-law tried to call me for several times a day to ask the same thing. It was weird. And they would go to my home a lot. My sisters-in-law stay overnight every other weekend. And that was too much for me.*

The interviewees align with the image of Southeast Asians as introverted, disinclined to disclose their emotions and innermost thoughts, and avoid physical contact in public relative to Turkish natives. Julia was very shocked when her in-laws were kissing her frequently. She tried to keep quiet and adapt to this culture at the beginning, but she remained very uncomfortable and spoke out when she could not bear it anymore. She

could not adapt to Turkish family culture and it is difficult for her family to understand her own culture. Therefore, she chose to move out from her in-law's family and keep a certain distance.

Jill\*, originally from Hong Kong, was similarly unimpressed by her husband's friends' frequent visits. Jill first visited Turkey in 2012 and met her husband while couch-surfing. She stayed at her husband's place in Selcuk. At the beginning, Jill found the Turkish friendly and helpful. After marrying and settling in the country, however, she was annoyed with visits by her husband's friends and relatives.

*The main difference is Turkish really like to have tea and coffee breaks, and they like to talk face to face instead of making phone call. I feel very inefficient in making a thing done. I was also impatient at the beginning, Somehow, I know I must get used to it because it is their culture, otherwise I will be the one who suffers. So just be relaxed. Another difference is that Turkish like to visit your place without informing you. I feel quite annoyed because it disturbs my routine and rest time. Of course, most of the people coming is to see my husband, we argued for many times because I hate that I don't have any private time to stay with my husband. It is difficult to solve this problem because we cannot ask them to go away. My husband can only use some excuses to kick people away earlier.*

### **Push-pull Cuisine: "Foreign" Foods**

Nearly all interviewees noted that they had to adapt to the food. Turkish cuisine champions cheese, yogurts and tomatoes and is very different from Asian food which is largely dairy-free. Potlucks gathering are very popular among married Asian women in Turkey. In the Facebook group East Asian Ladies Club, most photos were taken during food gathering. Julia said,

*I am not crazy about Turkish food (...) Turkish food. It is the thing that I don't understand. I...I don't explore it. I refuse to explore it. I don't understand (...) the dessert, it's all sugar. I mean... the sweetness of it just comes from sugar.*

Lindsay\*, originally from Hong Kong, married her Turkish husband and moved to Turkey in 2012. She studied an elementary language course in Istanbul for three months and moved to Tekirdağ afterward, and lists food as the hardest thing to get used to, before moving on to general hospitality issues.

*I dislike the diversity of food. I cannot buy what I want. I don't know what can I cook with limited choices. I can buy broccoli & cauliflower only. Also, Turkish people are not organized. They do not plan anything in advanced. When they want to visit you, they come directly without asking (...) I seldom cook Turkish food.*

There are more than half of interviewees expressed that they cannot adapt to Turkish food.

*Theresa: Even now, I still cannot eat Turkish food every day. I only eat it once in a while when we go out or when my husband requests that I make some. I usually cook Asian food at home. I cook Vietnamese food. Hmm...the first year when I was here, I had problems finding the ingredients for cooking. As years went by, I met some Asian friends and I found out where I could buy specific ingredients. I go back to California every year to visit my parents. When I return to Istanbul, I buy extra luggage to bring back rare ingredients. In adaptation to food, I mean I like it and I enjoy it, but I can't have it every day. I cannot cook and eat Turkish food every day. In recent times, it's becomes easier. I have found more places to buy materials. So...I don't have troubles anymore. I keep my own culture although I have been in Turkey for four years.*

Hannah: I am not that much into Turkish food. I usually eat Chinese food. I think Turkish meals have more nutrition but sometimes I think it is too much. It is too oily. And they have a lot of deep-fried food. It seems like... most Turkish people keep many medicines at home, like my mother-in-law. And they like to eat sweets...it is not healthy to eat a lot of sweets. They usually eat sweets after dinner. My husband also likes to eat some sweets after dinner. I don't allow him to eat it but he eats it secretly. I think it already becomes a habit of him.

*Winona: Personally, I don't really interest in Turkish food, even until now, I just tolerate. Sometimes, I cook it for my husband and son. Sometimes, I cook Chinese food at home. Sometimes I cook Turkish food. I make some fusion food. For example, spaghetti and Chinese soup. Now, even my husband and some are adapted to Chinese- Turkish fusion food.*

*Yvonne: The main problem I have is food. I cannot adapt to Turkish food...*

*Leyla: My in-laws are nice people. We don't have any big problems. Our only difference is our eating habits. I like Turkish food but I cannot eat it every day. I like pork. I can only eat pork when I go back to South Korea. Some Korean restaurants in Turkey sell pork but it is very expensive. Most of my relatives smoke, both men and women. I was very surprised that most women also smoke.*



## Gastronomical and Linguistic Homophily

Interviewees reported that food and language play an important role of social interaction among married foreign women in Turkey, with the Asian subgroup exhibiting specific grouping criteria.

- “East Asian ladies club” mostly consisted of members who are married to Turkish men and gatherings are conducted in English. The membership is diverse, including Taiwanese, Thai, Filipina, and Vietnamese; those who cannot speak English are excluded *de facto*, if unintentionally.
- “Taiwanese Sisters Club in Turkey” consisted of members from Taiwan and gatherings are conducted in Mandarin Chinese. English speaking brides have been excluded.

The groupings are essentially linguistic. Those who can speak English integrate into more social groups including people from their own country and other countries. Their social circle can be very internationalised in Turkey. For those who speak only their native languages and have poor of English and Turkish, their circle will be restricted. When asked whether she could refer any more married women from her country for interviews, Theresa\*, originally from Vietnam, said that there is such a group in Turkey but they cannot communicate in English.

During the interview, it transpired that Julia is not only keeping a distance with her husband’s family but also local Turkish people. When I asked if she had any friends in Turkey, she said that “she does not need Turkish friends”. She has several friends in Turkey, but most of them are foreigners.

*It is because I don't know the language (...) that's really a barrier because I don't know the language but another thing is that... I don't think I can have Turkish friends because I don't like... I am not crazy about Turkish food. So, I have a different life so I don't have a common thing for me and a Turkish friend to do. So, I don't have one.*

The dietary reason she gave is at odds with potluck gatherings, where it is readily observed that Southeast Asian cuisine is varied, and that participants often prefer the cuisine from their own country. This refusal to learn the language or integrate into local

society marks these individuals' self-isolation from Turkish people. They prefer to interact and make friends with "foreigners" rather than locals. The contradiction between recognising the hazards of communications with Turkish in-laws and refusal to attempt learning the native language serves to highlight each violation to the women's norms. This in turn makes them drawn to people they are familiar with, namely other foreign people who have similar backgrounds and a common identity as a foreigner in Turkey. Shared experiences include dealing with bureaucracy, child-rearing as a foreign mother, and solving problems in daily lives.

*I cannot cook but they (South-east Asian brides in Istanbul) cook very well. So, when we all get together, it's always potluck. We share our daily life...yes...it's always about the food! Interesting!*

The development of the ingroup "married foreign women in Turkey who speak my native language" leads to a preference for bonding to the exclusion of the Other that is "the totality of Turkish society". In times of conflicts, members rally for support among the ingroup, accelerating ingroup cohesion and outgroup derogation. In this way, the isolation is compounded.

*It's (Online social media group) really great help. There's a downside of it and a good side of it. The good side is you know, I meet friends, I get the support that I need through different groups, I get help (...) We formed a play group. Because the play groups here are so expensive so we just formed our own. There's the good side of it but there is also a downside of it. Because I have those, I am connected with other foreign women, so I don't need local friends. I guess it is the downside and I don't even try to have local friends because I have so many. No need, no need to integrate into the communities here. So, I have my own communities, the foreign communities. So, I guess it is the downside of it.*

## CHAPTER 4: THE SENSE(S) OF INSECURITY

A sense of security denotes feelings of confidence and safety in any given situation. Interviewees registered various anxieties that are typical of any new migrants, including personal safety, language, social network, and legal protection. The cohort was also concerned with employment, the loss of financial independence, issues with citizenship in relation to their marriage, xenophobia, and wider economic and social developments in Turkey.

### **Lack of basic legal knowledge**

Jane\*, originally from the Philippines, has lived in Turkey for six years. She first arrived in 2011 to meet her husband, and then they got married and resided in Turkey. She expressed that she had lost “her freedom, independence and everything” after she married. The society is extremely polarized in her first impression, with some parts that are very secular and others that are very traditional by her standards. Her husband’s family was traditional and conservative. They asked her to wear headscarves, to pray in the *cami* (mosque) and restricted what she wears. Her husband kept control of her finances. The family did not want her to work but just gave her a small stipend, which she needed to request and justify every time. She felt that it was degrading, as she used to have a job. The arguments were compounded by the issue of dress, as she rejected their request for wearing a *hijab* because she is not a Muslim.

The about-face came after Jane gave birth to their second child. He started to develop relationships with other women, and Jane was emotionally hurt. She lost the attention from her husband and thought that she was just like a domestic worker made to care for the whole family but did not receive love. Therefore, she decided to file for divorce.

*He was not satisfied with what I did for him and what I gave him. So, he searched for more. He was demanding too much from me. Even I could not do, he still demanded too much. When he could not get what he wants, he searched for another (woman). That was the main reason that he wanted to*

*be the boss. I said "Okay! Let's go."*

Like most interviewees, Jane's husband and family had become the centre of her life.

*The main thing that I got divorced. He didn't want me to work and I said I want to work. So, the start of the (...) We had problems because I didn't want to stay inside the flat. He didn't want me to work*

Jane has not returned to the Philippines since she first arrived in Turkey. The courts granted her ex-husband custody rights of their children. Her husband argued in court that she had nothing in Turkey: no job, no money and no flats for the kids to live. After the divorce, Jane found a job as a babysitter for a rich family and now meets her children once a week.

She came to Turkey for her husband and her imagination of better life. Now, she stays for her children, and hopes that her ex-in-laws would not spoil her kids too much. She even cannot take her kids to the Philippines to meet her parents for a short period, as her husband feared that she would not take the kids back to Turkey.

During her marriage, her husband asked her to renew the residence permit year by year rather than getting Turkish citizenship. After the divorce, she realized that she does not have citizenship, which complicates matters as she needs to renegotiate a legal identity.

*I asked my lawyer. He said I should get my citizenship here since I got married. He asked me why I didn't get it. I said my ex-husband did not want to give me a citizenship. He said "We will fix it. We will fix it." I hope this year, I can have my citizenship or next year. That would be much better for me (...) I have been to Turkey for seven years but I never returned to my country for one time. It is very difficult. I mean I miss my country because my family is there but I cannot leave my kids here. I asked my ex-husband to let me bring my kids to visit the Philippine. But he didn't allow me to. I couldn't take the kids for vacation.*

### **Employment and Disempowerment**

All interviewees in this study had a job before marriage.

*For most Turkish families, the men are the person taking charge of money. So, the women just have the allowance, of course my husband gives little money for shopping. They don't want you to have money. They just want you*

*to stay in the house without money; they don't want you to work as well. It is very difficult to live like this. Sometimes when you need something, you need to ask. It is degrading for me to ask for money to buy something I want. For a person who used to work and earn money by herself it is so difficult to live in this way. Because whenever she needs to buy something, she has to rely on her husband and seek for his approval.*

In line with other interviewees, Jane felt that she was useless if she had to ask their husband for money. The lack of employment and own income, and the need to plead for it, directly translates into an erosion of their confidence in life.

Husbands with a traditional and conservative background seldom encourage their wives to work, depriving them of financial independence and a sense of security. This contrasts with the experience in Southeast Asia, where women tend to work after marriage. Many interviewees mentioned that they want to work but it is very difficult to find a job in Turkey. They explain several reasons such as language barrier, cultural differences, and a patriarchal social structure and economic model.

Some nonetheless try. Esther\*, originally from central Taiwan, used to have her own trading company. In 2008, she met her husband in Taiwan. Her impression of Turkey during her first visit in 2009 is that the people are so nice, helpful, kind and friendly. In 2017, she moved to Turkey for permanent residency. In her opinion, 2013 and 2014 were the best time for Turkey. Now she imports skincare product such as facial masks into Turkey, but she found promotion difficult, as locals are not as receptive to new products and she cannot communicate or introduce her goods well. Sometimes, she feels very upset about her business and finances here, and describes the recent period as the hardest time of her life in Turkey:

*Esther: Sometimes, I feel it is difficult for me to communicate with local people...and difficult to introduce our products to them. Secondly, it is in the initial stage of developing our business here. There are many things I need to learn. Thirdly, the exchange rate of Turkish lira keeps dropping, it makes it so difficult to do trading business here because we import products from other countries.*

*Phyllis: I couldn't find any jobs in Turkey and it made me felt I was usefulness.*

*Julia: Well, when I first came here, I was in a rush to find a job. I applied through Kariyer because I didn't want to be useless. I applied to everything but no one called me back.*

Cherry: The bars of finding jobs in Turkey are mainly language problems as Turkish is the main communicating language and most of the companies. They are afraid to grant work permits to foreigner due to lots of processes, extra expenses and tax issues.

*Jane: I go out for work but it's so difficult to get a job in Turkey.*

The above brides fit the typical image of the modern Southeast Asian woman. They are not satisfied with staying home, and find that a successful career endows their lives with meaning. Joblessness translates to a sense of insecurity due to loss of financial dependence, but business ownership also generates economic anxieties.

### **Increasing Political and Social Instability**

The political situation becomes very complicated in Middle Eastern World and Central Asia. Several terrorist groups are active in these districts. Since 2015, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, or PKK) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, aka. Daesh) have organized attacks in the south-eastern part of Turkey. Turkey has since endured a wave of terrorist attack, especially in Ankara and Istanbul, targeting locals and foreigners alike.

Interviewees expressed their concerns about the recent political development and personal safety, and their consensus is that 2015 and 2016 were the worst time in Turkey. Theresa met her Turkish husband in the United States and moved to Turkey in 2013. She now resides in Istanbul and remembers her difficulties during her first year in Turkey. She did not know anybody except her husband and his family. She did not know the language and could not do anything independently. After the first year, a Taiwanese woman connected her with a group of East Asian women. She started to have her own social circle and participated in different gatherings, albeit in English so her Turkish did not improve. Her life became more interesting and everything was getting easier until the military coup of 2016 which terrified and depressed her. Said Theresa,

*The coup last year (...) we were just having dinner then suddenly soldiers were there and there was an aeroplane. They flew over my building and I felt a bit terrified. We were worried.... like...Are they going to bomb us? You know,*

*I have my kid, we just felt the fear. That was a very negative experience that I need to go through. (to this day)*

Theresa and her husband are constantly re-evaluating the political situation in Turkey, and now they are ambivalent about leaving or staying in Turkey. On one hand, they are worried about the security issues. On the other hand, her husband's business is thriving in Istanbul. They spent several years developing it, and it is not easy to give up.

Some married foreign women in Istanbul have left the country due to security concerns as they do not want to live in fear, and those who remain talk of a backup plan in case things take a turn for the worse, contrasting with Southeast Asia which provides more predictability.

*Theresa: We think about it (move back to the U.S.) We think about it all the time. The political issues going on here don't look very positive in any way. But we can move back to the U.S. at any time because both of us are U.S. citizens. But the thing is that the first reason we came to Turkey, came to Istanbul, is so my husband could re-establish his business. At this point, it is going well. It is small but going well. So, we don't want to give up. For many years, we have been working on it. So, we don't want to leave (...) We stay here because we want to give things here another chance to see how things go and...it is absolutely going bad. And...things are going unfixable. So, if the things change in a sudden, then we will go back. But now, it's still okay.*

*Nina: Turkey has changed, doesn't like 3 years ago... But those political events and attacks are not as terrible as international media said (...) My husband said if the situation is getting worst, maybe we can move back to Taiwan but now I think it is still fine.*

*Zoey: In 2016, the situation was very bad. The attacks were very frequent. When I went to the city center, I paid extra attention on the people around me. Social security is another issue, some of my friends have been stolen in the public area, not only one person I know, but three people already (...) If the situation is getting worst, we will consider about it (moving back to China).*

### **Anti-Chinese Protests**

The tension between the Chinese and Turkish governments has been strained by the Uyghur issue. Uyghur group feel affinity with Turks rather than Chinese, and protests

against the Chinese government were held in Turkey for the past five years. Emotions reached new heights in 2015 with protests and attacks against Chinese people. In July 2017, protesters attacked a Chinese restaurant in Istanbul. A few days later, protests mistook a group of Korean tourists and a Southeast Asian woman to be Chinese and attacked them in Sultanahmet and Ankara respectively. The Thai embassy in Istanbul was pelted with rocks because its government repatriated more than 100 Uighurs to China.



*Fig. 1. “We crave Chinese blood”: banners hung on the building in the Ataşehir. (Hakan, 2015)*

Most ethnic Chinese stayed home to avoid the attacks during the two-month period as news and photos of banners were circulated on social media among different foreign groups for the Mainland Chinese and the Taiwanese. Anxieties were shared by married women from other Asian countries as they might be mistaken as Chinese. Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) gave an interview with *Hürriyet* on July 8 saying that it is difficult to tell Asians apart because “they all have slanted eyes” (Hakan, 2015). The remark was ill-received by the Asian community which considered it racist, and some Chinese people still worry about a return of these attacks.

Yvonne\* is an ethnic Korean originally from China who reinstated Korean nationality as an adult. After graduating from university, she worked in a Korean enterprise in Shanghai. In 2009, she met her Turkish husband, an expatriate staff, in Shanghai and got married in



2014. His Turkish company reposted him to Istanbul and Yvonne agree to move with him in December 2015, the year when various terrorist attacks occurred. Yvonne was new to the country and very worried about her safety.

*There were many difficulties and challenges ahead, I needed to deal with many things by myself. I regretted that I didn't spend time to learn Turkish before I came here. At the beginning, I was afraid of going out by myself, I felt that I was surrounded by bad people and terrorists. And I needed to get the permission of my husband before going out to meet my friends.*

Joan\*, originally from China, met her husband when she was traveling in Turkey in 2012. They got married in 2014 and settled in Turkey, where she joined social media groups on WeChat. She remembered that during the month of anti-Chinese protests, many people updated the news on the social media groups. She and her Chinese friends were extremely anxious about their safety and stayed at home for most of the time.

*At the time, many news was circulated on social media. There was different news about the attacks on Chinese restaurants and tourists. Horrible. We worried that things might go out of control. My husband and relatives asked me to not go outside alone. My parents called me from China every day. They asked me to leave Turkey temporarily. Luckily, these events ended in a month. In recent times, there is no anti-Chinese protest anymore. I think it is because Turkey has a better relationship with China now.*

## CHAPTER 5

### INTERNATIONAL PARENTING AND THE TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

International marriages usually face additional challenges and disagreements in parenting compared to couples who share a cultural background and agree on how to raise the children. In Southeast Asian cultures, parents self-describe their focus on self-discipline, independence, and obedience to authority. When asked about their opinion about the parenting style of their in-laws, most interviewees said that most Turkish parents spoil their kids. Some find the differences minor, whereas others say that it explains why most (Turkish) children are not independent. Their impression came from their relatives in Turkey.

*Jane: Most of the time, they tried to manage my life and I don't like it, especially when they tried to take control of my kids. I think most of the kids are spoiled here in Turkey, but I wanted my kids to grow up and learn everything on their age. But in my family, that was not possible. My parent-in-laws spoiled my kids and that is what I didn't like even though I know they are good people.*

*Theresa: They are not like...you should do this, you should do that. They are not like that. (...) They leave it totally up to us. But some interference like...very little children and their grandparents... like you can have a little more chocolate, you can eat a little more sugar, you know...he can go to bed later. Those little things, something that I do not think is a big problem at all.*

*Leyla: I am only concerned about the education. I think Turkish parents spoil their kids too much, at least the parents I know (...) When the kids request something, they just give it to them. The kids also lose their temper easily. It is not good for the kids. Their character cannot be changed after they grow up. I think Turkish parents should train their children to be more disciplined.*

Anecdotal observations such as parents singing or talking to crying kids in a soft voice to calm them down, also seem to contrast with parenting styles in Southeast Asia. The idea is shared by other nationals, however. Kerry Arslan is originally from the United Kingdom who blogs her observations after marrying a Turkish man. She argued that kids are usually spoiled by most Turkish families:

*Having recently spent some time at the In-Laws, I watched as my little boy went from a reasonably behaved 1 1/2 year to a spoiled brat in two weeks all due to the fact that when he cried he got given, and if he didn't get he threw tantrum and got given. I tried in vain to stop this happening and all I got told was you can't let him cry. (Arslan, 2015)*

However, upon observing her relatives' interactions with older kids, she noted more positive differences:

*(As) to the question of discipline. Well, I think that Turkish parents when a child is young are likely to be softer than westerners they are given to so they don't cry, but as the child gets older, they are taught to respect their elders, to respect their culture and their family and given strong values for life. (Arslan, 2015)*

The debate on parenting styles, discipline, and culture is ongoing, in academia as well as among parents. Research on the parenting style of Southeast Asians describes it as highly controlling and harsh, emphasising cultural collectivism, interdependence, conformity, emotional self-control, and humility (Kurasaki, Okazaki, & Sue, 2002). Turkish parenting style was documented by Turkel and Tezer through a measure called the Parenting Style Inventory (PSI) into three categories, including authoritative, indulgent, and neglectful. He used PSI to measure the parenting style with three dimensions, including acceptance/involvement, strictness/supervision, and psychological autonomy. The results showed that the children who perceive their parents as indulgent had a higher level of learned resourcefulness than other two groups, and a higher level of acceptance/involvement compared with those growing up in the authoritarian family.

While not all Turkish people spoil their children, the perception remains among married foreign women, as the causal mechanisms between parenting and child development may differ from their own traditions. Turkish families should also respect parenting ideas from foreign daughters-in-law, given the widespread impression it gives off. Communication and mutual respect is essential for what may be a hotly contentious issue.

### **The Education System in Turkey**

The education system in Turkey consists of private and public schools, run by private

institutions and the government respectively. Tuition is set by each organization. Private schools usually provide more comprehensive facilities such as more advanced laboratories, swimming pools, tennis court and music studio. Public schools have affordable fees but receive far lower capital investment per head than private schools. Private schools are however beyond the means of the middle and working classes. The increasing polarization between public and private schools concerns many interviewees.

Hannah\*, originally from China, has been living in Turkey for five years, and her family has recently moved to Beylikdüzü. Nine years ago, she met her husband in China while he was on a business trip. They got married in China and gave birth to their first daughter in her hometown. Hannah grew up in a small town and never imagined that she would get married to a foreigner and move overseas. Four years after they first met, they decided to move to Turkey permanently.

Initially she felt lonely and depressed because she lacked social circles. She had a lot of friends when she was in China but it was difficult for her to make friends with the Turkish people because of the language barrier. Her husband became the center of her life and they argued because he could not spend most of his time with her. Things improved when she gave birth to her second daughter and she started to adapt the life in Turkey. She met other Chinese brides who also live in Beylikdüzü and had potluck gatherings weekly. She continued to resist learning Turkish.

One day, her daughters' teacher asked her to not communicate too much with her daughters because they made grammatical mistakes in Turkish. Hannah felt very sad and started to learn Turkish at an advanced level because she did not want to have any communication problems with her daughters.

Hannah continues to have a good relationship with her husband, who learned Chinese for her, and she is unparalleled in life satisfaction among the interviewees. The only thing that causes her grief is the education system in Turkey.

Most of the family from middle to upper classes prefer to send the children to private school, due to concern over public schools. At upwards of €15,000 per year, the fees are burdensome.

*What I worried the most was the education. I heard that the public schools*

*here are not good. We gave birth to our daughters so definitely we want to give them the best resources and education. We need to be responsible for their lives. My elder daughter is studying in a private primary school. The tuition fee is very expensive! However, I will send my younger daughter to a private school also. It is a huge burden for us but we will try our best to give them the best.*

In strong economies in Southeast Asia, parents leave no stone unturned to send their children to the best schools. In China, they also send their children to various extra-curricular activities (musical instruments, dance, calligraphy, and tutorial classes) to improve the chances of being accepted by these competitive institutions.

This perception persists after the interviewees' arrival in Turkey. Hannah's husband runs a small business with China which places them in the middle class. Tuition costs put a big dent on their household finances, but they insist regardless.

Nina expressed her concern of the education system when she has her children in the future.

*I don't have children but I heard my friends said...there are many problems of the education system... I don't have children now, but if we have children later, we will come back to Taiwan... In Turkey, if I want my children to learn piano, ballet dance...these are the activities for the children from rich family. But in our countries, it is very normal things for children to learn. And the tuition fees of private schools are very expensive here. In Taiwan, the tuition fee in public schools are very cheap and the campus is nice and spacious.*

## CHAPTER 6

### DOES RELIGION MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

On a rough spectrum of religious diversity, Turkey stands in the middle between Southeast Asia and Central Asia.

Turkey is the only secular country with a more than 95% Muslim population. However, religious ideologies differ between cities and even urban districts. Urban economic powerhouses such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Antalya are more secular while the countryside is more traditional and conservative. Even in the same cities, some districts are settled with conservative Muslims while other are very secular. In Istanbul, Beşiktaş and Kadıköy are the more secular areas with numerous bars and night clubs, while Fatih are more conservative in manner and attire.

In contrast with Central Asia and the Middle East, Southeast Asia is one of the most religiously free and diverse regions in the world (Jereza, 2016). Separation of church and state is the norm. China has the largest population of Buddhists and Taoists; the Philippines, Catholics; and Indonesia, Muslims. Intranational religious diversity is evident in Singapore with Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, and Christianity.

Does religion affect the lives of married foreign women in Turkey? How do their experiences map to the wide spectrum of religiosity, conservatism, tradition, and secularism? At the very beginning, I assumed that religion might be an influential factor affecting the lives of South-east Asian brides and their family members, especially with devout Muslim families. However, the research interviews show that religion is not an influential factor affecting the family relationship of the brides. Instead, the level of sticking to conservatism and traditionalism plays a more critical role. Interviewees' descriptions of their in-laws' families and personal experience fall into three categories to describe the relationship of the brides with different types of Muslim family:

- 1) Secular acceptance;
- 2) Devout acceptance; and
- 3) Conservative non-acceptance

#### Devout acceptance

Christine\*, originally from Taiwan, is a famous belly dance instructor. In 2008, she met her husband in Turkey and they fell in love. His husband's family is Muslim, and her husband thought at first that his family wouldn't accept her. They developed their relationship in secret. Christine felt very sad but did not want to give up easily.

*Before we got married, I usually came to Turkey to visit (my husband) but I never saw his parents; only his elder brother knew about our relationship. One day, when I was at my apartment, my husband called me. He told me that his (other) brother was coming and I needed to leave the apartment temporarily. His friend rode a motorbike to pick me up. When we were leaving the place, I could not stop crying. I have many questions in my mind. I did not understand why our relationship is forbidden. We just love each other. My husband hid our relationship until the time we had the idea of getting married.*

The secret continued for three years until her husband decided to marry her. His mother was very sad about his decision and did not eat for two days. She accepted Christine thereafter, telling her son:

*This girl gave up all the things in her country because of you. She loves you so much. I cannot hurt a person who loves you.*

Gradually, her in-laws accepted her. After they got married, her in-laws did not restrict her attire or pushed her to convert, and their religious differences never caused any trouble in their lives again.

Christine's parents-in-law are devout Muslims with an open-minded and accepting attitude toward their Asian daughter-in-law. The acceptance includes the marriage and Christine's continuation of her previous lifestyle, such as her bringing non-halal food.

#### Secular acceptance

Nina is one of two interviewees originally from Taiwan who finished their degree in the

United States. She then worked for a Taiwanese company which transferred her to a branch company in Istanbul. Her husband was a colleague, which she characterised as “a very open-minded Muslim” who did not go to *cami* and ate pork when he visited Taiwan. Her husband’s family are open-minded and well-educated as well.

*He (her husband) is very open-minded (...) Before we got married, we talked about religion. I told him that I don't want our child to be born Muslim. I want the child to decide their religion by themselves when they grow up. My husband agreed. So, we decided to get married (...) My father-in-law graduated from Istanbul University. He is a lawyer. My mother-in-law is a retired nurse. They are very nice and open-minded. We don't have any problems. Freedom is very important for me. I love traveling. I think I should not be bounded by relationship. We should explore the world rather than bounded by our relationship (...) We even joined the travel tour together.*

In the case of secular acceptance, couples do not have conflicts over clothing, eating, and religious issues with their parents-in-law, compared to those married into conservative families and subsequently suffer from tense relationships.

#### Conservative non-acceptance

Sarah\*, originally from Gansu province in northern China, is now 38 years old. She met her husband in Shenzhen, a booming southern city where she converted to Islam . Her parents objected to her marriage because they want her to marry a native man. After marriage, she moved to Belgium because his husband and in-laws lived there. Four years later, her father-in-law thought that the religious environment was not healthy in Belgium, and the whole family decided to move back to Turkey.

Sarah is a devout Muslim. She wears the hijab and prays daily. Her father-in-law distrusts her to this day and does not allow her to stay alone outside for a long time. Whenever she uses social media apps to talk to her friends, her in-law would check and ask whom she was talking to and what they were talking about.

*He believed that foreigners are open<sup>4</sup>. and that's the reason why he even checked my phone without my consent, and he even cursed me if I rejected to let him check my phone. He is a conservative person that we have different points of view but I still respect him in some ways. Comparatively, my mother-*

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<sup>4</sup> *Kaifang*, lit. “opened up”, open-minded, or unrestrained by custom or in sexuality.



*in-law is much nicer to me because she is also a foreign bride..*

After five years in Belgium and several more in Turkey, Sarah has yet to be able to earn the trust of his husband's family, whose views remain unmoved.

*I have my daughters; I love them so much. That's why I choose to be tolerant to all difficulties. I have many arguments with my husband and father-in-law. I have considered divorce from him and move back to China for many times. But I don't want to leave my daughters. I feel very happy to see them grow up every day. And it is my responsibility to look after them. Even though I don't let my daughters to go out often, they can still play at home. Maybe it is true that the outside world is too complicated and dangerous for them.*

Nina and Christine show that devout families are not necessarily fractious, and they do not have many issues with their in-laws. Sarah and Jane face disputes over freedom, clothing and family roles due to the conservative nature of the family, even though in the case of Sarah, the daughter-in-law is a devout Muslim herself.

Notably, Sarah is strongly inclined to achieve personal success in the career, in common with many other interviewees. Even though her husband and father-in-law do not allow her to go outside freely, she still makes use of social media applications to communicate with the outside world and run multiple businesses through assistants.

*I want to fulfil my life. I don't want to be useless. I tried to meet more people online to see anyone could do business with me. I found some students to be my assistants. They helped me to finish some tasks outside because it is not convenient for me sometimes (...) Besides, I still have many things that I want to do and I want to have my life fulfilled. I am still trying to meet more people online and see if they could help me to work on my business because I hate feeling myself as a useless person. I already opened a Chinese restaurant in Asian side. I had this idea, I worked on the online promotion, PR and I make this idea real. I want to make all these businesses even bigger. I know that I can't taking care everything at the same time, so I don't go to the restaurant very often but my husband usually goes there...*

The three categories have different expectations toward their foreign daughters-in-law. According to the interviewees, the attitude of their husbands and in-laws plays an important part of their life satisfaction in Turkey. Marriage to tolerant and secular men seldom lead to religious clashes, whereas husbands and in-laws who hold conservative and traditional views tend to correlate with frustration in their wives' lives or dissolution of marriage.

## CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN ADAPTIVE TOOL

Social media tools are useful for new migrants prior to the acquisition of native languages, as they provide an opportunity to meet foreign friends, share update-to-date information, entertain and communicate with families back home. Sarah noted how they let her meet other Chinese people in Turkey:

*I met some Chinese brides<sup>5</sup> from WeChat and QQ, then I created some groups in these applications. Our communities became bigger and bigger. Since then, I tried to think of a way to do business in Turkey with their help.*

On top of communications, these tools provided business opportunities. Since its launch in China in 2011, WeChat has become a popular communications channel for online commerce, with many people using their accounts as online sellers. It also supports online payments and purchases, and some married Chinese women in Turkey talk to their friends in China and sell them Turkish products. Others make Chinese foods and sell it online in different platforms, providing business opportunities for those who cannot otherwise find jobs or raising children.

Sarah usually uses WeChat to promote her Chinese restaurants to other Chinese people in Turkey. Hannah, who lives in Beylikdüzü, sells rose water, luxury Turkish bags, and Turkish cooking ingredients to her friends in China.

Like Nina, Winona\* is originally from Taiwan and finished her masters in the U.S. where she first met her husband. She first visited Turkey in 1993 and the beauty impressed her prior to her return to Canada. In 1998, she moved to Turkey, but the degree did not help her with her job hunt.

*At that time (the year of 1998) ...the development of information technology was very backward. I didn't have a job. My main duty was to stay at home and take care of my family. The life was so boring here in 1998. I had language problems. It was difficult for me to communicate with other*

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<sup>5</sup> *Tuxi*, Mandarin, verbal abbreviation of *Tu'erqi xifu*, lit. :“Turkey daughter-in-law”, popular endonym amongst married ethnic Chinese women in Turkey.

*people... I didn't have anything to do. No shopping mall...only a few Asian people...and only a few Chinese restaurants. I remember that there were only three restaurants in Istanbul at that time. One restaurant was in a basement of a building in Taksim, one was in somewhere close to the airport and one was Big Hong Kong restaurant in Taksim. I remember there was an open-fire event in a Chinese restaurant here. My mother-in-law showed me a piece of news about the incident. I didn't know the people on the news. There was no entertainment, no shopping mall, no Cevahir...*

She relied on her husband for every difficulty and believes that life for married foreign women in Turkish has vastly improved since. The choice of vegetables grew beyond tomatoes and cucumbers, and back In 1998, Winona remembered that there weren't even supermarkets in Şişli. The first supermarket was opened in 1998 on the Asian side of Istanbul and a long drive away. Nowadays, there are many Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, and Japanese restaurants in Istanbul. Several Chinese markets sell Asian ingredients, and Chinese ingredients can even be ordered online with home delivery.

Air tickets were expensive and Winona said she could only visit her own family once a year. Social media now allows her to contact them cheaply and frequently. She also joined different social media groups for the Taiwanese, such as the Facebook group of "Taiwanese in Turkey". From those groups, she obtained the latest information about Turkey and Taiwan, and postings for part-time temp jobs let her earn pocket money for herself.

Winona has adapted to life in Turkey after twenty years, but a sense of belonging remains elusive. The increased support, friendship, shared experiences and emotions with other foreigners comes at the expense of feeling the need to develop local networks because they already have foreigner circles. The will to learn the local language and integrate into local communities is thus sapped.

## CHAPTER 8

### FUTURE ORGANISATIONAL POSSIBILITIES

#### **Understanding as much as possible before marriage.**

Gavin W. Jones hypothesized that the greater the difference in background between spouses (cultural background, age, religion, education) the higher the risk that the marriage will end in divorce (2012). According to Turkish Statistical Institute, 39.3% of divorces occurred in the first five years of marriage. Even when couples share a country of origin and culture, they have a higher chance of divorce if they have incompatible personalities or are unsuccessful in integrating into a shared family life.

International marriages will presumably be even more difficult because background differences are greater. However, interestingly, half of the interviewed brides expressed that they did not have a deep understanding about either Turkey or their husband's family background prior to marriage, and that they did not conduct any deep research and verification about this topic.

The interviews suggest that when the values and education levels of the Southeast Asian brides and the Turkish grooms (plus the latter's families) are similar, the couples do not face conspicuous or insurmountable contradictions. Marriage into a religious and conservative family is more likely to lead to conflicts.

The bride's lack of understanding for the groom's family, his social background and Turkish society at large generates a large expectation shortfall between her imagination and their reality. For the sake of her future life expectation, foreign brides need to learn as much as possible about Turkish culture and society, economic development, the possibility of developing their own career in this economy, the family background of their future husband, and the family's religious practices.

### **Try to Integrate into the local community**

I must admit my surprise at the fact that a full three-quarters of the 20 interviewees explicitly mentioned that they do not need to integrate into the local community, and that they do not find the possibility fulfilling. The language barrier issue is highlighted by the paradox where most of them recognise that they do not put much effort to learn the language, even when they know that it is their main issue with life in Turkey. Escape from the local community is not a good way to continue their life after their decision to seek permanent residence, as it deprives them of feeling at home in in their husband's country—or rather, their adopted country.

In 2013, Luo Minglei made a performance on Turkish television in an entertainment programme. The Chinese woman impressed many Turkish viewers and stirred up discussions over Asian brides in Turkey:

*When I told my parents that I would marry a Turkish man, they are so worried about me because all my friends and relatives are far from me and I cannot seek any help in Turkey if there are any problems. (Chen, 2013).*

She spent a long time to change her parents' mind and finally married her husband. She spent two years to overcome the difficulties and took Turkish language courses. In that two years, she learnt how to be a good daughter-in-law in a Turkish family, from making Turkish coffee to speaking fluent Turkish language. Her deep understanding of Turkish community and fluent Turkish allows her to maintain a cordial relationship with her husband's family and start her own trading business in Turkey.

### **Understanding legal rights and necessary legal processes**

Understanding legal rights and conducting all necessary legal processes in the spouse's country, such as marriage registration and application of citizenship and social insurance, are a must for international marriage. In the past 15 years, the Turkish Government changed the policies of citizenship and naturalisation for foreign wives of Turkish citizens.

According to Winona\*, originally from Taiwan,

*It is easier to obtain the nationality when I came to Turkey 15 years ago. The first time I came to immigration department for a residence permit application, the staff there asked me if I would also apply for Turkish nationality. I was so shocked why I heard that. I could get the citizenship on the first year I came.*

Policies and application processes for marriage migration change from year to year and application for Turkish nationality can be more complicated.

A bride's thorough understanding of legal rights can help her defend her own rights in the event of dispute or dissolution of marriage, as had occurred in the case of Jane. Far from being a taboo, consideration of these possibilities is essential for international marriages, especially where children may be involved. Compared to those in same-nation marriages, married foreign women lack social support from their own family and relatives and are unfamiliar with the local legal system.

### **Make good use of foreign brides' social network for self-help purpose**

People use social media to post information about themselves: they share their own current subjective experience, recent past, or opinions (Dar Meshi, Diana I. Tamir, Hauke R. Heekeren 2015) The recent rise of social networking for married foreign women is hugely beneficial to their lives as a way to share experiences, and it will be even more useful if formal offline (or real-life) organization can arise from them for self-help purposes.

On top of potluck gathering, formal organizations can bring about sharing and discussion between long-time residents and new arrivals to help the latter overcome cultural shock more quickly. One-to-one mentorships can also help ensure that no one is left behind in peer groups. Support groups are instrumental to the expression and promotion of married foreign women's rights and raise exposure as a minority group in Turkish society, with the assistance of other non-governmental organisations and authorities. The latter can also expedite the flow of correct and up-to-date information on legal rights, application process and legal assistance when necessary. Online posts about the application process

of “İkamet”(Turkish residence permit), the process of registration of marriage, and whether it is forbidden to bring this and that into Turkey are very common. While replies are abundant, their accuracy cannot be guaranteed, and professional advice will clear up much doubt and uncertainty among new arrivals.

### **Understand Cultural Shock and Overcome Prejudice**

Family and marriage psychologist Chang Li believes that new immigrants usually have strong sense of alienation due to the huge difference between reality and their expectation of life and value. The expectation shortfall leads to mental dissatisfaction including anger, anxiety and insecurity, which may lead to depression if unaddressed.

Interviewees generally report that the first two years are the most difficult time for married foreign women to adapt to life in Turkey. Feelings of isolation, frustration, and anxiety are common. While details differ, their phases of emotional insecurity are likely to be related to both the language barrier and their joblessness. Anger is directed toward their husband because they think that they have given up their own family and friends and migrated to an unfamiliar environment. Hannah marks the distinction and overlap between her problem and their problem in this way:

*At the beginning when I came to Turkey. There was a lot of problems in my life, the language barriers, the adaptation to life, and much more. When I was in China, I could find my friends to meet, if I argued with him. But in Turkey, I didn't have anyone except him. He became the center of my life and he was very tired because of work. That was the reason that we usually have some arguments and troubles at the beginning. I even have the problem of depression.*

As mentioned, she found other married Chinese women in Beylikdüzü afterward and led her to e-commerce by exporting Turkish products to China. Expansion of her own social circle relieved her of depressive moods whereas starting her own business relieved her of insecurity. This stabilised her relationship with her husband and she started to enjoy her life in Turkey.

When asked whether she want to move back to China:

*Turkey is nice in certain extent. The environment is suitable for living. The food is more natural. The air quality is good. There is a serious air-pollution problem in China and food safety issues...*

Understanding the differences is the first step to overcoming cultural shock because people will have more empathy and tolerance once they understand the reasons behind the differences, especially unseen factors such as religions, values, perception and beliefs. This approach transcends the never-ending and ultimately futile attempt to judge one culture through another.

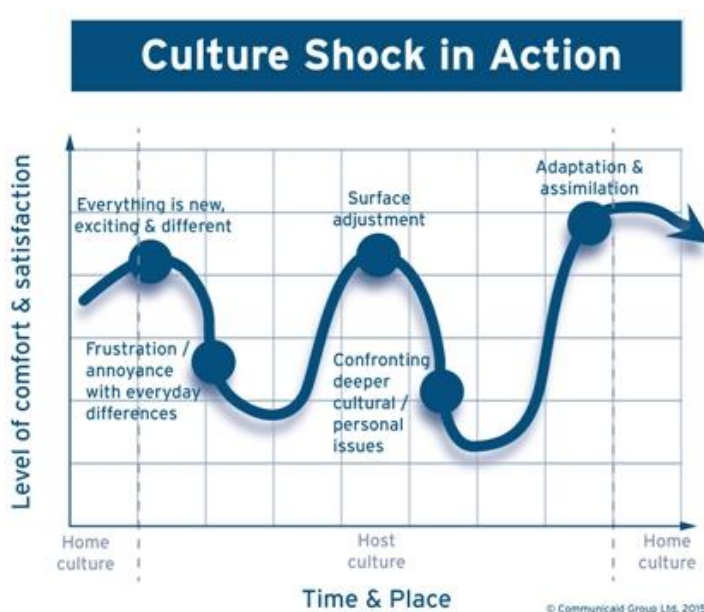


Fig. 2: Culture Shock in Action (Maclachlan, 2015).

Interviewees in this study largely conform to the five-stage theory of cultural shock as proposed by Pedersen (1994), but notably not all of them have completed the stages, and even fewer have reached the final stage of adaptation and assimilation.

### **Build up the Sense of belonging**

Identity is the totality of one's perception of self, or how we as individuals view ourselves as unique from others. The differing sense of belonging felt by the interviewees is a corollary of them internalising their identity as foreigners. Overall, self-recognition as Turkish is low among interviewees regardless of their being wives of Turkish men and



mothers of Turkish children. In the Facebook Group of “Hong Kong people in Turkey”, some members expressed their lives in Turkey as “being trapped in Turkey” and described women who moved to other countries with their husbands as “having escaped”.

The insider/outsider mentality is also related to the idea of temporary (if indefinite) versus permanent residence. It will give them more motivation to live in a more “Turkish way”, such as trying to learn the language and be more understanding of Turkish culture. Otherwise, it is impossible for them to completely “feel like home” in Turkey, and are likely to remain exiles of love.

### **Limitations and Suggestion for Further Research**

The life story of each interviewee shares only the topical commonality as married foreign women in Turkey, and is otherwise different according to the personalities and backgrounds of the women and their husbands. The research findings of this thesis only focus on the interviewees and reflect on their circumstance as they report it. Unlike quantitative research that involves many respondents, oral history usually records the life of the individual rather than pronouncing a universally valid verdict on their collective situation. Insofar as Turkish society is constructed by the sum of its individuals, these interviewees included, it is worth studying the case of the newcomer and found out their specialty.

The research contents can only represent their ideas and impressions at their age of conducting the interviews. Further research can be conducted in the way of tracking and recording the life experiences changes on every stage of their lives. A more comprehensive picture of their life stories can be shown. Southeast Asian regions comprises countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, and China. Of invitations initiated by the author through social media groups, our interviewees from China, Taiwan (the Republic of China), Vietnam, Philippines, and Korea replied, and at least one group (as suggested by Theresa) was abandoned due to the lack of interpreters. Other hidden groups likely exist.

Last but not least, this study is confined to residents in Turkey. There is an unknown

number of foreign married women in Turkey who have since left the country, either with their newly minted “foreign married men” in the wives’ countries of origin or elsewhere, or after their marriage had ended. I tried to reach Vietnam Embassy, Embassy of the Philippines, Embassy of Korea (Republic), Embassy of the people's republic of china, Taipei Economic and Cultural Mission by both phone and email for relevant data of their citizen who married to Turks. Embassy of Korea (Republic) rejected my request to access the data due to confidential reason. Taipei Economic and Cultural Mission replied that there are around 30 Taiwanese brides who married to Turks and recently living in Turkey. They mentioned that it is the brides that they know. There is a possibility that the number of Taiwanese brides should be more. Vietnam Embassy, Embassy of the Philippines, and Embassy of the people's republic of china have not replied me about the data until the submission date of the thesis.

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This thesis provides a first draft for the history of modern intermarriage between Turkish men and Southeast Asian women, against rising international travel mobility and advances in information technology developments.

In the span of less than ten years, social media platforms have made it far easier to make friends worldwide and pursue long-distance relationships, just as they have allowed isolated migrant minorities to tackle the challenges of integration in new and unexpected ways.

The lives and difficulties of Southeast Asian women in Turkey, as the topic at hand, are recorded and analysed through their own words, in a very similar vein to how they build their stories by telling them to one another. They have diverse backgrounds in nationality, education, religion, family, and class, and often only share two things in common: language and marital status.

Few had a deep understanding about life in Turkey before their marriage, either through active research or attempt at residence. Their initial cultural shock consists in adapting to the culture of big families, close ties between family members, and different understanding toward the roles of family members. Language barriers caused other problems in life and were recognised as such but few attempts were made to address it, making it difficult for them to make Turkish friends and integrate into local communities.

By keeping a distance with the locals and socialising with other married foreign women, two levels of isolation are sustained. The individual is isolated from the local neighbourhood, and the community of married foreign women is insulated from Turkish society at large. The double whammy of joblessness for previously economic active women and financial dependence on husbands erodes on both confidence and security and is severely detrimental to life satisfaction.

The question of religious compatibility is superseded by the question of tolerance and acceptance by the husband, and while difficulties do arise, they are not necessarily

intractable or endemic.

While understandable in the context of marriage, the immigrating spouse's lack of backup plans can lead to inequitable situations if the marriage does come to an end. Ignorance of legal protection and citizenship laws can lead to acrimonious divorces, especially where children are involved.

Outside the context of marriage, the struggles of culture shock for the newlywed are largely in line with those of other immigrants. Social media thus becomes a double-edged sword, lending support for newcomers or becoming a crutch for those who remain foreign.

Civic participation is vital to the community and the individual alike, and a well-integrated social life is a prerequisite to building up a sense of belonging. Language and understanding will always be crucial to these women's attempt to adapt to life in Turkey, as they pursue new and changing roles in the household, economy, and society in the Republic of Turkey.

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## TRANSCRIPTS

### Interview with Taiwanese bride Esther

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: E

Y: Hello Esther, can you briefly introduce yourself?

E: I am from the Central part of Taiwan. I frequently traveled to Spain. I have a trading company in Taiwan and now I am doing the trading business of skin care products from Taiwan to Turkey. I met my husband in Taiwan in 2008. He was in Taiwan at that time. Later, he moved to China for work. We stayed in different countries for a while. Later, I also moved to China because I wanted to stay with him.

Y: When did you come to Turkey for the first time? Can you describe your first impression of Turkey?

E: My first visit to Turkey was in 2009. It was March. My first impression of Turkey was...the people were so nice. They were very helpful, kind and friendly. In 2014, I moved to Turkey for permanent residency. I think that 2013 and 2014 were the best times in Turkey. The administrative processes are very complicated and made me very confused. There is a large gap and distinctive differences between the rural and urban areas of Turkey. And... I don't know if you have faced this problem, but many Asian girls have been harassed by Turkish men... I also have that problem. But I think it is not a single phenomenon in Turkey, but also the problems of other developing countries. I studied Turkish language course for four months. The nature of Turkish people is very good, but the people I know are jealous... have you ever heard of the usage of the evil eye? The people put blue yes in front of their door in order to send their unluckiness to other people. Yes...they are not doing it on purpose but when they have some unlucky things happened, they try to use the blue eyes to send that bad luck to other people.

Y: Do you have any close Turkish friends?

E: No, I don't have any. It is very difficult to make Turkish friends. I think Turkish women have a strong sense of self-protectiveness.

Y: What do you usually have for meals? Chinese food or Turkish food?

E: Sometimes Chinese food, sometimes Turkish food. I know how to cook Turkish food. I usually cook it.

Y: Do you have any religion? Does your husband's family have any religion?

E: Yes...My husband's family is a Muslim family, but they are not very traditional nor conservative. They are very open-minded. My sister-in-law treats me as her younger sister. I like them so much! I don't have problems with my in-laws. My sister-in-law usually asks my husband and me to have our kids, but we don't have any plans yet... Just let it be.

Y: What things do you like and dislike the most about Turkey?

E: Turkish people are very helpful and kind. I remember that at the beginning, my Turkish was not good and I usually had problems when taking public transport. Turkish people are very helpful when you ask them for directions. The thing I dislike the most is...the administration process. It is so complicated. And...there are more and more people becoming more blinded toward religion. There are an increasing number of conservative people. I think it is related to the increasing number of Arabic people.

Y: How about your social circle? Do you have any friends here? Where are they from?

E: Yes I do. They are also foreign brides from East Asia. Most of them are Taiwanese and Chinese, some of them are from other South-east Asian countries such as Vietnam

Y: Could you briefly introduce IWOI?

E: IWOI is the organization of International Women of Istanbul. They organize different activities for international women who live in Turkey. Their activities...includes booths, play groups for mothers to communicate, and free courses for international women such as learning about social media and website making.

Y: What are the differences between IWOI and FWOI?

E: FWOI is only a Facebook group and IWOI is an official group. There is another group called "Taiwanese sisters group". Only Taiwanese brides are allowed to join the group. This group also helps Taiwanese brides in Turkey integrate into life here.

Y: Can you rank the level of your satisfaction toward your life here? You can rank from 1 to 10 with 10 being perfectly satisfied.

E: For personal life such as with my husband, his family, and marriage. I will rank 6. But for my work here, I will rank 4. Because recently our business is not doing well. I import Taiwanese skin care products such as masks to Turkey. It is very hard to promote our products here because it seems that most Turkish people do not easily accept some new products. Whatever, I will try my very best to develop our business. Oh yes! Tomorrow there will be a make-up exhibition in Nişantası, I have my own booth there. You can come to join if you feel interested. I can give you free tickets.

Y: Oh! It sounds so interesting!

E: Yes! There are many professional skin care products in the exhibition. You can join if you are free tomorrow.

Y: Sure. Please write me more details about the event. Are there any difficulties for you to do business here?

E: Yes. Firstly...the language barrier is a problem. Sometimes, I feel it is difficult for me to communicate with local people...and difficult to introduce our products to them. Secondly, it is in the initial stage of developing our business here. There are many things I need to learn. Thirdly, the exchange rate of Turkish lira keeps dropping, it makes it so difficult to do trading business here because we import products from other countries.

Y: What is the most difficult time of your life in Turkey?

E: I think the recent time is the hardest time of my life here. Sometimes I felt very upset about the development of my business here because it does not meet my expectations. However, I will try my very best for my business.

Y: Can you share your most unforgettable experience in Turkey?

E: The most unforgettable experience...hmm...I think it is the beauty of natural scenery here...The seaside is very beautiful. I really love it.

Y: I have another question. Can you rank the level of your satisfaction toward your relationship with your husband? You can rank from 1 to 10 while 10 means perfectly satisfied.

E: Hmm...I rank 9 for the relationship with my husband. Because we love each other so much and we understand each other.

Y: Do you have any cultural differences with your husband or husband's family?

E: Yes. I do. They have family gatherings every week. At the beginning, I could not adapt to this culture. My Turkish was not good. I just sat there and could not communicate too much with them.

## Interview with Vietnamese Bride Theresa

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: T

Y: Hello Can you briefly introduce yourself?

T: No problem. I am 33 years old. I have a 3 and ½ year old son. I grew up in California, but I was born in Vietnam. I studied biology and nursing in California and I worked for a while before my husband and I moved to Istanbul four years ago. I love cooking and I've been attending cooking classes for the past five years. I am not working now. I am just a housewife and I take care of my little boy. Yes. That's it. What else you want to know?

Y: Ya, you raised a very interesting point. I interviewed some Asian brides before, and they have problems with Turkish food. They cannot adapt to food here and there are not many Asian restaurants. Do you have this problem?

T: I do. Even now, I still cannot eat Turkish food every day. I only eat it once in a while when we go out or when my husband requests that I make some. I usually cook Asian food at home. I cook Vietnamese food. Hmm...the first year when I was here, I had problems finding the ingredients for cooking. As years went by, I met some Asian friends and I found out where I could buy specific ingredients. I go back to California every year to visit my parents. When I return to Istanbul, I buy extra luggage to bring back rare ingredients. In adaptation to food, I mean I like it and I enjoy it, but I can't have it every day. I cannot cook and eat Turkish food every day. So, I am very Asian from the inside. In recent times, it's becomes easier. I have found more places to buy materials. So...I don't have troubles anymore. I keep my own culture although I have been in Turkey for four years.

Y: Do you have troubles in any other aspects? I mean... during the first year of your residence in Turkey.

T: The first year... let's say... Firstly, I didn't know anybody at that time, only my husband and his family. It was strange. I took Turkish classes and...that was the first step to integrate into the... How do you say...the community? You know...you need friends... but I could not make any friends here in the first year. Then, I discovered the group, "Asian women club in Istanbul", and that was where I met [my friend] Crystal. Every month, everybody brings something that represents their country and culture. We talk and enjoy our time together... and share. You know...we share our stories with each other. So, it was my second step to adapting to life in Turkey. And...how to say...My Turkish is not good because I usually hang out with international women. We communicate in English. Then, I moved to live with my parents-in-law. I improved my Turkish a little because I could talk to them every day. So, things got easier and easier... I learned how to go to the bazaar, to buy the first ingredients by myself, drive from here and there, you know, I do things by myself. That was my first year. Then, I got pregnant... and now I focus on my kid.

Y: How many Turkish friends do you have? Are there any problems for you about integrating into local social life?

T: Right, right, right. I only have a few Turkish friends. I met them through my husband. For myself, I haven't met any Turkish friends.

Y: Why?

T: It is because of the language barrier. We can have basic conversations, but it is difficult to continue in an in-depth way... I cannot. So, I cannot make friends because I cannot express myself. I cannot use the language to share.

Y: You mentioned that you don't have a religion. How about your husband and his family? Do they have any religious beliefs?

T: My husband is Muslim but he has doubt... He has a doubt about his religion. He is not religious, totally not religious, but he believes in the Quran.

Y: How about your parents-in-law? Are they secular or conservative Muslim? Does religion cause any problem in your life?

T: Not at all, not at all. I don't worry about it. They are very open-minded. My father-in-law reads the Quran and he did some research, but it is just for himself, just for his own curiosity. He does not have any religious behavior. He is not exaggerated. He never makes me feel uncomfortable. I never worry about this. My mother-in-law is more open-minded than my mother.

Y: Did you ever worry about religious issues before marriage?

T: We talked about our religions and how to raise our kids. My husband is very open-minded. He had moved to the U.S. when he was 18 years old. We never had any arguments or disagreements about religious issues. It is not a problem. When I came here, the hardest thing was, there were more and more people... I see the changes comparing with 2008 when I first came. It made me feel uncomfortable. You know, everyone has the rights to practice their religions and whatever they want to believe. Yes, just let it be. Nothing you can do. Yes, I try to ignore it. I don't care about it.

Y: What changes have you seen if you compare with the first time you came to Turkey?

T: I would say...not really big changes, but there are an increasing number of schools and imams...They put religious classes in elementary school. I am not happy... I don't understand. They are kids. They don't have the...how to say, they are not yet at the stage to learn about religion. They can decide when they have a conscience. They put those religious classes into the education system. It is something that... most foreigners think... is not appropriate. It is what I am concerned about.

Y: Is your kid studying in Kindergarten?

T: Yes. He is 3 years old.

Y: Which language do you use to communicate with your kid? What languages can he speak?

T: I speak to him in Vietnamese. My husband speaks to him in Turkish. Between my husband and I, we speak English. He is fluent in Turkish because he is surrounded by Turkish. He fully understands Vietnamese, but he does not like to speak. Unless I force him, unless I force him... Then he speaks a couple of words. Otherwise, he refuses to speak Vietnamese. He can speak English as well. He is picking up English from us, from media, from watching YouTube channels.

Y: Your kid is growing up in a multi-lingual environment. Are there any differences between you and your parents-in-law regarding raising your kid?

T: Not at all, not at all... fundamentally. But here and there. When you live together... there are some problems... but not serious. They are not like... you should do this, you should do that. They are not like that. They are not telling me... They are not telling us... how to raise kids. They leave it totally up to us. But some interference like... you know... very little children and their grandparents, so they are a little on the silly side, you know what I mean... like you can have a little more chocolate, you can eat a little more sugar, you know... he can go to bed later. You know, those little things. But yes, those little things, something that I do not think is a big problem at all.

Y: You rated your relationship with your family... you rate 7. Why? Do you have any rationale behind this?

T: I mean... it is at the average level that everyone can achieve, but I am not giving it a 10 because I don't believe there is a 10 in every relationship. You know what I mean? Of course, there are... negative things you need to consider... because we are living together - even though they are not here now, they went to their hometown. Hmm... small... how to say... small impacts and small disagreements that how... it is the nature of it when it comes to a relationship. But it is a good thing my mother-in-law knows how to help me, how to take care of my kids... Hmm... you know how they look after me. There are lots of good things that come with it. You know the act of being all together.

Y: You said the most difficult part for integrating into Turkish society was the language part, right? But I saw you rated 8 for the level of integrating into Turkish society. It seems like a high rate for me. So...

T: I am saying that because I don't feel a problem communicating even though there is a language barrier. You know what I mean? Wherever I go with my little Turkish, I cannot speak Turkish, but I understand well. So, wherever I go, I get help all the time. Yes. So, it is not a problem for me to go out, do things. Or... it is my daily life. Every day when I go out, I don't need to be scared of this, scared of that. So, I don't feel that there are any problems. It is a matter of how you look at things. You know what I say, I hate traffic the most, otherwise, I would give a 9.

Y: Yes. Traffic is horrible. I can understand.

T: You know, I take care of things by myself. For example, when I bought something online, the cargo came and I was not at home. And I was like... Oh I'm not at home, what am I going to do? And he [the deliveryman] asked, oh you have a neighbour? I can talk to him. So he was able to give it to the neighbour. You know...something like that. It's something that makes me happy about Turkish people. Or you know, when you go out, they see that you have a kid, they will totally help you. Hmm...so those things I feel like...hmm...they have so much to offer, even though sometimes you know that problems can outweigh everything else. Just because life is so busy, sometimes...ya... Before I just got too aggressive, but otherwise I feel like living in Turkey is not a bad thing like somebody put it out to me.

Y: You have been living in Turkey for four years, right? Can you share your most unforgettable experience in Turkey?

T: Hmm...most unforgettable experience... Let me think, because I have lots of little ones... The first year in Turkey, a friend of mine and I were going to a place near Uskudar. We went to the wrong place. So, we didn't know how to go and it was at night. We did not have any idea because we had never been there before. It was next to Uskudar. So, a guy was just like, Oh! You are so far from there, you cannot walk. It is like 30 or 40 minutes away, a lot. Then he said you wait here, you wait here, and he said I will catch the bus for you. There was a minibus going to that place. So he just took us running to that bus and he stopped the traffic, he crossed the street, you know how Turkish people cross the street sometimes, they don't wait for the light. They were just like, stop!stop!stop! That was what he did for us, so we could catch the bus and then he told the driver, you know what, these two ladies need to go there so could you stop right there for them? I really appreciate those kinds of experiences. You know, I feel like Turkish people are so nice. They can help, they want to help not just because they have to help. That is one of my most unforgettable experiences.

Y: It is a very good example to show the hospitality of Turkish people. How about a difficult time in Turkey? Can you give an example of your most difficult experience in Turkey?

T: Let me try to think about it because for hard times, I try not to remember them. Hmm...I don't know, let me see...Ah! The most recent one I can share right now, the coup last year, you know, we were just having dinner then suddenly soldiers were there and there was an aeroplane, you know... They flew over my building and I felt a bit...terrified. We were worried.... like...Are they going to bomb us? You know, I have my kid, we just felt...the fear. That was a very negative... experience that I need to go through.

Y: The political environment in Turkey is not stable when compared with 2008. How do you feel about it? Have you ever thought of moving to another place?

T: Yes. We think about it. We think about it all the time. It's like...how to say... the political issues going on here don't look very positive in any way. But we can move back to the U.S. at any time because both of us are U.S. citizens. But the thing is that the first reason we came to Turkey, came to Istanbul, is so my husband could re-establish his business. At this point, it is going well. It is small but going well. So, we don't want to

give up. You know what I mean? For many years, we have been working on it. So, we don't want to leave...we just let go of everything else. So yes, we stay here because we want to give things here another chance to see how things go and...it is absolutely going bad. And...things are going unfixable. So, if the things change in a sudden, then we will go back. But now, it's still okay.

Y: Apart from the political issues, you feel very satisfied with your life in Turkey, right? You rate it as 10 for life.

T: Yes. I rate it at 10 because things come from within you. So, if you have a piece of... then you can make it anywhere as your home and you feel satisfaction with everything. It is coming from within. So, I give a ten because it is my life now. You know my home is here, you know my husband and my kid are here.

Y: I also interviewed some new brides who just came here. As a person already staying here for 6 years. Do you have any suggestions to these newcomers?

T: Right. My advice would be that you...you take Turkish classes and learn the language as much as you can. You know you will make your life much easier. Don't expect too many things, you know good things and bad things are everywhere. So, hmm...if you decided to come here, it means you are starting a new life here. So, stop comparing here and there. If you keep comparing things, you will keep feeling the bad things. You know what I mean? I would say that they should go out, don't just stay by yourselves at home. Go out and meet friends, Turkish friends, foreigner friends. That will help you so much in a big way. Be different with your in-laws. If there is a crowd or anything you don't like, just let it go. It's not worth it. As far I know, they are your in-laws, they will help you. If anything, just forgive, otherwise...just let it go. It is not a big deal.

Y: I want to know if there are any formal South-east Asian Ladies organization? Or online organization? I mean for the Asian brides here to meet friends? To meet each other or help each other?

T: There is a group I know that is South-east Asian ladies of Istanbul. You can meet more friends there and keep extending your circle. You know, they are also interested in you too.

Y: Is it a Facebook group?

T: Yes, it is a Facebook group.

Y: Is it an official group or unofficial group?

T: No, it is an unofficial group. Actually, it was established under IWI, International Women of Istanbul. It is a sub-group of that.



## Interview with Korean bride Yvonne

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: YS

Y: Can you briefly introduce your background?

YS: I am from a Korean family in China. I restored my Korean nationality after I grow up. Maybe it is the reason why I have strong adaptability than other people to adapt the life in another culture. After my graduation from the university, I worked in a Korean enterprise in Shanghai. In 2009, I met my Turkish husband in Shanghai and we got married in 2014.

Y: When did you visit Turkey for the first time?

YS: My first visit to Turkey was in 2010 with my husband, he was my boyfriend at that time. We traveled together. I wanted to know more about my boyfriend and his background.

Y: When did you decide to move here for permanent stay?

YS: In Autumn 2015. My husband was Expatriate staff in China and later his Turkish company sent him back to Turkey for another position. I agreed to move here in order to support his career development. In December 2015, we moved to Istanbul.

Y: What did you feel at the beginning when you move here?

YS: After I fell in love with my husband, I visited Turkey for one to two times every year because I wanted to visit his friends and family. At the beginning, I just simply thought that Turkey is a very beautiful country. After my immigration, I found that the feeling was totally different. There were many difficulties and challenges ahead, I needed to deal with many things by myself. I regretted that I didn't spend time to learn Turkish before I came here. At the beginning, I was afraid of going out by myself, I felt that I was surrounded by bad people and terrorists. And I needed to get the permission of my husband before going out to meet my friends. Later, the main problem I have is food. I cannot adapt to Turkish food...and the transportation is inconvenient. The traffic is so huge.

Y: What do you like and dislike the most about Turkey?

YS: I like the sea...the weather, and the hospitality of Turkish people. What I dislike the most is...that...I feel they are so rushed at most of the time. The drivers in Turkey are so rushed...they don't pay too much attention to road safety...They usually use the ring press when they drive. There is one more thing that I dislike the most...They smoke too much, no matter in what occasions. It is the reason I don't like to go to the restaurants and coffee shops. I think Turkish government should ban the people to smoke in some public areas such as restaurants and coffee shops. All other things are acceptable.

Y: To what extent, you agree that you can integrate into society? You can rate from 1-10 while 10 is the level you totally integrated. You can explain why you give this rate?

YS: I rate 2... It is because...I think I am still a foreign or outsider in this country. I have not yet integrated into Turkish society.

Y: Can you describe your social circle in Turkey? Most of your friends are local Turkish people or foreigners?

YS: I met some friends from my husband's social circle. I also met some of them after I came here. Most of them are Chinese, Korean, and some Europeans. They are foreigners who moved to Turkey after marriage, just like me.

Y: Do you think it is easy for you to meet Turkish friends?

YS: Turkish people are very passionate. They like to make friends and full of curiosity. Therefore, I think it is easy for me to make Turkish friends. Most of my friends are from my husband's social circle or the people I met in language school.

Y: Have you make use of the different online social platform to make friends in Turkey? Such as Facebook group and WeChat. What do you think about these online social platforms?

YS: I think it is very important for foreigners to use these online social platforms, especially at the beginning. It is because... firstly, you can know more about local cultures through these online social media platform, and lift style, and make friends with local people. Through these online social platforms, you can easily access to some useful information such as the location of Chinese restaurants, Chinese markets, and transportation. It is so nice that some people can answer your questions in a generous way, even you do not speak the local language. The most important thing is, I can meet some friends with common languages, such as Chinese people and Korean.

Y: Do you feel satisfied with your life in Turkey? You can rate the level of satisfaction from 1-10 while 10 is totally satisfied. You can also explain why you give this rating.

YS: I would say 5. I just came to Turkey. There are many things that I don't know, and I cannot adapt to the life in Turkey. In the cultural aspect, Turkey is still a bit conservative. The political situation is unstable. I think Turkey is not suitable for foreigners to stay permanently. I still wish that I can move to another country.

## Interview with Chinese bride Mavis

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: M

Y: Can you briefly introduce your background?

M: I am from Beijing China. I graduated from the University. I met my husband when I was studying at the university. He was my classmate. I was very surprised when I first met him because he spoke good Chinese. In 2010, we got married in China. My husband and his family came to China for our wedding ceremony. My parents met my in-laws for the first time. They were happy meeting each other. After marriage, we took my in-laws to travel around Beijing in places like the Great Wall. After half-a-year, we moved back to Turkey for another Turkish wedding ceremony. The ceremony was great. I liked it. However, my mother-in-law took all my gold coins and money after the ceremony. I was very shocked. In China, all these gifts belong to the new couple.

Y: Why did she take your gold coins? Did you ask for the reason?

M: They said they will keep it for us temporarily. They even took my wedding ring. I was very angry because they only took my ring but not my husband's. I was very angry so I decided to go back to China. I didn't accept that they took my ring. I even told my husband that I decide to get a divorce. My husband was very afraid of the possibility of a divorce but my in-laws insisted. It was the most unacceptable thing for me.

Y: How did you solve this problem?

M: My parents came to Ankara to talk to them. Luckily, my husband speaks Chinese. So, he translated the conversations between them. My parents asked me not to divorce, because I was already pregnant three months pregnant. My in-laws also gave me back the ring after they met.

Y: How many children do you have?

M: I have two, a son and a daughter.

Y: Do you have any problems with your in-laws right now?

M: No... Until now, we don't have any other big problems. My husband and I go back to China every year. When I get bored, we buy the tickets back to China immediately.

Y: Do you have any jobs in Turkey?

M: No, I don't have. I stay at home most of the time. I need to take care of my children. It is difficult for me to find a permanent job because I usually travel between China and Turkey.

Y: What do you like and dislike the most about Turkey?

M: I like the ingredients and the food, especially the milk products. It is so fresh and healthy. In China, it is very difficult to buy some fresh ingredients. The thing I dislike the most. is the conservative mindset of some people.

Y: To what extent, you think you can be integrated into the lives of your family?

M: I think 70%. We don't have any more arguments after the incident with the ring. My Turkish relatives are nice. They usually come to our place and bring us some desserts.

Y: How about your Turkish level?

M: Not that good. I speak to my husband in Chinese and English.

Y: How about the communication between your in-laws and you?

M: My husband helped us by translating most of the time, especially at the beginning. Now, my Turkish improved a little. It is still not that good but it is fine for some basic daily communication.

Y: Do you have any difficulties to adapting to the life in Turkey?

M: Until now, there are no big problems. The only thing is language. Yes...I am also planning to learn more Turkish.

Y: Are there any differences about the idea of Education between your husband and you? Or your in-laws and you?

M: I want my children to learn more Chinese. It is very difficult to learn Chinese after they grow up. In the future, I want them to finish their primary school in China and come back to Turkey for Secondary school. So that they will be able to handle Chinese and Turkish very well at the same time. My husband has different opinion from me. He thinks that since he also learned Chinese after growing up, there should be no problems for our children. My in-laws also oppose my plan because they don't want their grandsons to go to other countries.

Y: To what extent, you agree that you can integrate into the Turkish society?

M: I think not that much because I don't have many friends here. I have many relatives from my husband's family but we cannot communicate most of the time.

Y: What languages can your children speak?

M: I talk to them in Chinese. My husband talks to them in both Chinese and Turkish. Now, they can understand these two languages. I am worried about their Chinese because they can speak but cannot write. Chinese words are very difficult to learn. That is also the reason why I want to send them to China.

Y: Do you cook Chinese or Turkish home at home?

M: I make Chinese food most of the time because my husband likes it. That is good. I usually cook Chinese food.

Y: Have you used any social media application? Such as Facebook and WeChat.

M: Yes, I have. I use it many times every day. There are many Chinese brides in the WeChat group in Turkey. We share different kinds of information such as the news, problems in raising our children and many different topics.

Y: Have you decided to stay in Turkey permanently?

M: In the few coming years, we will continue to stay here. But in the long term, I don't know. I am not sure how the situation in Turkey is going. We have our business here and it is doing well. It is not easy for us to give up.

## Interview with Filipino bride Julia

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: J

Y: Can you briefly introduce yourself? Like your background?

J: I am from the Philippines. I came here in November 2011 because of my husband. Now we have a boy, he is 2.5 years old. What else can I tell you? I am turning 36, so I got married when I was 30 I guess. What kind of background do you need?

Y: Where did you grow up? In the Philippines or in other countries?

J: Oh, like that, ok ok ok. Wait a second. I grew up in the Philippines. I studied finance there, . What else... I have two brothers. Is it relevant? Haha... So there.... I studied in Manila. Hmm...not really, just a summer school.

Y: How did you meet your husband?

J: I met him back in September 2011. I met him in a club in Manila. On the next day, I went to Bangkok with my friends and he came with me. We stayed in Bangkok for four days and that was it...

Y: So, your first time came in Turkey was in 2011, right?

J: In November 2011

Y: Do you have any religion?

J: Right now, I am considering Islam, but before that, I was raised as a Christian. And then I studied philosophy. I have a lot of questions I want to study. Something happened in my life and I questioned God. Because of that, I decided to study philosophy and I didn't have any religion. Until... I met... So, I didn't have any religion for a long time. And then I was wondering about Islam and by chance I met my husband, who is a Muslim. So right now I am considering Islam but I don't have time to read. I ordered books in English because I don't know Turkish. And I have started reading but I am so busy with my son!

Y: Do you still remember your first impression of Turkey? Maybe I should ask in this way. Do you still remember before you came to Turkey, what did you think about this country? Did you have any questions about your future life? Because you were coming to a country that is totally different from your own.

J: Well... I met my husband in September. We spent four days together, you know... After September, we came here together. So, we just said let's give it a try! If it is not...then fine! So, I quit my job and came here. I didn't do any research. My family was so worried about me because it is a Muslim country. We are a big friend of the U.S. So, we...Muslims

are bad, Christians are good...haha... My friends... They were scaring my mom, my father, my brother, but they didn't stop me. I thought: We will just try! If it does not work, then I will just come back! So, there is nothing to lose. It is just a job. I can get another job. There is nothing to lose. That was my thinking so I really didn't care. I didn't do any research really...Oh, it is just a country...with Muslim...but Turkey is not like before. A lot has happened already. Before the Gezi Park... You know that right? Ya... Turkey became popular. But before that, 2011, it was like, OK Turkey. After that, is WOW Turkey! OK. Turkey is a scary country. You know what I mean?

Y: Yes. Now...bombings...attacks...

J: Yes! So, my first impression of Turkey. It is a beautiful country. It is cleaner than Manila. But the...before, they have smiled! (It is not clear what she says) It's really stuck in my mind! Haha...

Y: How about language? When you came here...do you remember?

J: Yes. I remember many things until now. I studied in Tomer when I came here. But I stopped. The language is really a problem. My Turkish was better before when I was studying and talking to my in-laws, practicing... My Turkish was better than now. So, are we still in the first impression? Most people did not speak English. I went to school immediately and I was learning. It was really a problem. The problem is a Turk...when I try to explain or order something...even now. But I am used to it already. I just don't care anymore. But before, I was talking in Turkish but they were like...OK! You can talk in English but I was like...it's okay! You can talk in Turkish. So, it is like... Oh... I remember when I went to the hospital, it was hard, it was very difficult because we couldn't understand each other. Just now, it became easier because I don't care anymore. Haha...but before it was hard. Yes...

Y: I mean at the very beginning, how did you deal with these problems?

J: I don't think the problem is solved. It is still there. I just chose to ignore it or not to make anything of it. I remember before, my husband would take me to a family member's home. And I don't remember to whose house we went and they told me the same thing "Pilav" because they think: I am Asian so I like rice. I... Yes... I eat rice but I eat rice with something else, right? And they gave me rice...pilav...makarna...Ah.... I got fat because of that and no I just say no. Ok. Before I was shy, and I couldn't say no but come on.... Ah...eating rice and then going to another house, rice again. Haha... I know they were being nice but... So first, I didn't say no. they were all hugs and kisses and hugs and kisses...they said they would do this with their Turkish Gelin. But I was so embarrassed. You know, they were just hugging, they were just hugging me. Haha... what else? Hmm...kiss on the chic when you say hello. Sometimes, you see me (Not clear what she says here). My mother-in-law kisses me on the chic several times a day or every day. Then I say tesskkuler...the same thing...morning, night-time, evening... My mother-in-law tries to call me, several times a day. Sometimes once a day, but she also sends messages to me on Facebook or WhatsApp, asking the same thing. And that is weird. And they would come to my home a lot. They would visit. They visit me a lot. My sister-in-law... My husband has two siblings and they stay overnight every other weekend. And that was too much for me because I told you, I met my husband September and we spent four days together, that was it! Yea...so anyway. Those kinds of things are very...and it is at the

point of topping. Haha... anyway, so I was able to... to get comfortable a bit to tell my in-law that... you know you should ask me in Turkish before you come... my Turkish was really good then. If you ask me the day before... of course I will be okay. If there is a problem, I will tell you, even now, when my sister-in-law or someone else asks, I just say it if I have a problem, I will tell... no need to ask me. Somehow, I just think I became honest and just tell them how I feel. And with the hugging, I don't hug anymore, I don't kiss, I don't care. I would say... ah... no, don't do that. With the staying overnight, I became honest and I just explain that we would not do that in my country. I know this is your culture, but enough. It's enough. So, I became honest and I tell them. But it took a year... yes... a year... actually two years, two years I think, to get over it, to get over the problems. I don't really talk to my in-laws that much. We are done. It's done. I don't find anything interesting from what is happening to them. They just stay at home. They are regular Turks I guess. They don't do anything. Just staying at home. Nothing to talk about really. So, ya... there is that.

Y: Until now?

J: Yes. Until now. They just, we don't really... yes. We communicate but we don't share stories, we don't... and my husband... is... we don't really go to family wedding... whatever, whatever, which is good because we live so far, we live in the European side. So there is distance and my in-laws just come here every weekend to see my son and I appreciate it a lot because I need help. And when they are here, my husband and I, can go out and watch a movie. Or... when they have lunch in the European side, I take my son to them. Yea... so somehow... how many years? Five years... six years we have been here... and we found a little ground, a safe place for our relationship. You know... no need for the hugging and kissing. Haha... No need to kiss ourselves. No need to be overly nice. So, integration into my family, I don't think so. I am not well integrated myself. I have forced my cul... hmm... it's not culture but I have told them honestly and I am just up to here.

Y: How about other Turkish people? Do you have any Turkish friends?

J: No, I don't. It is because I don't know the language. Haha... and I... yea... that's really a barrier because I don't know the language but another thing is that... I don't think I can have Turkish friends because I don't like... I am not crazy about Turkish food. So, I eat... I have a different life so I don't have a common thing for me and a Turkish friend to do. So, I don't have one.

Y: How about your friends in Istanbul? Where are they from?

J: Most are foreign brides as well, and expats. Most are Southeast Asian. Yea...

Y: How did you meet other international foreign ladies?

J: I went to International women of Istanbul. It's the first step. And, there are Asian Potlucks... I don't know, how did I meet Crystal...

Y: What do you think about the online social media group like foreign women of Istanbul and Asian ladies club? What do you think about these groups?



J: It's really great help. It's really great help. There's a downside of it and a good side of it. The good side is you know, I meet friends, I get the support that I need through different groups, I get help. Me and my son...you know what I mean. We formed a play group. Because the play groups here are so expensive so we just formed our own. There's the good side of it but there is also a downside of it. Because I have those, I am connected with other foreign women, so I don't need local friends. Ya... I guess it is the downside and I don't even try to have local friends because I have so many. No need, no need to integrate into the communities here. So, I have my own communities, the foreign communities. So, I guess it is the downside of it.

Y: What do you like to do with your foreign friends in Istanbul?

J: Oh...eat! Hahaha... I cannot cook but they cook very well. So, when we all get together, it's always potluck. We share our daily life...yes...it's always about the food! Interesting!

Y: Can you share your most unforgettable experience with your foreign friends here?

J: There are a lot...actually.

Y: It's OK. You can share more than one.

J: With my foreign friends, right? Foreign friends...maybe I will share my baby shower story. Yea...Filipino had a baby shower for me. My friends came. I was living in the European side. So, they had to cross the bridge. Ya...my Filipino friends attended it. Crystal didn't because she was busy or maybe she forgot it. Haha... she had Spanish class or something like that...most were East-Asian ladies. That was unforgettable.

Y: You talked about food, right? Turkish food. What do you think about Turkish food?

J: Turkish food. It is the thing that I don't understand. I...I don't explore it. I refuse to explore it. I don't understand...for example like...I cannot even remember gonya, mutfa or whatever. All these are the same, all the same. There's no...I don't understand it. They would make it complicated and that's it. And the...the dessert, it's all sugar. I mean... the sweetness of it just comes from sugar. I am not a great cook so I cannot see but it's all sugar. You can put something too to make it sweet but all sugar and they are all the same. But recently, I found out "goshor"...and I love it. I love it with meat. I love lamp. Hmm... Turkish food...all the same. Haha...everything is kebab. They say it is very good, very famous but I find it is the same. What's the difference? I don't understand. There is no difference. Hahaha...so and the pastry...really not good. They lack cream in them. I don't know. There is something missing. That's not good for me, not good for me.

Y: So, at the very beginning, how did you solve the problem of food?

J: The thing is I cannot cook. In Manila, where I met my husband. Then I had to cook for myself. I cook to survive. That's it. Really my cooking is dizziness. I just try to... I just

try to eat healthy. Before, I was about 39kg.

Y: Wow! You were so tiny!

J: Yes. I was really tiny. Because I just went to work and I didn't sleep. Ya but I gained a lot, really a lot. I got to 49kg. I think I exaggerated and I cannot remember anymore...haha...but I really gained a lot because I am just eating cikolata, cikolata...I am eating all the unhealthy stuff that I couldn't cook. Oh! I did enjoy chicken, chicken pilav, tavuk pilav, that one but I really eat a lot of cikolata, cikolata ugur cikolata that's it. So, I was forced to learn to cook but I didn't really solve the problem because I bought a lot of...oh a lot of waffle they have that. Ya...waffle, right? The one with Nutella, that one...oh really oh my god. Unhealthy, unhealthy lifestyle, unhealthy really. So, that's why I...until now that is very important for me. I remember coming here, the first couple of months. I just ate cikolata, cikolta, cikolata. Hmm...the white meat here, the chicken...beef...until now. They taste different to me. I don't know, just something different, that's it. And I love meat. I love my steaks. But here I just can't eat that.

Y: How often do you go back to the Philippines? Do you go back to the Philippines every year?

J: Yes. I go back to the Philippines every year. Right now, yes, it has been two years since I started going back to the Philippines for Christmas holidays. So that's it, I decided to go back to Philippines for Christmas, New year and Chinese New Year.

Y: How can you keep your relationship with your family and friends in Philippines?

J: Yea... last time I went home, just this December, I felt very disconnected from my friends in Manila. I couldn't understand the language they are using. Because they were talking about business, how to make money. Whatever restaurant, the overhead cost here, the cost is like this and like that. I have also worked in a financial institution before, to make money and life was very fast. Yes, now life is very fast for them but for me...hmm...haha. So, yea, I just couldn't relate to them anymore. I am just a homemaker here. Couldn't relate to them. So, that is sad... On Facebook, we try to Skype, but just with my best friends. Yes. But not with my other friends. I didn't see my other friends. I just saw a couple of close friends. Yea...but I have a different life now. It's really different.

Y: Have you ever thought about finding some jobs here in Turkey or in the future?

J: Well, when I first came here, I was in a rush to find a job. I applied through Kariyer because I didn't want to be useless. I applied to everything but no one called me back but now I don't want to work. We don't need money. So why should I work? And I hear that working here...of course still better than in Manila I guess but I don't want to respond to a boss anymore. I don't want to have a boss. Yes...that's it. You know that I will have to go to work at 8:30 and finish work at 6 or at 5. And the traffic...no way.... Not anymore....

nonono....

Y: Yes...the traffic is horrible here...

J: No no, it is better than in Manila.

Y: Oh really? Even better than in Manila?

J: Come on. Manila is much worse. This is nothing. I remember my work, I was driving just 6 or 7 km from my home in 2011 but I needed to leave one hour early...just 6km. So much worse. Really terrible, terrible.

Y: What do like the most about Turkey? And dislike the most?

J: Oh...its beautiful, it's so beautiful. It's really beautiful. And the castle and the ancient buildings? How should I call it? It should be the castle and I love it.

Y: What things you dislike the most about Turkey? If any.

J: Ok. Probably. Not probably, I would say the attitude. "We are the best", "No need to go to another country". "Why don't you try our food?" "We are the best" Haha...OK. Fine. For me, the Philippines is the best, Filipino food is the best. But I...you know, I still need other things. I don't know why...what are they hiding? No need. In the play group, I asked if they had ever been to Asia. They had never been, never. I said you should go to Asia. Then they said, "I don't know English" or they think they don't need to...they don't leave any room for improvement because they might think they are already the best and they are just happy in their own box, which is very sad. But not everyone is like that...but...the people I interact with are like that. Yea...and they eat "The watermelon seeds", come on, rubbish! Bins are over there, they just put them into the playground. If you go to Pendik. Have you ever been to Pendik? It is so beautiful. There are many beautiful playgrounds there.

Y: How about the recent attacks in these days? How do you feel about it?

J: Yes... I also talked about it with my expat friends. You also need to consider; I am from Manila. And so, I get easily scared. it is just sad that... turkey was very popular already. In 2011 and 2012, it was not. After the Gezi Park and now I feel the PKK, now a lot of people are out of jobs. That's what I don't like...

Y: How about your future? Do you plan to stay in Turkey permanently?

J: Yes. Hmm... I could say in Manila as well. But...in Manila, we had been colonized by Ispanya (Spain). So, we still have those colonial mentalities even though we haven' been a colony for nearly a hundred years, but we were colonized by Ispanya, American, and

Japanese. So, the thinking of the Filipino people... I thought you know Chinese... I am Pilipino Chinese, so I still have...half of it. This mentality in Filipino is that... White is better and black is not. American, Chinese “wow”. But if you are Filipino, “hmm...” I really don't like that. Even I enjoyed the privileges because I am Pilipino Chinese, so I didn't have a hard time, but looking back... I don't want my children, my son to have this kind of mentality. So, I don't think... I am not going back. Manila is not an option. Turkey...they love themselves so much and they are so proud of their county. That's really good somehow...haha...but they need to open up a bit...but that kind of mentality, I really like it. You know, I want my son to be proud of his Turkish. So...ya...no plan, no plan until now. I like it here. I don't know yet about the education system. I heard a lot of things about it, from my friends. Yea yea...I don't know yet, we will see but until now, there is no plan. I like it here. I like it here. I like it here.

Y: If I ask do you feel satisfied with your recent life in Turkey. What do you think?

J: Ah...Ok. Right now I am so bored. So bored. I need to do something with my life. Because of my son who is two years old now I haven't done anything since I came here. So, I would say I am not really satisfied. There are 1 to 10, right? I saw your questionnaire. I would rate 6, 7... yea but it is my fault, it is my fault. I chose to be stubborn. I will think about doing something, maybe business. So right now, my answer is about seven. So...ya... I have my son, that's why. If I didn't have my son, I will probably write 4. In terms of being a mom here. I am doing ok because I have my play group. But in terms of individual life here, I am not doing ok because I don't know the language. As a foreigner here, I refused to integrate into the society and to learn the language. That's why I rate it as 7.

## Interview with foreign brides Sarah

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: S

Y: Can you briefly introduce yourself?

S: I am Yang Xia, I was born in 1978 and I am 38 years old. I am from Gansu Province, China, but I have been living in overseas countries for around ten years. I was divorced once, because my first marriage was not good. I was in military before when I was young, and the military was where I met my first husband; we got married after we fell in love. However, he had an affair with another woman and I couldn't accept it. Therefore, I divorced from him. My parents were very angry and they asked me not to separate but I denied it. After my first marriage, I went to Shenzhen and started to work in different companies and different industries, for example sales, marketing and etc. Even though I was not born in a Muslim family, I started to be attracted by Muslim religion when I was in Shenzhen. Then I decided to explore more about this religion and I still remember one of my job duty was to promote the Muslim clothing in a shop. I felt very surprised when I first saw the girls wearing Muslim clothes, they looked so elegant, and it stirred up my interest because I believed I have found the beautiful side of this religion. At the same time, I met my second husband in Shenzhen. He was a customer of our company and after the time spent together, I found that he is a good person and I did not see any bad habits on him which I was very impressed. However, my parents disagreed with my second marriage because they thought that it was not a good choice to get married with a foreigner and they didn't want me to stay alone in foreign country. But at the end, I decided to follow my heart. We moved to Belgium after our marriage and I gave birth to two of my beloved daughters there. I tried to inculcate good Chinese and Turkish cultures to my daughters. After four years, my father-in-law thought that the religious atmosphere was not good in Belgium, the people were not devout, and so we decided to move back to Turkey.

Y: Do you still remember your life in Turkey at the beginning?

S: Everything was very new to me and I needed to adapt a new life. My husband's business was not good at the beginning, and we had many arguments. I didn't understand any Turkish which made it even harder for me at the beginning. Most Turkish didn't know much about Asian people and they can't tell which country we are from. When I went to the streets, many people asked if I were Japanese. Haha... I don't understand why. But I don't like Japanese. Also, I needed to learn Turkish because most people could not speak English. It was quite different from Belgium. Life was easier there. My father-in-law didn't allow me to go outside by myself. He thought that I am a foreigner and I wear headscarf, maybe some bad people would have some bad ideas toward me.

Y: How about your social network? Do you have any friends?

S: I didn't have too many friends at the beginning. Then, I started to use social media such as WeChat and QQ to meet other Chinese people in Turkey. Later, I met some other foreign brides. I formed some social groups on the social media applications, our community became bigger and bigger since then. Also, I tried to see if I could do some business in Turkey and this idea turned out to be the restaurant business I am running now. But back then, I found that I am quite different from some other Chinese brides. Because some of them didn't think that they should work here; they prefer having gathering and meals with friends all days. But this was not the life style I was after, I didn't want to spend my life doing nothing meaningful. My father-in-law worried me about using social media to communicate with other people at the beginning, and he even sat next to me so he can check on my screen and asked who I was talking to, and what we were talking about. He believed that foreigners are open and that's the reason why he even checked my phone without my consent, and he even cursed me if I rejected to let him check my phone. He is a conservative person that we have different points of view but I still respect him in some ways. Comparatively, my mother-in-law is much nicer to me because she is also a foreign bride. Other than friends, I also found some students to be my assistant from the online platform after I had my restaurant business. They help me to finish some tasks outside when I am not convenient to go outside sometimes. They are very helpful and I really trust them.

Y: What business you are doing?

S: I had a workshop in China for designing and producing Muslim clothing. We mixed the Chinese handicraft and Muslim clothing together. I recruited some disabled people to produce the clothes. On one hand, they can earn their cost of living by making clothes. On the other hand, I can help to promote Chinese traditional handicraft to overseas.

Y: Do you feel satisfied with your life here? Can you rate it from 1 -10 while 1 is the lowest?

S: I rate 5. I have my daughters; I love them so much. That's why I choose to be tolerant to all difficulties. I have many arguments with my husband and father-in-law. I have considered divorce from him and move back to China for many times. But I don't want to leave my daughters. I feel very happy to see them grow up every day. And it is my responsibility to look after them. Even though I don't let my daughters to go out often, they can still play at home. Maybe it is true that the outside world is too complicated and dangerous for them. Besides, I still have many things that I want to do and I want to have my life fulfilled. I am still trying to meet more people online and see if they could help me to work on my business because I hate felling myself as a useless person. I already opened a Chinese restaurant in Asian side. I had this idea, I worked on the online promotion, PR and I make this idea real. I want to make all these businesses even bigger. I know that I can't taking care everything at the same time, so I don't go to the restaurant very often but my husband usually goes there...

(Sounds turned smaller and smaller on the recorder...)

## Interview with Chinese bride Hannah

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: H

Y: How long have you been together with your husband?

H: Already 9 years and I have been living in Turkey for 5 years. We met in 2007 in China.

Y: Where are you from? From which part of China?

H: I am from Jiangsu, Chang Zhou. He worked in there before. We met and got married in China. I gave birth to my elder daughter in China.

Y: Oh, you look so young!

H: Haha... Thank you. I am 31 but I got married early.

Y: It seems that the relationship between you and your husband is very good. (Her husband came interview venue together for the interview and left when we started)

H: Haha...right now. It is. At the beginning, we had different arguments because our backgrounds are very different. Time passed, we started to know more about each other and became more tolerant to differences between each other. For every marriage, there is a run-in period for you to get over all the differences and conflicts. Now, our relationship is good. The run-in period was the period that...most torturable, unsecured and poor.

Y: When did the run-in period occur in your relationship? Did it happen in China or Turkey?

H: It happened at the beginning when I came to Turkey. There was a lot of problems in my life, the language barriers, the adaptation to life, and much more. When I was in China, I could find my friends to meet, if I argued with him. But in Turkey, I didn't have anyone except him. He became the center of my life and he was very tired because of work. That was the reason that we usually have some arguments and troubles at the beginning. I even have the problem of depression. (During the interview, her daughters disturbed for a while.)

Y: Do you cook Chinese food or Turkish food at home?

H: I cook Chinese food. My husband usually cooks a big bowl of food, put it into the refrigerator and eat it for the whole week... Are you from Hong Kong?

Y: Yes... I am from Hong Kong.

H: In my impression, most Hong Kong girls are very thin.



Y: Yes, because it is the standard of beauty in Hong Kong. I ate a lot after I came to Turkey. Haha. I like Turkish food, but sometimes I miss Chinese food so much.

H: I cannot... I am not that much into Turkish food. I usually eat Chinese food. I think Turkish meals have more nutrition but sometimes I think it is too much. It is too oily. And they have a lot of deep-fried food. It seems like... most Turkish people keep many medicines at home, like my mother-in-law. And they like to eat sweets...it is not healthy to eat a lot of sweets. They usually eat sweets after dinner. It is too much and not good for health. My husband also likes to eat some sweets after dinner. I don't allow him to eat it but he eats it secretly. I think it already becomes a habit of him. Most Turkish people smoke a lot but luckily my husband and his family do not, except some devout Muslim families. We don't usually drink. When some friends visit us, we may have some wine.

Y: Have you ever imagined getting married with a foreigner and move to Turkey?

H: No.... At the beginning of our relationship, we didn't think of getting married. We just thought that we fell in love and we are girlfriend and boyfriend and that's all. I never imagined that I would marry to a foreigner and move to a place that far away from my country. I only thought I might marry a man in a different city. But never thought of moving to another country... We never thought of getting married in the first year of our relationship. When I was 23, 24 years old, my family wanted to introduce some boyfriends to me.

Y: Is blind date popular in China?

H: Yes. It is common. For example, my sister and her husband met in a blind dating. My sister's husband is a live-in son-in-law. It is because my father does not have any sons. He only has two daughters. It is our tradition for those families who do not have any son to find a live-in son-in-law. It is very expensive to get married in China. The girls' family requires the guys to have a car, a flat and pay a lot of money to be betrothal gifts. When we got married, my husband also paid a certain amount of money as the betrothal gift.

Y: How about Turkey?

H: It seems similar. They also need to pay a lot of money as betrothal gifts. My brother-in-law paid around twenty and thirty thousand Turkish Lira as betrothal gifts. The divorce rate in Turkey is very high. In my social circle with Turkish people, most of them divorced. For example, my husband's cousin, my friends and my friends' parent-in-law...etc. And I know that, after the Turkish women got divorced, they seldom get married again. I was very shocked to know that the divorce rate in Turkey is high.

(Two children disturbed us and we stopped for a while.)

Y: Haha... Seems it is not easy to handle the children and the housework.

H: I am quite lucky. My husband has his own business so we don't have too much financial pressure. We have a house-worker for the cleaning. She comes to my place every week and really shares our burdens a lot. Otherwise, it could be so tiring.

Y: How many friends do you have in Turkey? Are they Turkish or Chinese?

H: Most of my friends are Chinese brides who also married Turkish men. Four of them live in Beylikduzu. We have close relationships. We usually meet up for cooking Chinese food together. It makes us feel not lonely any more. We share all the little things and happiness in our lives. And we help each other if anyone is in need. I feel more secure now. The life became so fantastic after I met them. And I really enjoy our days.

Y: Oh, you ladies usually cook Chinese food together? Is it difficult to buy Chinese food and sauces in Turkey?

H: Recently, the problem had been solved. Every year when we go back to China, we brought a lot of food and sauces back to Turkey. There is a Chinese market in Taksim. They provide most of the Chinese sauces and ingredients that hard to buy in Turkey, such as Tofu. In Beylikduzu, there is a weekly bazaar. We can buy many vegetables, organic chicken, and even duck eggs there! It is so convenient in Beylikduzu but it is very difficult in other places. So, we don't have any problems with food any more. We learned to make different kinds of Chinese food such as dumplings, noodles and much more.

Y: Do you have any religion difference with you and your husband's family?

H: My husband's family is Muslim but they are very secular and open-minded. They never ask me to have any religious practice.

Y: Do you have any religious problems in Turkey?

H: I don't have any religious problems with my in-law's family. But one of my friends is unlucky. She married to a Turkish man from a conservative family. Now she has many troubles about the religious issues. After marriage, her in-laws' family usually said she made the whole family feeling guilty now. So, they did not allow her to go out easily and forced her to wear long clothes. Another friend of mine...she is quite unlucky as well, she also got married to a Turkish man and moved to Turkey. But they had some problems in their relationship, and they got divorced. After the divorce, her in-law's family did not allow her to see her son any more. She cannot take her son back to China. One day, her mother-in-law took her to an official place and asked her to sign a Turkish document. She didn't understand what was written on the paper. So, she took a photo of the documents and sent it to some Chinese WeChat groups. Some Chinese people could understand what was written. It wrote that the woman is willing to give up the right of raising her son and she promised that she will never meet her son again. How horrible that was. They asked her to sign this kind of agreement. They knew that her Turkish is very poor and she couldn't understand. It was a trap! Luckily, she was smart enough to send the picture to the group. Otherwise, she might legally lose her rights to raise her kid.

Y: What do you think about the recent political situation in Turkey?

H: Hmm... every time when there is a bomb attack. My family and friends in China reach me out immediately to inquire my situation. Luckily, I live in Beylikduzu. It is very safe here. So, I don't need to worry about the security issues. I am ready to live in Turkey permanently. What I worried the most was the education. I heard that the public schools here are not good. We gave birth to our daughters so definitely we want to give them the best resources and education. We need to be responsible for their lives. My elder daughter is studying in a private primary school. The tuition fee is very expensive! However, I will

send my younger daughter to a private school also. It is a huge burden for us but we will try our best to give them the best.

Y: What languages do your children speak?

H: My elder daughter can speak Chinese. Her Chinese is very good because she lived in China for a period. My younger daughter speaks Turkish. One day, the teacher of my little daughter asked me to not communicate too much with my daughters. It is because they learned some grammatical mistakes from me. I felt very sad and started to learn more Turkish.

Y: I saw that you sell some Turkish products to China? I followed you WeChat Moment.

H: Yes, I want to find more meaningful things to do. I don't want to waste my life. So, I started to sell Turkish goods to China such as honey. I imported the natural honey. The quality of the honey is very good here.

Y: Have you ever think of staying in Turkey or moving back to China in the future?

H: I will consider Turkey. Turkey is nice in certain extent. The environment is suitable for living. The food is more natural. The air quality is good. There is a serious air-pollution problem in China and food safety issues...

## Interview with Chinese Bride Joan

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: J

Y: Could you briefly introduce your personal background? Such as which country and city are you from? Also about your Education background?

J: I am from Guangzhou China. I worked for a trading company when I was in Guangzhou. I met my husband in the year of 2012 when I was traveling to Turkey. In the year of 2014, we got married.

Y: What was your first impression of Turkey?

J: I was very impressed with historical sites. It was April. The weather was cool and comfortable. In comparison, the weather is very wet in Guangzhou so I usually had skin problems. After I came to Turkey, I don't have that problem anymore.

Y: How long have you been to Turkey for long-term residency?

J: Since 2014.

Y: What do you think about your life in Turkey?

J: It was quite boring before. Now, it's getting better. I have an online shop on Taobao and sell goods to China. It is a small business. I cannot earn big money but my life is getting more meaningful.

Y: What kind of goods do you sell?

J: Some skincare products such as facial cream, rose water, olive products.

Y: Do you believe in any religion? What is the religion of your husband and his family?

J: My husband is a Muslim but he is not a religious person. I converted to Muslim after marriage but we don't have any religious practices. We believe in God. We are good people. That is enough. The most important thing is whether your heart is beautiful or not.

Y: Do you have cultural differences with your husband?

J: Yes, it is all about food. He does not like Chinese food. I don't like Turkish food. I like eating rice but he likes bread.

Y: Have you try to solve this problem?

J: We tried to compromise. It is usual that there are some Turkish dishes and Chinese

dishes on our dining table at the same time...bread and rice together. Haha.

Y: To what extent you agree that you have a good relationship with your husband's family? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 completely agree. Can you provide any reasons for your ranking?

J: I think 7. We don't have too many problems. Other brides said that they have many problems with their mother-in-law but I don't have any. They are very understandable.

Y: To what extent you can integrate into Turkish society? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 completely agree.

J: I think 5. I don't have too many Turkish friends. I only know the relatives and friends of my husband. There are not many chances for me to meet other Turkish people.

Y: What is the most difficult part for you to integrate into Turkish society?

J: I don't have any chances to meet Turkish people. When I meet some Turkish relatives, we don't usually talk because of language problems. Most of them do not know English and my Turkish is not good...and I don't know what can we talk about.

Y: What do you like and dislike the most about Turkey? Why?

J: I like the natural skin care products in Turkey. The quality is good and natural. I do not like Turkish food. Kebab is everywhere. Their food diversity is very limited. And...some Turkish people do not like Chinese so much. I feel that they like Japanese more. I don't understand why.

Y: What is the reason leading you to think that Turkish people do not like Chinese?

J: The relationship between Turkey and China was not good before. Now, it is getting better but it was very bad before. I remember the anti-Chinese protests. It was horrible.

Y: Were you in Turkey during the period of anti-Chinese protests?

J: Yes. I was here. I think some Uyghur people mobilized the event. Not all Uyghur people but some extremists. At the time, many news was circulated on social media. There was different news about the attacks on Chinese restaurants and tourists. Horrible. We worried that things might go out of control. My husband and relatives asked me to not go outside alone. My parents called me from China every day. They asked me to leave Turkey temporarily. Luckily, these events ended in a month. In recent times, there is no anti-Chinese protest anymore. I think it is because Turkey has a better relationship with China now.

Y: What do think about the recent terrorist attacks?

J: I think the situation is not good but it is not bad as the News reported inside China. My relatives worried about me. They called me when they watched the news every time. I tried my best to make them calm down.

Y: Do you have any friends in Turkey? Where are they from?

J: Yes. I have some Chinese friends here. Most of them got married to Turkish men. We have our own We Chat group. In our leisure times, we like to cook Chinese food together.

Y: Oh, you talked about WeChat, are you a frequent social media user?

J: Yes, I am. As I said, I met other Chinese friends on WeChat group. I also have my own online shop.

Y: What is the level of your Turkish language?

J: My Turkish is not good.

Y: Have you think of learning Turkish?

J: Yes. I thought about it. Maybe sometime in the future.

## Interview with Hong Kong Bride Lindsay

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: L

Y: Could you please briefly introduce yourself? Such as your education background and current occupation.

L: I am from Hong Kong. I am graduated from Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2007. Before moving to Turkey, I was an engineer in a Government-funded technological institute. My main duty was administration. I don't have any jobs in Turkey.

Y: When did you come to Turkey for the first time? For what purpose?

L: I came to Turkey for travelling with my family in 2005. We joined a travel tour.

Y: What was your first impression?

L: I love the fascinating scenery in Turkey. The people are very friendly. It was the first time I travelled to a country outside Asia. Everything was so beautiful and colorful. I love the sunshine here. It was very beautiful. The environment is suitable for living. Before I came here, I met a woman from my part-time job. She traveled to Turkey 30 years ago. She said Turkey was not developed enough. But I found that it was not true.

Y: How did you meet your husband?

L: In 2006, we met each other online. We were members of a website introducing Turkish Language and Culture. One day, he sent me a direct message, then we started chatting. During summer holiday, I found some flight tickets with reasonable price. So, I traveled to Turkey for a month. Later, he came to Hong Kong to visit me. We traveled to Russia and Japan together before we got married. We got married in 2012, we had a small wedding party in Hong Kong.

Y: Do you remember the website?

L: It was long time ago. Turkish.com I wonder if it still exists. This website was introducing Turkish Language and Culture.

Y: Can your husband communicate with your family? What did they think about your marriage?

L: He can communicate with my brother. My brother speaks English. My Mother can speak little English but my father cannot. My parents were worried about me at the beginning because of the long distance from Hong Kong. After I got married, I brought them to Turkey. They met my parents-in-law and found that they treated me very well. They felt relieved. My mom likes Turkey very much.

Y: What was the impression of your husband about Hong Kong?

L: He said Hong Kong was very crowded. The streets were very chaotic with many people...and foul smell everywhere. Haha, I couldn't understand but he said foul smell was everywhere.

Y: How long have you been to Turkey for long-term residency?

L: I have moved to Turkey after we got married in 2012.

Y: Have you learned Turkish?

L: In 2013, I studied a Turkish language course in Istanbul University. The course lasted for 3 months only. Then we moved to Tekirdağ, then I stopped learning Turkish.

Y: Do you have any religion? What is the religion of your husband and his family?

L: No, I don't have any religion. My husband and his family were born to be Muslims but he is not a religious person.

Y: Do you have any religious issue with them?

L: Luckily there is no problem between us. I eat pork but they don't oppose. My husband also tried pork.

Y: He ate Pork?

L: Yes. He never ate pork before. In 2007, he came to Hong Kong. He was curious about the taste of pork. I asked him to try it. He loved the taste.

Y: How about culture? Do you have any cultural difference with your husband?

L: Sure, we have. He does not like me to wear shorts and miniskirts, so I stopped wearing those. We need to understand and respect our cultural differences.

Y: To what extent you agree that you have a good relationship with your husband's family? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 completely agree. Why?

L: 10. My husband's sister-in-law is a Polish. My mother-in-law treats us differently. She speaks highly of me but think poorly of her. She is not a stubborn person. My friends have many problems with their in-laws but I don't have. They do not accept Asian food but totally accept Asian culture. We seldom communicate because of the language barriers. Because of this, we don't have any problems.

Y: To what extent you feel that you can integrate into Turkish society? Why? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being completely integrated.

L: We live in Tekirdağ, it has a small community. I go out every day with my son. I meet some people in the shops. I can talk to them with basic Turkish. I don't like my neighbors so I don't visit them. They are always curious.



Y: What is the most difficult part for you to integrate into Turkish society?

L: Language. I cannot express myself. We cannot understand each other.

Y: What do you like and dislike the most about Turkey?

L: I like Turkish people. Most of them are friendly and generous. I dislike the diversity of food. I cannot buy what I want. I don't know what can I cook with limited choices. I can buy broccoli & cauliflower only. Also, Turkish people are not organized. They do not plan anything in advanced. When they want to visit you, they come directly without asking.

Y: What do you usually cook at home?

L: Chinese food. I seldom cook Turkish food.

Y: To what extent do you feel satisfied with your life in Turkey?

L: 4. My friends and family are in Hong Kong. Tekirdağ is a small town. My life is so boring here. Nothing to see. No places for shopping. I don't have anything for leisure.

Y: Do you have any jobs?

L: No. I don't want to work because I need to take care of my kid.

Y: How old is your son?

L: Turning to 2 years old.

Y: Does he speak Turkish, English or Chinese?

L: His father talks to him in Turkish. I talk to him in Cantonese Chinese. Between my husband and I, we speak English. So, he can understand little English. He is quite confused because we speak too many languages.

Y: Where did you give birth to your son?

L: In Turkey.

Y: Do you have any language issues with the doctor when you got pregnant and gave birth?

L: Yes. We couldn't communicate. My husband went to the hospital every time with me for body check and giving birth. I was not worrying too much because I studied Biological Engineering in University. I understood the index on the report. I knew that everything was fine. I chose caesarean delivery because my doctor recommended it. Most doctors in Turkey prefer vaginal delivery. It just took 30 minutes to give birth of my son. My husband was with me when I gave birth. Later, my mom came to Turkey during my period of "confinement in childbirth". I stayed at home for a month. My mother took care of me and my mother-in-law took care of my son. It was summer, the weather was very hot.

After the period of “confinement in childbirth”, I went to shopping immediately.

Y: Do you have any friends in Turkey? Are they Turkish or foreigners? Where are they from?

L: I don't have local friends but I have two foreign friends here. I met them in supermarket and hospital in Tekirdağ. They are Chinese and Taiwanese. My Chinese friend is from Zhengzhou in Henan (a province in China). I have a closer relationship with my Taiwanese friend.

Y: How often do you meet with them?

L: Not very frequent. They live in another part of my city. We will meet when they come to buy things.

Y: Are you a frequent social media user? Such as using Facebook, Online forum, WhatsApp.

L: Yes. I like using Facebook.

Y: Have you met any friends through social media in Turkey?

L: I met new Hong Kong friends via a group there, but we haven't met yet in person yet.

Y: What is the level of your Turkish Language? Have you attended any Turkish courses?

L: Intermediate. I went to a Turkish course organized by Istanbul University in Istanbul in late 2013, but the course lasted 3 months only. Then we moved to Tekirdağ, then I didn't study Turkish anymore. My listening and grammar skills are bad. But my speaking is better. I think it is also good for me.

Y: Are you planning to live in Turkey permanently?

L: My husband does not want to live in Turkey. He is doing cheese business. They usually do not sign any contracts here. So, he cannot get back some money from his customers. The system needs to be changed.

Y: Have you considered of relocating back to Hong Kong?

L: No, the rent is very expensive. It is very difficult to rent a flat in Hong Kong and the flats are too small.

Y: What do you think about the recent events in Turkey? Such as the attacks and military coup?

L: Actually, I don't worry so much because I live in a small town. I heard another Hong Kong woman said it was so horrible. She lived in Ankara. She said she even saw the fire. What I'm worried about is the earthquake. Last month, there was an earthquake, even the paintings on my wall were shaking. I heard the sound. It was so horrible.

## Interview with Philippines bride Jane

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: J

Y: Can you briefly introduce yourself? Where are you from and how long have you been in Turkey?

J: OK. I am Jennifer. I am from the Philippines. I have been living in Turkey for six to seven years. The reason first time I came to Turkey was to meet up with my husband, and then we got married. Being married with a Turkish man is very difficult thing because the culture shock is far beyond my imagination. And the Islamic life style in the family is one of the big reasons that making it difficult. Turkey is very different from where I grew up in the Philippines. How to explain it? I mean the family culture here is different from my country, because in Turkey only people that I interact with, are my husband's family. If you get married with a Turkish man, most of the cases you will lose your freedom, your independence, everything you value will be gone. You always dependent on your husband for your life. It is very difficult to live as an independent woman.

Y: Which year did you meet your husband and how did you meet your husband?

J: I came here in 2011. And then, I was working and I met him here then we started dating. A year after we started dating, we got married. And he introduced me to his family first, then after a year, I gave birth to my first kid here.

Y: Do you remember your first impression of Turkey?

J: The first impression... For me, it is just the same. Different people but the living is the same, just like living elsewhere. Of course, at first you feel like a foreigner. But once integrated with culture it changes, it got me shocked because the people here are very traditional. Some people live in modern area are open-minded but some people are still very traditional.

Y: How about your husband's family? Are they Muslim?

J: They are Muslim but they belong to different section of Islam. They are Alevi. And they explained to me their religion, their culture. They even asked me to change my religion. Haha...

Y: Are you Catholic?

J: No no no. I don't have a religion. I just believe in God and that's all. And they wanted to change me, the way I dress, the way I present myself to their family and other relatives. They wanted to change everything about me. But for me, I didn't change as the way they wanted.

Y: How did they ask you to change your dressing?

J: They asked me to put the...what is the name...the headscarves.

Y: Hijab?

J: Yes. They asked me to put the headscarves. Then...they asked me to pray in the Cami...not the Cami, the Cemevi with them. First time I got into the house, they wanted to teach me all about God. Then continued with what you need to do and how to raise the family...like that...everything was different. And for most Turkish families, the men are the person taking charge of money. So, the women just have the allowance, of course my husband gives little money for shopping. They don't want you to have money. They just want you to stay in the house without money; they don't want you to work as well. It is very difficult to live like this. Sometimes when you need something, you need to ask. It is degrading for me to ask for money to buy something I want. For a person who used to work and earn money by herself it is so difficult to live in this way. Because whenever she needs to buy something, she has to rely on her husband and seek for his approval.

Y: So...what was your response when your husband and his family asked you to change your clothing and your behavior? What did you feel?

J: About the clothes, I explained to my husband that...he shouldn't force me...I would not wear skinny clothes but he should not ask more from me. I will not wear a hijab because I am not a Muslim. And for the religion, I don't do anything related to religion because I don't have one. I told him that. And asked him to pass my message to his family. My message was "I will not do what I don't want. I will only do what I want". So, he explained to his family accordingly. He told them I would not do anything that they want. They didn't force me ever since, even though sometimes they might not agree with my opinion. They don't like me that much, but I am glad that I have the in-laws that understand I grow up in another culture that far different from them. They didn't do anything to force me. They just suggested it. Even...my husband said we will not force you, it is your choice. So, I go out for work but it's so difficult to get a job in Turkey. At the same time, my family is demanding me stay at the flat, for cooking, cleaning, raising the kids...you need to serve them in a way. They need to feel comfortable inside the flat, and even you feel tired, you must entertain them after work which is very exhausting.

Y: Do you have a job here?

J: I have a job here. And the...the main thing is I got divorced...he didn't want me to work and I said I want to work. We had problems because I didn't want to stay inside the flat. He didn't want me to work.

Y: Because of this issue, did you divorce?

J: Yes...and another thing... don't know whether it is about the religion, or just because of being a man. Turkish guys won't stay with one woman...hahaha... (her voice changed to a sad emotion...sounding not happy) Yes...so, that is another reason I got divorced. Because they are keep wondering around the girls and it just goes on keep wondering around.

Y: Are you staying alone recently?

J: I am staying with my mom. I am having a better life right now. More free and relaxing. Haha...because...they wanted to control everything back then.

One time, my parent-in-law came into my house. They changed everything, from the kitchen. They changed the glasses, the plates, and everything. I just went out for one day and in one day they changed everything. Haha... You want to put all the things you like but they want to change them all to things they like. They wanted to change whatever they want. That made me very angry and upset. They think they were doing me a favor. But... it was not.

Y: Can you describe your recent status? Which year did you have divorce? And how long you have stayed in Turkey after your divorce? How about your kids?

J: It happened like this. I got divorced in 2015. After the divorce...we had two kids. We went to the court. They gave my children to him. Because they said I don't have anything in Turkey. I don't have a job. I don't have a house to keep my kids. And I don't have money. That's okay. They gave my kids to him. I can visit my kids. There are no problems in that matter. I can go whenever I want. They can stay with me for a week or two. And...everything is okay. They are not brainwashing the kids that I am a bad woman. Everything is okay. That is the good thing about my parent-in-laws that they are not saying any bad things about me to my kids.

Y: To what extent, you think you had a good relationship with your ex-husband's family? You can rank it from 1-10 while 10 is that you completely agree that you have a good relationship with your ex-husband's family before the divorce.

J: 7.

Y: why?

J: because... most of the time, they tried to manage my life and I don't like it, especially when they tried to take control of my kids. I think most of the kids are spoiled here in Turkey, but I wanted my kids to grow up and learn everything on their age. But in my family, that was not possible. My parent-in-laws spoiled my kids and that is what I didn't like even though I know they are good people.

Y: What is the level of your Turkish?

J: I think...about the beginner level. Haha.

Y: How did you communicate with your husband's family?

J: At the beginning, it was so difficult to communicate. So, we used body language. After a while, I learned little by little. So, we could communicate. But sometimes there were some things that I wanted to explain, I wanted to tell them but I didn't know how to say it in Turkish. Mostly, I was telling my husband and he was explaining it to his family about what I wanted to say. With My ex-husband, we communicated in English.

Y: To what extent that you think you integrated into Turkish society?

J: Hmm...not much. Not much. Joining the society is difficult. Yes. It is difficult for a foreigner to stay here. When you go shopping, you go to the shop and they tell you a much higher price than the normal one and same for the taxi, you are a “yabanci”, they will take a road which takes longer. Hmm...what else. There is also the positive side. Some people want to help you because you are a foreigner, they try very best to help you. That is good. But about integration. It is different. The mentality is different. They didn't experience the feeling of being colonized by other countries. So, they just keep their own mind. They don't accept ideas of foreign people. Because when they grow up, their parents and families teaching them to not change. So on, they don't change because they don't want to be changed.

Y: How about food? Do you have any problems with food and eating?

J: Everything is different. But it is okay. It is not a problem for me. But, sometimes you miss your own food. Sometimes we cook our own dishes but it is different. Haha...the ingredients are different. The food here is OK.

Y: Do you have any friends here?

J: I have few friends. Some of them are Turkish. They are nice. Sometimes when you have problems, they will help you, some others from are other nationalities. Philippines as well. I am communicating with them here. So, there is no problem with that.

Y: Do you feel satisfied with your recent life in Turkey?

J: Satisfaction... a little bit. I want to go back to my country. But I know that my ex-husband will not let me do this. If I go he will not let me talk to my kids back at my country. So recently I am living here. But for the satisfaction of living here. No, I am not that much satisfied. Because...the economy is...hmm...turkey is getting difficult right now. So...living here costs too much as well. If you earn some money, at the end it is still not enough. For example, now I live in a rented house here with my mom, so the rent, the bill, and the food. My salary is not enough for a month.

Y: Do you have any plan for moving back to Philippine? Or continue to live in Turkey?

J: I am thinking of moving back with my kids. But...I don't know when can I have my kids back. So, I don't have any plans yet. Because I want my kids to have the better education. I am saying that because the education in Turkey is not good. The education is better in my country. And...if the kids would stay here until they grow up. The way they raise the children here is not good. They will not be independent. They will not know the limit.

Y: What would be the difference between you raising your kids or your ex-parent-in-law?

J: I told them to not spoil the kids. Don't give them everything they want. To discipline them. I also told my ex-husband that I am not with them so he needs to discipline them. If they do anything wrong, tell them it is not right. Sometimes they need to use punishments. If they do not know what is right and wrong, they will grow up like a blind person. I told him it is also his problem, not just mine. He said it is okay. They are listening him well. So, it is good. They are following what I have been telling them.

Y: How old are your kids?

J: The elder is five and the younger is three.

Y: Do they speak English or Turkish?

J: They can speak a little bit English. Turkish and Kurdish.

Y: They can speak Kurdish? Are your ex-husband and in-laws Kurdish?

J: Yes. They are Kurdish.

Y: Before you came to Turkey...before you got married. Did he tell you the situation of his family...I mean... about how they wanted to change your habits?

J: No. he didn't tell anything. He just said they would accept who I am. He said it beautifully. He said everything will be okay. Haha...So, when I came here, what a shock for me. Really. Haha...

Y: Your ex-husband changed his attitude after marriage or?

J: After I gave birth to the eldest. He changed 360degrees. He changed everything about him. The way he talked to me. The way of his life simply. Everything changed.

Y: Can you describe the changes?

J: The first thing...the feeling. His emotions were gone. After that, you know... he changed the password of the computer. Blablabla...also his phone. You know...he hid everything for me. Financially, he hid everything from me. I didn't know how much his salary was. When I was having my daughter, he demanded everything from me. He came home...said "bring me this", "bring me that". I said "You don't need a wife. You need a servant" because they grow up like that. The women serve the men. I am sorry but in my culture, we are equals. When we come back to our house. If you want me to do something, and I don't want to do it, then you have to do it yourself. I said to him his wishes are not happening. He came back home and sit down and I brought him food, brought tea, coffee, blablabla.

I said, "You don't need a wife" At the beginning, it was okay. He helped me with this and that. Good. But after...I mean, even when I gave birth to the first daughter, his family didn't come with me to the hospital. Do you know how is the hospital here? You need someone to help you. Nobody to helped me.

Y: What was the reason?

J: Men is more important than women. Until now, they give too much respect to men. I saw how many women here...married...just to be at home. In front of the people, they introduced their wife how good they are. But after they come back home, they are a different people. They are so different. They show how they love their wife. But inside the house, you are just like a slave.

Y: Your husband changed after you give birth to your first kid, right? Were there any other things happened between you and your husband to damage your relationship?

J: He was wondering around to find other women. He was searching for more. He was not satisfied with what I did for him and what I gave him. So, he searched for more. He was demanding too much from me. Even I could not do, he still demanded too much. When he could not get what he wants, he searched for another. That was the main reason that he wanted to be the boss. I said "Okay! Let's go." Because I am not a jealous person. I don't want my man to wonder around another woman. If he chooses another woman, then let him just choose another woman, but he must first let me go.

Y: You are brave. I can imagine how difficult it is to stay in a different country and face all these troubles.

J: Haha... Thank you. I am not brave. Sometimes, I just put everything as an experience." Experience is the best teacher". So, I just treat it as experience and learn from this experience. When there is a chance to get my kids back, then I will go back to my own country.

Y: Do you have any plan for making this idea come true?

J: Right now, I don't have any plan and it is difficult. I know they would not let me, especially my ex-husband and his family love my kids so much. So, they will be very sad if I take my kids back to my country. My ex-husband will not let me take them also. If I can have a chance... maybe the only chance is the war. The war here, you know the nearby countries, right? If it happened? Maybe he will let me. But who knows? I give everything to God's hand right now.

Y: What is your recent job in Turkey?

J: I am working as a Nanny for a rich family in Turkey.

Y: Do you have Turkish citizenship?

J: That's the thing. I asked my lawyer. He said I should get my citizenship here since I got married. He asked me why I didn't get it. I said my ex-husband did not want to give me a citizenship. He said "We will fix it. We will fix it." I hope this year, I can have my citizenship or next year. That would be much better for me.

Y: Yes. If you have the citizenship, everything will be much easier.

J: yes. I hope they can fix it.

Y: Have your children ever been to Philippine?

J: No. I have been to Turkey for seven years but I never returned to my country for one time. It is very difficult. I mean I miss my country because my family is there but I cannot leave my kids here. I asked my ex-husband to let me bring my kids to visit the Philippine. But he didn't allow me to. I couldn't take the kids for vacation. Haha...



Y: Do you have any plans to visit Philippine in this year or maybe in the future?

J: Not this year. I am planning it. Maybe next year. I also wish my boss would let me. I also want to have a vacation.

Y: Have you join any social media platform or groups here?

J: Yes. The group of Foreign women of Istanbul and the ... Istanbul English Speakers. It is informative for many questions, such as renew my residence permit. And sometimes there are many questions. So many troubles. A few months ago, somebody called my phone and they somehow knew my information. They said that they are the police. And they asked me to go out from my house in the middle of the night.

Y: Oh. I remember this post on the group. They were fake!

J: Yes. And then I asked in foreign women group. I asked what should I do. And they gave me advice. So, it was a big help for me. So, it was one of the advice they gave everyone. They give different pieces of advice. And different things. It is a great thing. Even I don't know them. They don't know me. It is still a great help.

## Interview with South Korean Bride Leyla

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: L

Y: Could you briefly give us your personal background?

L: I am from South Korea. I was an exchange student in Turkey. I met my husband in Istanbul. We got married in 2015. Recently, I live in Istanbul.

Y: Which year did you come to Turkey for the exchange program?

L: In 2013.

Y: How did you meet your husband?

L: I met him when my friend came to visit me. I lived in a dormitory at the time. She could not stay with me. So, we booked a room at a hotel in order to stay together. My husband was a student at the time. He worked as a part-time employee in that hotel.

Y: When did you move to Istanbul?

L: I moved to Istanbul in 2015, after we got married.

Y: What do you think about Istanbul?

L: Istanbul is a cosmopolitan city. I can see people from all over the world. Turkish people are very kind and generous. When I got lost and needed direction, people were very generous with helping me. It happened many times. The culture is very diverse. I like exploring different interesting things in this city, such as coffee shops, historical buildings, and bookstores.

Y: How about your husband and his family? Do you have any cultural difference with them?

L: My in-laws are nice people. We don't have any big problems. Our only difference is our eating habits. I like Turkish food but I cannot eat it every day. I like pork. I can only eat pork when I go back to South Korea. Some Korean restaurants in Turkey sell pork but it is very expensive. Most of my relatives smoke, both men and women. I was very surprised that most women also smoke.

Y: What is the religion of your husband and his family? Do you have any religion?

L: I don't have a religion. My husband is a Muslim. He was born in a Muslim family. I don't think he has any differences with an atheist.

Y: How about your parents in law? Are they conservative?

L: No, they are not. They are very nice.

Y: To what extent do you agree that you have a good relationship with your husband's family? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 meaning completely agree

L: I give 8. My in-laws are very nice, very open-minded. I took them to Korea to meet my parents before. They love Korea, especially my mother-in-law. She likes Korean drama. Many Turkish people said that they like Korean drama.

Y: Can you integrate into Turkish society? You can rank from 1-10 with 10 meaning completely agree.

L: 7. I have good relationships with my husband's family but I don't have any Turkish friends. I have made some foreign friends from other countries such as Germany, America (the U.S.), and China.

Y: Can you speak Turkish?

L: Yes. I can speak some but not very good. I completed the elementary course at school during my exchange program.

Y: How did you meet the friends from Germany and the U.S.?

L: I met some of them on Facebook in some foreigners' Facebook groups. My friends also introduced me to some foreign friends.

Y: What do you like to do with them?

L: We do not meet so often, usually 1-2 times every month. We like to explore some nice coffee shops and restaurants together.

Y: Do you have any work experience in Turkey?

L: No, I don't.. I stay at home most of the time. To do the cleaning, cooking...

Y: Do you have any children?

L: No, I don't have but I am planning to have. I am only concerned about the education. I think Turkish parents spoil their kids too much, at least the parents I know.

Y: How do they spoil the kids?

L: When the kids request something, they just give it to them. The kids also lose their temper easily. It is not good for the kids. Their character cannot be changed after they grow up. I think Turkish parents should train their children to be more disciplined.

Y: How about your husband? Have you talked to him about this issue?

L: Yes. He loves kids. He can spend all day long with kids. Haha, (he is) just like another kid (himself). He will also spoil our children. I can imagine. I will try to control him.

## Interview with Hong Kong bride Carine

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: C

Y: Can you briefly introduce your background?

C: My first time been to Turkey was 2005, to visit my Hong Kong friend in Istanbul

and I met my husband at that time. In 2008, we planned to get married but we needed to save more money. At the time, I was in Hong Kong and my husband was in Turkey. Although we stayed in two different countries with long distance, we contacted each other every day. In 2009, my husband proposed to me, we met both of our parents and had a small engagement party. We had a wedding ceremony in Turkey and Hong Kong. After we got married, we decided to stay in Turkey, so I moved to Turkey for two years. After I gave birth to our child, we decided to move back to Hong Kong together. Before I moved to Turkey, I tried to find some Turkish language teachers but I couldn't find any because there were not so many Turkish people in Hong Kong. I heard that there were some Turkish language courses in Taiwan. However, Hong Kong didn't have any. After I came to Turkey, I learned Turkish for half-a-year and worked as full-time housewife. After another half-a-year, I found a job.

Y: How did you find your job?

C: At that time...my husband helped me to apply jobs online and he mentioned that I

could speak fluent Putonghua and English. After a while, there was an international

company offering me a job. It was an online company and I needed to help them to

translate the content into different languages. The tasks were not that difficult. I had

worked on that company for more than a year until we decided to move back to Hong

Kong. I remember, for me, it was not that difficult to find a job because I had another job offer from another Chinese company at the same time. The welfare in my Turkish company was quite good. We had 45 minutes for lunch and we had free lunch from our company.

Y: Do you like Turkish food?

C: Yes. I like it! I like it so much, especially midye!

Y: How about your relationship with your husband's family?

C: Our relationship is very good. At the very beginning, I didn't talk to my mother-in-law

too much although we lived together. But I really enjoy staying with them. My mother-in-law is good at cooking and the food is delicious! I remember at that time, my mother-in-law usually responsible for cooking and I responsible for washing dishes. After half a year, I learned Turkish so fast and I could have basic communications with my mother-in-law.

Y: Where did you live when you were in Turkey?

C: I lived in Avcilar. It is a beautiful place with few minutes walking distance to the seaside. It was a very convenient place and the transportation was very good and I could go to most of the places in Istanbul with metrobus.

Y: Do you have any religious barrier with your husband's family?

C: I don't have any religion so I never concern about any religious issues. My husband did not have any religion but he didn't accept Islam! His parents are very openminded, secular and not traditional. My mother-in-law usually said the sounds from mosque are very annoying. But my husband's grandfather was more traditional and conservative. He prayed in our wedding ceremony.

Y: Do you think Turkey is a Male chauvinism oriented society?

C: I think most Turkish men take care of women. Most Turkish men I know are responsible for earning money and they give all their money to the families. They will not beat women. They will only speak out for unequal things. When I was in public transport like metro and buses, it was very usual for men to offer their seats to me. The young people also respect the elderly. I remember that when I was in the public transport, some elderly asked the young men to offer their seats. The Turkish young men stood up immediately and greeted them as "Abi, abi" At home, women usually bring tea for other people. I think my family is quite different from other typical Turkish families. My family is not male chauvinism oriented.

Y: What is your impression of Turkish people?

C: I think they are very simple, nice and helpful.

Y: How about your social network when you were in Turkey?

C: I had some close friends but most of them are Asian. Asian brides in Istanbul have

very close relationships. I heard that some Asian brides did not have a good relationship with their husband's families and they asked the women to give birth to one child

Y: Why did you come back to Hong Kong in 2010?

C: it was because... I already had my baby. There were not many people can help to take care of my baby. So, I decided to move back to Hong Kong. I also want my baby to learn fluent English and Chinese. It is very difficult for a child to learn a new language after five years old. Also, the education system in Hong Kong is good. So, we decided to move back.

Y: Do you have any ideas about raising your kid? Is there any difference from your husband?

C: My husband does not like to push our daughter. However, Hong Kong is a society with keen competition. So, I don't have choices. We already compromised, he acts as a "nice person" to the daughter and I act as a harsh person.

Y: How about the life of you and your husband in Hong Kong?

C: It was very hard at the beginning. My husband worked as a news reporter and DJ when he was in Turkey. However, it was quite difficult for him to find a suitable job in Hong Kong. He taught Turkish at the very beginning and form students into different private groups but there were not so many people learning Turkish. At the same time, I found a full-time job to support the cost of living. The weather, language, food, and culture are very different between Hong Kong and Turkey. For example, food, at the very beginning, my husband can't adapt to the Chinese food. During the Chinese New Year, my father prepared many nice Chinese dishes but my husband and my brother-in-law...He is French. They ordered pizza and ate it together. Haha. My husband worked very hard to come across all these difficulties. Later, he found a full-time job and our lives become more stable in Hong Kong. My husband said he already mentally prepared that we will stay in Hong Kong permanently and he is ready to retire in Hong Kong in the future. Haha.

## Interview with Hong Kong Bride Donna

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: D

Y: Could you briefly introduce your personal background? Such as which country and city are you from? Education? Occupation before and after marriage?

D: I was born in Hong Kong. I completed my high school in Hong Kong. I worked as a clerk in an insurance company after six years. Later, I moved to Australia for study. After six years, I moved to Singapore with my Turkish finance. We got married in Singapore and stayed there for fourteen years.

Y: When did you come to Turkey for the first time? For what purpose?

D: My first visit to Turkey was in 1999 to attend my sister-in-law's wedding.

Y: What was your first impression of Turkey?

D: My first impression was the old city and historical sites. I was impressed by the historical sites.

Y: How long have you been to Turkey for long-term residence?

D: Two years and a half.

Y: Do you have any difficulties of living in Turkey?

D: Yes. I don't know Turkish. It is hard for me to communicate with local people. I don't have any jobs because of language barriers. I don't have any friends in Turkey. I met some Hong Kongese on Facebook. They live in Turkey but we never meet.

Y: Do you have any religion?

D: I did not have any religion before. Later, I converted to Muslim before I gave birth to my son. All my family members are Muslim.

Y: How old is your son?

D: He is fourteen years old.

Y: How did you meet your husband?

D: We met in Perth when we were studying there. We met outside our door gate by chance.

Y: To what extent you agree that you have a good relationship with your husband's family?

On a scale of 1-10 with 10 completely agree.

D: I usually act according to their expectation. I usually give them positive responses according to their requests.

Y: To what extent you feel that you can integrate into Turkish society? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being completely integrated.

D: It is very hard to integrate into Turkish society. The Turkish ladies I met are very smart and sociable. It is difficult to understand their idea.

Y: Why?

D: They usually say something good when they see you but it is not their real ideas.

Y: What do you like the most about Turkey?

D: People are friendly and helpful. I like their kindness.

Y: Do you have cultural differences with your husband at the beginning of your relationship?

D: We did not have any cultural differences except eating pork. Later, I gave up pork because of my son and my husband. I have no regrets about it.

Y: To what extent do you feel satisfied with your life in Turkey?

D: I love my son and my husband.

Y: Do you have any working experience in Turkey?

D: I have no working experience in Turkey. I want to work but my Turkish is not good enough.

Y: Do you have any friends in Turkey? Are they Turkish or foreigners?

D: I have a friend from Indonesia. She lives close to me. I don't have any Turkish friends. I just met a group of Hong Kong people in a Facebook group but I haven't met most of them yet.

Y: Are you a frequent social media user? Such as using Facebook, Online forum, WhatsApp...

D: I am online most of the time.

Y: What is the level of your Turkish Language?

D: Elementary. I do not study Turkish. I do not interest in it. It is difficult for me to learn a new language at my age.



## Interview with Hong Kong Bride Jill

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: J

Y: Could you briefly introduce your personal background? Such as which country and city are you from? Education? Occupation before and after marriage?

J: I'm from Hong Kong. I studied graphic design in university. I worked as art director in a graphic design company in Hong Kong and now I am working in a bed and breakfast hotel in Turkey.

Y: When did you come to Turkey for the first time? For what purpose?

J: First time coming to Turkey was for traveling, in 2012.

Y: What was your first impression of Turkey?

J: Turkish people are very friendly and helpful. The history, culture and traditions are impressive.

Y: How long have you been to Turkey for long-term residence?

J: 4 years.

Y: What is your religion? What is the religion of your husband? and his family? Do you have any religious problem with them?

J: I don't have a religion. My husband and his family believe in Muslim. We do not have any problem about religion.

Y: How did you meet your husband?

J: I used couch surfing when traveling in Turkey. I stayed in my husband's place in Selcuk. He is very nice and passionate. We usually talked about the cultural differences between our countries and shared our personal views of our lives. Before I left Turkey, I

fell in love with him. It motivated us to keep in touch. Later, we developed our relationship, got married and I moved to Selcuk.

Y: To what extent do you agree that you have a good relationship with your husband's family? You can rate from 1-10 while 10 is completely agree.

J: Our relationship is good. On leisure time, we hang out together and we work on their farm together. The only problem is my Turkish. My Turkish is not good, so we cannot talk so much.

Y: To what extent do you feel that you can integrate in Turkish society? You can rate from 1-10 while 10 is completely integrated.

J: 8, maybe I still have language barrier so I cannot totally integrated. In daily lives, I think I am ok.

Y: What is the most difficult part for you to integrate into Turkish society? If any.

J: Working in Turkish firm.

Y: What do you like and dislike the most about Turkey? Why?

J: I like the nature and history of Turkey, as her rich culture and historical things well preserved. There are beautiful mountains, sea sides and even deserts. I enjoy my time. I don't like the government's policy which is not very friendly to the public, like paying high taxes, different fees, insurance. It makes poor people to live in a difficult life.

Y: Do you have any cultural differences with your husband? Especially at the beginning of your relationship? How did you solve the problems of cultural difference?

J: The main difference is Turkish really like to have tea and coffee breaks, and they like to talk face to face instead of making phone call. I feel very inefficient in making a thing done. I was also impatient at the beginning, Somehow, I know I must get used to it because it is their culture, otherwise I will be the one who suffers. So just be relaxed. Another difference is that Turkish like to visit your place without informing you. I feel quite annoyed because it disturbs my routine and rest time. Of course, most of the people coming is to see my husband, we argued for many times because I hate that I don't have any private time to stay with my husband. It is difficult to solve this problem because we cannot ask them to go away. My husband can only use some excuses to kick people away earlier.

Y: To what extent you feel satisfied with your life in Turkey? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being completely satisfied

J: 7

Y: Do you have any working experience in Turkey?

J: No, it is difficult to get a job in Turkey because I need to have working permit, and the salary in design field is lower than my expectation. I live in a small town, very few job opportunities and the daily transportation fee to city center is expensive.

Y: Do you have any friends in Turkey? Are they Turkish or foreigners? Where are they from?

J: I have few friends, most of them are foreigners who speak English or Chinese. They are from Canada, Singapore, Taiwan etc.

Y: Are you a frequent social media user? Such as using Facebook, Online forum, WhatsApp. Have you meet any friends through social media platform in Turkey?

J: I use Facebook and WhatsApp every day. From social media, I can access some information of living here and learn from others' experiences. I met some Taiwanese and Hong Kong friends on Facebook.

Y: What is the level of your Turkish language? Have you attended any Turkish language course?

J: Elementary, I only studied beginner course for 2 months.

Interview with Taiwanese bride Nina

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: N

Y: Can you briefly introduce your background?

N: I born in Taiwan. I grow up in a single family, I have a sister and my stepmother gave birth to a little brother. I really love traveling so after I graduated from university, I asked my father if I could go aboard for further study. I went to the U.S. for further study and then worked in ASUS Taiwan. When I came back to Taiwan, I found the world is so big, so I decided to quit my job for travelling. My senior manager told me that there was a chance to work in Turkey because he didn't want me to quit the job. I have been sent to Turkey branch company in 2011 and I met my husband at that time. He was my colleague. At the beginning, I didn't like Turkey. After a year, I decided to come back to Taiwan. I asked my husband to come to Taiwan. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to continue our relationship. So, my husband came to Taiwan to learn Chinese. Eventually, we decided to come back to Turkey. After we came back, I wanted to explore other places again, so I went to Germany to join the working holiday program. I stayed there for half a year. In 2014, I came back to Turkey and we decided to get married. We registered for marry in early 2014 and held our wedding ceremony in September 2014.

Y: Why did you decide to come back to Taiwan at the beginning?

N: I couldn't adapt to the life in Turkey at that time. You know... Turkey is a Muslim country with Male chauvinism... I don't like it because men and women are more equal in Taiwan.

Y: Any other reasons?

N: Yes...there were. Firstly, language was a problem. It was very difficult to communicate...so I decided to come back to Taiwan.

Y: Do you have any religion?

N: hmm...I don't have but I am in favor of Buddhism.

Y: Is your husband a Muslim?

N: yes. He is a Muslim but he is very open-minded.

Y: Do you have any religious barriers with your husband?

N: Nono, we don't have. He is very open-minded. When he came to Taiwan, he even ate pork. He is a very...he doesn't like typical Turkish people. Many people thought that he is more similar to European.

Y: How about your parents-in-law?

N: They are very open-minded. Freedom is very important for me. I love traveling. I think I should not be bounded by relationship. We should explore the world rather than bounded by our relationship. Right...my husband understands me and we traveled to many countries together. Before we got married, we talked about religion and our plan. I told him clearly that I don't want our children born to be Muslim. I want him to decide by his own will after he grows up. He agreed. So, we decided to get marry.

Y: How about your parents-in-law?

N: They are also very open-minded. They are from "Cankaya". Do you know "Cankaya"? And they are very nice. We don't have any problems. We do not live in the same city. So, there are no problems between us. We even joined the travel tour together.

Y: What is the education background of your parents in law?

N: My father-in-law is graduated from Istanbul university. He is a lawyer. My mother-in-law was a nurse before retirement. His family members are well-educated.

Y: Any changes during your second stay in Turkey? I mean after you moved back from Taiwan to Turkey again.

N: Yes. I did. I felt better than the first time. We should give a second chance for all the things. Just like...when you eat something...you may not like to eat it. When you try the second time. You may like it. Before our marriage, my husband didn't travel to other countries. I told him that "If you do not go to other countries, you will never know the real world. If you don't go to Taiwan, you will not know how Taiwan is. I also want you to know more about my birthplace" Our relationship was better than before when we were in Taiwan.

Y: Any difficulties for your husband to live in Taiwan?

N: At the beginning, there were many problems. For example, I needed to spend a lot of time to explain many things. My family members do not speak good English. So, it was difficult for them to communicate. We shared our views and values toward our lifestyles. For example, the place (Kanyon) we come today is high-end for my husband but it is very normal for us to hang out in this kind of places. He thinks everything is expensive here but it is my lifestyle.

Y: Do you have any more examples to show the differences between you and your husband?

N: Hmm... For example, it is very normal for us to go to Beymen to buy a bag but he would say "Oh, how expensive is it." I think... It is because he was an employee before. Two years ago, I wanted to start our business together. It was a big change for him. It is a risk but it is a chance at the same time. He worried about many things. I persuaded him for many times. Another example is that during the Chinese New Year, my father prepared a big meal for us. He didn't try any food. My father was unhappy. I explained to him that it is impolite to reject everything. Now, at least he tries. I think it is a typical norm for Turkish people to not trying new things. For us, Asian people, we tried different kinds of food since we were small. So, we don't have any problems with trying new things. But for them, they have typical food. So, they refused to try new food and it is their habits. In the past, he usually ate at home and seldom go out.

Y: How is the relationship between your family and your husband? Especially during the days when you both in Taiwan.

N: At the beginning, it was not good because of language problem. My family doesn't speak English and my husband doesn't speak good Chinese. Later, their relationship is getting better because my family found that my husband is a good person.

Y: Do you like Turkish food?

N: I like it but I can't have it every day. For example, I like doner, but I can't have it every day because it is too oily.

Y: Do you cook Chinese or Turkish food at home?

N: Both. Sometimes I make salad. Sometimes I cook other food. I like to cook different food at home.

Y: What do you like and dislike the most in Turkey?

N: I like the beautiful scenery the most and Turkish people are very helpful. And they don't care about minor things. In most Asian countries, the weathers are so wet and... people are not straight enough, they don't disclose themselves. But Turkish people are not. I really appreciate. At the same time, the Turkish people I met like to find some excuses for their mistakes...Also, I dislike the traffic in Istanbul. It really affects the quality of life...hmm...maybe it is not the problem of Turkish. Most people in the world

are having similar problems. They refused to know more about the world. They only have a very laymen impression toward other countries like America and China but they don't have an in-depth understanding. They do not have the intention to understand more.

Y: Can you rate the level of your satisfaction toward your recent life?

N: 7.

Y: Why 7?

N: I rated it according to different aspects of my life. My husband and I are very happy in our relationship, so I have satisfaction. He allows me to do whatever things I like. We are not rich, but I can get the things I want. I can travel to the places I like. So, I think it is quite OK.

Y: Why there are still 3 points to go?

N: I really dislike the traffic in Istanbul. There are some problems that are impossible to solve. We are doing business and it affects my emotion and happiness. I think...it is my husband's country. There are not too many things I could do. I cannot have satisfaction in terms of self-fulfillment. And...the salaries here are not high. I can only earn a little amount of money even I work. And...it is not a must for me to work.

Y: How about your friends in Turkey? Where are they from?

N: Not Turkish. Most of them are Asian and European. Language is a big problem for me to meet Turkish friends. Another reason is...both of us are foreigners, we have a similar background, so we can understand what does each other think about, and understand each other's difficulty. For Turkish people, we don't have a common ground, Turkey is their own country so they don't need to meet foreign friends. They already have their social network.

Y: How did you meet your friends in Istanbul?

N: I usually attend some events like FWOI. Some of them were introduced by our friends.

Y: What is your using experience of some online social media platform such as FWOI?

N: I was quite active before. I met many friends from the group at the beginning. But now there is a problem...most ladies in FWOI are expats. Their husbands are not Turkish and we don't have common topics now. And at this age, I don't really need to meet so many new friends.

Y: How often did you come back to Taiwan?

N: I go back to Taiwan every year, stay around 1-2months and normally stay in Turkey for more than 10 months.

Y: What do you feel about recent political events in turkey?

N: I think... Turkey has changed, doesn't like 3 years ago... But those political events and attacks are not as terrible as international media said... for political instability, just like Hong Kong...there are not too many rooms for us to do. I have opened a blog with my friend, we share the happiness and our lives in Turkey, in order to let other people know the real life of Turkey. My husband said if the situation is getting worst, maybe we can move back to Taiwan but now I think it is still fine.

Y: You mentioned that Turkey is different from 3-4 years ago. What are the differences in turkey?

N: Firstly, many flats are kirarik or sale... Secondly, the number of tourists decreased a lot. Thirdly, the president...most foreigners question about him. Fourthly, many companies collapsed. After the coup, many people have been caught. For example, if a reporter is caught by the government. Not only that person would be affected, but also his family if he is the breadwinner of his family...many people have been affected...not only the people they caught. You can imagine...Turkish Lira keeps dropping. It affects the lives of people seriously. Also, education reform... I don't have children but I heard my friends said...there are many problems of the education system... I don't have children now, but if we have children later, we will come back to Taiwan... In Turkey, if I want my children to learn piano, ballet dance...these are the activities for the children from rich family. But in our countries, it is very normal things for children to learn. And the tuition fees of private schools are very expensive here. In Taiwan, the tuition fee in public schools are very cheap and the campus is nice and spacious. I have a German friend who joined the Erasmus program to Istanbul University. She said the teaching quality is not that good...even in Istanbul...

Y: Do you have any advice to the new foreign brides?

N: I know many ladies who never been to Turkey before their marriage. They don't have any idea about Turkey before they got married. After they came, they found that there are many differences in cultural, religious and family ideas. I am a special case because I stayed here for a while before I met my husband. The foreign girls should come and stay for a longer time before they get married because the feeling of being here for short time traveling and permanent stay are different.



Y: How about your foreign friends who also got married to Turkish men here? Do you think they are satisfied with their lives here?

N: I think...it is half-half. Some of them have some troubles in the cultural aspect.

Y: How about your relationship with your family and friends in Taiwan? Can you maintain a good relationship with them?

N: We communicate on social media. For friends...I think the relationships are not as good as before because our lifestyles are very different and the common language. Sometimes, they don't really understand me and I feel a little...a little lost in emotion.

Y: How many friends do you have in Turkey? I mean good friends.

N: Not more than five... I have a bigger social network in Taiwan. And for local Turkish people, it is difficult for me to make some...

Y: What do you like to do with your friends in Turkey?

N: So many... but I mainly stay with my husband because our relationship is good and our interests are similar. We watch movie, go shopping, and do many other things together.

Y: Can you rate your satisfaction rate of your marriage? 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest.

N: I rate 9 because of my satisfied relationship with my husband. And there is still I point to go because of the disconnection of local communicate.

Y: Will you learn Turkish again?

N: Yes. I want to learn it again. Maybe start from next month. I communicate with my husband in English. So, I don't have any ways to speak Turkish. But I think I will learn Turkish again.

## Interview with Taiwanese Bride Christine

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: C

Y: Can you briefly introduce your background? Where are you from? How long have you been to Turkey?

C: I am from Taiwan. I am a belly dancer and teacher in Taiwan. It is my 9th year in Turkey. My husband is a lawyer. I just gave birth to my son.

Y: You are Belly dance teacher in Taiwan?

C: Yes. I have my own studio in Taiwan. Every summer, I go back to Taiwan for several months. I arrange different workshops to my students.

Y: Have you continue to teach belly dance or perform in Turkey?

C: The status of Belly dancers is very low in Turkey. Most people look down on belly dancers and think that they are similar to prostitutes. In Taiwan or other regions of Asian, Belly dance is a kind of arts. The ideas are very different. So, I did not do so many things related to belly dance here. My husband also opposed me to perform in Turkey. Until now, his relatives do not know anything about my background. I just told them I was a teacher in Taiwan. I didn't tell lies. I just didn't tell the whole story. There is a distance between us because they didn't see the true me...

Y: What do you feel? You have a good job in Taiwan but you need to hide your job in Turkey.

C: I feel very frustrated because I love my profession. I met some belly dancers here. They referred me to some dancing show but I rejected for many times, until I found that I really miss Belly dance. An agency contacted me to perform on the boat. The salary was only 100TL per night. It was low but I did not care about money. I just love my job. Many local dancers ask for tips from the guests but I never. I didn't want to stop my show in the middle for asking the tips. I respect my profession. At the beginning, it was hard. I had the problem of seasick and I took some pills before I went there. My husband opposed my decision so he never picked me up. I went there and came back by myself at nighttime. I performed on the boat trip for a several months until...one day, I did not want to perform suddenly. So, I stopped taking pills. After a month, I found that I got pregnant. How wonderful it was. I thought that was my little baby to make me stop taking pills. We had the feeling of telepathy. Otherwise, I would continue to take the pills. It would be harmful to my baby.

Y: Does your husband have any religion? And his family?

C: They are Muslim but their religion is not a majority in Turkey. I forgot the name of it... At the beginning, my husband hid our relationship. His family opposed our relationship. Before we got married, I usually came to Turkey for visiting him (her husband) but I never saw his parents, only his elder brother knew our relationship. One day, when I was at the apartment, my husband called me. He told me that his brother was coming and I needed to leave the apartment immediately. His friend rode a motorbike to pick me up. When we were leaving the place, I could not stop crying. I had many questions in my mind. I did not understand why our relationship was forbidden. We just love each other. My husband hid our relationship until the time we had the idea of getting married. He told his parents. They were very sad. His mom even didn't eat anything for two days. After two days, her mom talked to him suddenly. She told him that I left my country and family because of him. She said she could not make me sad because I love him so much. She loves you so much. I cannot hurt a person who loves you. So, his parents agree with our relationship. It was not difficult. His parents were quite open-minded. The only person who against our relationship was his brother. He scared my husband that we could not tell their parents but end up the problems had been solved easily.

Y: After marriage, do you have any problems with your parents-in-law?

C: No, we don't have. We live at different flats. My mother-in-law usually comes to help me for the housework. Our relationship is very good. They are very nice and tolerate our cultural differences.

Y: How about your husband? Do you have any cultural differences with him?

C: No, we don't have except the issues of performing Belly dance in Turkey. We don't have other big problems.

Y: Have you found other cultural differences with local Turkish people?

C: I found that the Turkish women I know are very difficult to communicate with. Some people said that they are easily jealous about something. I am not sure whether it is true or not but I do not have any topics to talk to the Turkish women I met.

Y: Do you have any friends in Turkey?

C: Yes, I have. I have many foreign friends here. I know many brides from Taiwan and other countries in Asia. We usually have gathering. 9 years ago, there were very few Asian people. Now, it is easier to see Asian people on the streets.

Y: Are you planning to stay in Turkey for permanently?

C: Yes. Turkey is a nice place with beautiful scenery and higher living quality. At the same time, I also came back to Taiwan for several months every year. I think it is fine.

Interview notes with Taiwanese brides Phyllis

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: P

Y: Can you briefly introduce yourself?

P: I am 27 years old (when we conducted the interview in 2016), and have been live in Turkey for 3 years. I had my own little business before I came to Turkey. I met my husband online and came to Turkey for visiting him. Then we got married in 2013. The marriage registration in Turkey was very complicated for me. After we got married, I moved to Turkey and became a full-time housewife. I am now living in Besiktas with my mother-in-law.

Y: Did you have any wedding ceremony in Turkey?

P: Yes, we did. We had one ceremony in Turkey. It was a very unforgettable experience. We had a wedding ceremony at a restaurant in Turkey. People just kept singing and dancing all night. Our Turkish friends and relatives gave us some gold or cash and we put them into our pockets.

Y: Do you feel satisfied with your life in Turkey?

P: No, I didn't. I couldn't find any jobs in Turkey and it made me felt I was usefulness. My husband treated me very nice but I didn't have very good relationship with my mother-in-law.

Y: How is the relationship with your parents in law?

P: My husband grows up in a single family. My relationship with my mother-in-law was not good because of the language barrier. I couldn't speak good Turkish and my mother-in-law couldn't speak English. She usually requested me to serve my husband very good. But I thought men and women were equal. The flat belongs to my mother-in-law, when we had any arguments; my month-in-law asked us to move out. So, we didn't talk again. A few months ago, I prepared a big birthday party for my mother in law, and invited many of her relatives to join the party. But after the party, my mother-in-law asked why she did it, as it was so expensive. My mother-in-law said Turkish people won't do it! However, it was very common to have a big celebration for birthday or other special events in Asia. This cultural difference and the response of my mother-in-law made me felt very sad because I had put so much effort and worked so hard on that day. And my mother-in-law likes to put softener when washing clothes. However, I had the problem with softener. My skin will be very sensitive and itchy when I wear the clothes with softener. I talked to my mother-in-law for many times but she refused to not to put softener when washing clothes. I talked to my husband because it was a very serious problem and I even went to the hospital. My husband told her not to wash my clothes anymore because I could do it myself but she refused again. Sometimes my husband prepared tea for me. My mother-

in-law asked him not to do it again as it was my responsibility. She said it is the responsibility of a wife to serve their husband. Why it is my responsibility? All family members should share the duties in the family. My mother-in-law requested me to clean the window every day. I think it is too much. During my pregnancy, she was still smoking at home. It made me feel very uncomfortable. My father-in-law had a relationship with another woman. His betrayal made she feel uncomfortable, so put all her attention to my husband. Sometimes, the unsatisfactory relationship with my mother-in-law made me felt very sad.

Y: What do you think about Turkish men?

P: My husband was very good and treated me very nice. But some of my friends have a bad relationship with their husbands. They were living under domestic violence and beaten by their husbands. A friend even being betrayed by her husband. Some of them chose to stay here because they don't have too many choices. They don't have money. They don't have job. So, they cannot leave their husband because they cannot live without them. Some of them being the mistresses of some Turkish men because of lives. I heard my friends sharing their experiences, especially my Filipino friends. The issues of betray were very serious among my friends who are also foreign brides, especially for those whose husband work as Tourist guide. 3/4 of them are having extramarital affairs with another foreign woman. Some of them didn't leave their husbands because of their children. Some of them are not financially independent, so they chose to be tolerated. The protections offer from the government to female are not enough.

Y: How about food? What do you think about eating here?

P: I couldn't eat Turkish food. I didn't understand why. But I just couldn't eat it. It was difficult to buy Asian food as there was no Asian market here. I tried to buy the food online and deliver the food to Turkey. I learnt to make different food by myself at home.

Y: Do you have any difficulties of living here?

P: Yes, especially the language problem. Even the doctors and nurses in public hospital were not able to speak English. It was very difficult for me to have body check myself during my pregnancy. My husband needed to take a day off and went to the hospital with me every time.

Y: Will you stay in Turkey permanently?

P: No, because the education system is not that good and it is very expensive to study in private school. And I don't have too much confidence in the public schools here. I appreciated some Asian values such as hard-working, multi- language teaching environment, patients, independent and respectful. So, I want to leave Turkey after my daughter gave birth, because of the better education system and opportunity. On the other hand, I also can't adapt the life in Turkey.

## Interview with Taiwanese bride Winona

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: W

Y: Can you briefly introduce your background?

W: I am a Canadian-Taiwanese. I was born and raised in Taiwan and finished my undergraduate and master degree in the U.S. I met my Husband in the U.S. He is a photographer. After our graduation, I came back to Canada and my husband came back to Turkey. My husband is the oldest son of his family. Family is usually his first priority so he decided to come back. In 1993, I came to Turkey for the first time. And...I have been living in Turkey since 1998.

Y: What was your first impression about Turkey in 1993?

W: My first impression was... I studied Architecture in my undergraduate degree. I thought that Istanbul was so beautiful, the natural scenery...so dynamic. The cultures were very diverse in this city. Some people were very conservative while some people were very open-minded. I felt so excited at that time. I felt so relaxed in this place.

Y: Do you remember anything about your life in Turkey in the year of 1998?

W: At that time...the development of information technology was very backward. I didn't have a job. My main duty was to stay at home and take care of my family. The life was so boring here in 1998. I had language problems. It was difficult for me to communicate with other people... I didn't have anything to do. No shopping mall...only a few Asian people...and only a few Chinese restaurants. I remember that there were only three restaurants in Istanbul at that time. One restaurant was in a basement of a building in Taksim, one was in somewhere close to the airport and one was Big Hong Kong restaurant in Taksim. I remember there was an open-fire event in a Chinese restaurant here. My mother-in-law showed me a piece of news about the incident. I didn't know the people on the news. There was no entertainment, no shopping mall, no Cevahir...It is easier to obtain the nationality when I came to Turkey 15 years ago. The first time I came to immigration department for a residence permit application, the staff there asked me if I would also apply for Turkish nationality. I was so shocked why I heard that. I could get the citizenship on the first year I came.

Y: How about food?

W: There were not many snacks here. The stores only sold bread and water. There were not many choices of vegetables. Every year, when I came back to Canada, I brought some vegetables to Turkey. Ginger is so important in cooking Chinese food but I couldn't find ginger in Turkey before 2003. Later, a Chinese market was opened in Levent, it was in the basement, the upper floor was a Chinese restaurant. I still remember, in 1998, there was no supermarket in Istanbul before, only some small stores. The first supermarket Carrefour was opened in 1998's. It was very difficult to buy the baby milk powder and diapers and there was only one brand. And there was no baby food to buy at that time. The small store only sold some bread and water and some fruits. Sometimes, there was a van stopped at our nearby place to sell fresh potatoes, tomatoes, and other vegetables. I could buy some fresh fruits and vegetables there.

Y: What food do you cook at home?

W: Personally, I don't really interest in Turkish food, even until now, I just tolerate. Sometimes, I cook it for my husband and son. Sometimes, I cook Chinese food at home. Sometimes I cook Turkish food. I make some fusion food. For example, spaghetti and Chinese soup. Now, even my husband and son are adapted to Chinese- Turkish fusion food.

Y: How about your Turkish? Have you learned Turkish?

W: At the beginning, I don't. So, I really relied on my husband to solve all the problems. I needed my husband to help me all the time. After two years I had been here, I studied Turkish language courses together with my friend. I couldn't have too much communication with my husband's family because of language barriers. I didn't think that I would stay here permanently so I didn't learn Turkish in a more advanced way. After several years, I found that it is impossible for me to leave Turkey because my husband refuses. So, I tried to meet more new friends. Most of them are Asian people, especially Taiwanese. To be a foreign house-wife in Turkey, it is very difficult for me to integrate into the Asian students' group here. For the working people, it is also difficult, because we don't have too much common language. For foreign brides, I found that the brides who came earlier and those who came recently are quite different. Most Asian brides who came here before the year 1998 met their husband overseas. Most of them had the experiences of living abroad. After the year of 2000, a certain number of foreign brides met their husbands on the internet. So, they didn't have much understanding about Turkey when they came. So, they faced more problems and difficulties with the elder generation.

Y: Have you found any cultural differences between Turkish people and you?

W: Yes. I found that most Taiwanese brides have financial problems because they don't have jobs. Most Asian women save money for future and make themselves feel more comfortable. Most of the Turkish people I know would do not have saving habits. And...most Turkish men do not like their wives working outside after they get married.



If their wives want to work, they need to get the permission first. I also found that the status of Turkish women usually lower than men in a company. It is quite different from my culture. As a foreigner, it is very difficult for me to find a job.

Y: Do you have any children?

W: My son was born in 1998 in Canada. After he born, we bought him to Turkey. Now, he just enrolled into Istanbul Teknik University.

Y: How about the education of your son?

W: He can speak Chinese because I talk to him in Chinese. My husband talks to him in English. And he talks to his friends in Turkish. I still remember when he was 3.5 years old, he went to Kindergarten, his Turkish language was not as good as other Turkish kids, he cannot express himself, so he has been bullied by other Turkish kids. So, we changed our mind, my husband talked to him in Turkish more often.

Y: How about your relationship with your husband's family?

W: My mother-in-law treats me very good. My sister-in-law is single. She treats me very good too, although we seldom communicate with each other. My mother-in-law does not restrict me for any specific things. She is different from most in-laws of my Taiwanese friends. Their in-laws usually ask them to do this, to do that. One of them got divorced because of this reason. My relationship with in-law is fine but I always think about coming back to Canada. But my husband refused and my son also. Because he already has his social circle here. He doesn't want to leave his friends.

Y: What is your most unforgettable experience in Turkey?

W: My most expensive experience...let me think...is the earthquake in the year of 1999. There was quite fine in Sisli, the district I live. But the news showed that many buildings have been destroyed in other district. It was happened at 3,4am. we were sleeping at that time. Suddenly, my husband weak me up and asked me to go outside. I didn't know what happened. He told me there was an earthquake! I was very worried but luckily, we don't have any lost. In Izmit, there were 2/3 buildings collapsed because it was close to the center of the earthquake. Many people needed to stay outside with tents because they lost their home.

Y: Do you have any religion? And your husband's family?

W: No, I don't. My father-in-law is very open-minded. So, we don't have any religious issues.

Y: How about your relationship with local Turkish communities?

W: I haven't participated in any Turkish communities. Firstly, it is because of the language barrier. Secondly, I found that the Turkish people I met are not that interested in developing friendships with me. I had some colleagues in the past but we were not good friends. We were colleagues only.

Y: Did you have any jobs in Turkey before? What was the job?

W: Yes, I worked in two companies before. The first job I worked in an architecture firm. I just worked for a short period of time. We needed to go to the construction sites but my previous boss did not buy insurance for me. It was not safe to work in this situation. I refused to go to the construction site without insurance. My boss was not happy so I resigned. I worked in an American company for my second job. In 2009, the economic environment was very bad in American, so my company was closed.

Y: Can you share your happiest moment in Turkey?

W: I think...when my son got a very good exam result. He studies in ITU now and it is a good university.

Y: How about your saddest moment in Turkey?

W: I think...I don't usually work...Without job means without income. I usually worry about the money issue. I don't feel comfortable.

## Interview with Thai Bride Cherry

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: C

Y: Can you briefly introduce your personal background? Such as which country and city are you from? Education? Occupation before and after marriage?

C: I am Thai, I lived in Bangkok. I graduated from Bachelor Degree and worked as an executive assistant in Bangkok before married.

Y: When did you come to Turkey for the first time?

C: I came to Turkey firstly in 2010 for traveling.

Y: What was your first impression of Turkey?

C: I liked the ancient architectures and landscape. The ancient architectures are amazing and landscapes are beautiful.

Y: How long have you been to Turkey for long-term residence?

C: Almost 4 years. I moved to Turkey in 2014.

Y: Do you have any religion? What is the religion of your husband and his family? Do you have any religious issue with them?

C: I was Buddhist, later I converted to Islam. My husband and his family are Muslim. We never have any religious problems.

Y: Are they secular Muslim or conservative Muslim?

C: They are secular. They are very open-minded

Y: How did you meet your husband?

C: We were friends on Facebook and later he came to Bangkok and we met there.

Y: To what extent you agree that you have a good relationship with your husband's family? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 completely agree

C: 10.

Y: Why 10?

C: My In-law family is very modern and open-minded for newcomer in every part of it.

They are happy to learn my tradition and lifestyle. They never interrupt my opinion and never interfere our couple life. For me, I feel so happy for our relationship.

Y: To what extent you feel that you can integrate into Turkish society? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being completely integrated

C: Turkish society is quite open for foreigners, although the relationship between me and my Turkish friends are still going over distance. Due to the language causes and difficulties of communication.

Y: What is the most difficult part for you to integrate into Turkish society?

C: The difference of culture and language. My Turkish is not very good.

Y: What do you like and dislike the most about Turkey?

C: I like the beautiful view of Turkey. The landscapes are so beautiful. I like it. I dislike some people's personalities, especially the racist's ones.

Y: What means by racist's ones?

C: It might be only my opinion which is I think offensive for Turkish nations. They are too proud of themselves, and will never admit that they are racists. But I don't want to go deeply in this issue.

Y: Do you have cultural differences with your husband? Especially at the beginning of your relationship?

C: Actually, we don't have any cultural problem since my husband understands Thai culture very well. He studied hard about Thai culture from books and his Thai friends.

Y: To what extent do you feel satisfied with your life in Turkey? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being completely satisfied.

C: I have good relationships with my husband and his family.

Y: Do you have any working experience in Turkey?

C: I am now working as an English coach in a primary section. The bars of finding jobs in Turkey are mainly language problems as Turkish is the main communicating language and most of the companies. They are afraid to grant work permits to foreigner due to lots of processes, extra expenses and tax issues.

Do you have any friends in Turkey? Are they Turkish or foreigners?

C: I have both Turkish friends, foreign friends, most of them are from South America and Thai friends in Turkey.

Y: How did you meet your friends?

C: I met them in school and Facebook.

Y: What is the level of your Turkish language? Elementary, Intermediate or Advanced?

C: Elementary. I can make some basic conversation, reading and writing.

## Interview with Chinese Bride Zoey

Interviewer: Y

Interviewee: Z

Y: Could you briefly introduce your background? Which country and city are you from? Education? Occupation before and after marriage?

Z: I am from Sichuan. I met my husband in early 2013 and moved to Turkey in late 2014. I graduated from the University. After graduation, I worked in a foreign trading company. At the same time, I opened my own online clothing shop. The business was very good. I earned my own savings. My life was like “Xiaozhi”(means middle class in Chinese).

Y: When did you come to Turkey for the first time? For what purpose?

Z: I came to Turkey for traveling in Spring 2013. Before coming to Turkey, I was very curious about this country. The first time I came here... Somethings happened...I reserved a hotel room in Sultanahmet. When I arrived, I found that my booking was invalid but I already paid for the room online. The front desk staff insisted that I need to pay once more because there were no records. I tried to reach the online booking website but my phone was disconnected. I stayed at the lobby area and did not know how to do. Later, the hotel owner came. He allowed me to check-in without paying extra money. Turkish people are very nice.

Y: What was your first impression of Turkey?

Z: My First impression was...Amazing his historical site in Sultanahmet, fascinating sea view, generous people. The people were some generous to give me the direction of the hotel and the hotel owner...

Y: How did you meet you husband?

Z: I met him online. We chatted on QQ for one year, then I decided to come to Turkey for traveling and visiting him. We developed our relationship during my travel.

Y: Did you worry about the safety issues? You never met him before.

Z: Hmm... We chatted for one year. He is a reliable man. He started to learn Chinese because of me. It made me feel quite touching. Out first dating was in a public area...a café...haha, it was fine. No problem.

Y: How long have you been to Turkey for long-term residency?

Z: It is my third year in Turkey. I moved to Turkey in the winter of 2014.

Y: Do you have any religion? If yes, what is your religion? What is the religion of your husband and his family?

Z: I don't have any religion belief. My husband and his family are Muslims but they are not devout people.

Y: To what extent you agree that you have a good relationship with your husband's family? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 completely agree.

Z: 7. My in-laws are very nice. They are very open-minded. They said I left my own family and country because of my husband so they treat me very good.

Y: Do you live with your parents-in-law together?

Z: No, they live in a different city that is not far away from Istanbul, with 40-minute driving distance. Every weekend, we go there to visit them. Sometimes, we stay overnight.

Y: To what extent you feel that you can integrate into Turkish society? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being completely integrated.

Z: My Turkish relatives are curious about me. They usually ask me many things about China. They asked me whether I eat cats...dogs... Nono. I felt quite disturbed. Haha...Another problem is food. I am not that much into Turkish food. I usually cook Chinese food by myself. Luckily, my husband also likes Chinese food. So, I give 7.

Y: What is the most difficult part for you to integrate into Turkish society? If any.

Z: I think cultural difference is the main difficulty. We do not have common topics, I mean with my Turkish relatives. They cannot speak good English. My Turkish is fine for some simple conversation, but cannot continue it in an in-depth way.

Y: What do you like and dislike the most about Turkey? Why?

Z: I dislike their smoking habit. Smoking is ok but most of them are too much. I like the hospitality of Turkish people most.

Y: Does your husband smoke?

Z: Yes. We talked for many times but he cannot live without cigarettes.

Y: Do you have any cultural differences with your husband? Especially at the beginning of your relationship?

Z: Yes. Sometimes we have. He wants to have more children. I told him most Chinese families have one child only. Parents can give all their resources to the kid. If you have three or four children, you have more burdens. It is difficult to give them the best, such as your attention and money. He respects me. He respects my choice but he usually tries to convince me.

Y: Do you have any children?

Z: No, not yet, maybe after one year. Once you have a kid, your life will change totally. I want to enjoy one to two years free time first.

Y: Do you have any jobs in Turkey?

Z: No, I don't have. It is very difficult to find a job here. I have my own online shops for selling clothes in China. The business is quite good. I don't know which kind of jobs I can do in Turkey. I don't think there are many job opportunities for foreign women. The salaries are very low. I don't have any motivations to find a job. I will not satisfy with two thousand or three thousand Turkish Lira for salary. I have an idea of opening another online shop here. I can get clothes from the market in Meter. Do you know Meter? There is a clothing market for whole sale. But language is a problem. It is difficult for me to communicate with local customers.

Y: To what extent do you feel satisfied with your life in Turkey? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being completely satisfied.

Z: 6...My husband works in a trading company. His salary includes basic salary and incentives. In the months with low incentive incomes, the money can only cover our rent and basic living expenditure. In the months with higher incentives, we have extra money but he doesn't have the concept of saving. I don't feel secure if we use up all the money every month. I am considering to opening another online shop in Turkey, but language is a problem. I don't understand why most Turkish people I know are not saving money, my husband and his friends...

Y: To what extent do you feel satisfied of your relationship to your husband's family?

Z: 7. My husband and my in-laws treat me very well but my own family and friends are in China. I don't have any friends here. The life is so boring. I want it to be more meaningful.

Y: Are you a frequent social media user? Such as using Facebook, Online forum, WhatsApp.

Z: I use WeChat most of the time. I use it to communicate with my relatives and friends in China. Also, through WeChat, I met some Chinese people in Turkey.

Y: In these two years, there are numerous Terrorists attacks in Turkey. What do you think about it?

Z: In 2016, the situation was very bad. The attacks were very frequent. When I went to the city center, I paid extra attention on the people around me. Social security is another issue, some of my friends have been stolen in the public area, not only one person I know, but three people already...

Y: Have you consider of moving back to China or other countries?

Z: Not yet. If the situation is getting worst, we will consider about it.

Y: What is the level of your Turkish language? You can rank from elementary, intermediate to advanced. Did you study any Turkish language courses before?

Z: I think it is above elementary but not yet Intermediate. I didn't any language courses.



My husband taught me some Turkish but We usually communicate in English. I also watch some online videos for teaching Turkish language.