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THE FEMALE POSITION AND ROLE IN KOREA AND VIETNAM (AN INITIAL COMPARISON)

ABSTRACT: Society has been continuously changing and developing in various fields, the role and position of women have been increasingly altering and becoming important in society and in family. Korea and Vietnam have the same basic background in terms of Eastern culture and social context. These have strongly influenced gender conception and position. This article analyses the position and role of women in the two countries in the past and present. In order to conduct this research, we applied comparative cultural studies specifically, Affectual/ Consequential comparison, Parallel comparison, Synchronic and Diachronic comparison, Cross-cultural comparison and feminism perspective to highlight the similarities and differences in their position. The findings of the research disclose lots of similarities on the position of women in traditional and modern society as well as reveals no less differences in the assessment of women's contributions to building and protecting the country, taking care of family and rearing children. Thus, the article will help the audience have a better understanding and knowledge of gender culture in the two countries.

KEYWORDS: female position, female role, Korean women, Vietnamese women.

Introduction

Korea and Vietnam are both countries in East Asia, which have experienced fierce wars and have been invaded by American capitalism. Also, the two countries have been influenced by serious feudalism and have had a certain depth of cultural tradition shaped by the same East Asian cultural stratum. In their long history, the two nations had been affected by Chinese feudalism especially Confucianism. Depending on the cultural configuration of each nation, they have received and transformed Confucian aspects differently. Thus, this would have a varied influence on their society, order, concept of gender and gender roles. In the tradition of the two countries, both once followed and practiced patriarchy which highly considered the male's role in society and family.

All of the above-mentioned contexts have had an effect on women's roles and positions. Women have not been appreciated or respected in family and society, being regarded as having lower status and blur roles. In pre-modernism, women had to

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suffer a lot of disadvantages and unfair behaviours. Nowadays, female roles, positions and voices have changed and they themselves can prove their abilities, personalities and intelligence and great contributions to society. However, the role and position of women in the two countries show heterogeneity but disclose some differences due to the cultural and social contexts, conception of female roles, education, and their efforts.

This article researches, compares and clarifies Korean and Vietnamese women's position in the past and in contemporary life so as to provide a perspective of gender and its role in the history of Eastern culture.

To study this issue, some theory and research methods are applied in the article. Feminism is a certainly suitable theory to research on women and women's right in any society, any culture and any age. "Feminism is a complex set of ideologies and theories, that at its core seeks to achieve equal social, political, and economic rights for women and men. Feminism refers to a diverse variety of beliefs, ideas, movements, and agendas for action" (Lewis, 2019). Moreover: "Feminism seeks to achieve equal treatment and opportunity for women in order to achieve similar opportunities across different fields of work and culture and equal respect in a variety of roles" (Lewis, 2019). From the 1960s – postmodernism feminism has aimed to achieve social and cultural changes. Feminism gradually becomes more academic and humane requiring not only equality but also the respect and recognition of physical and psychological features in order to help with conditions and opportunities to improve oneself and make society develop. "The goal of feminism is to create non-discrimination, which is essential for creating equality to ensure that no one is denied their rights due to factors such as race, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, political or other beliefs, nationality, social origin, class, or wealth status" (Lewis, 2019).

Chris Barker argued that the close relation between feminism and culture was not persuasive to research on culture without mentioning gender. He affirmed feminism concentrates on two basic problems: gaining citizen rights like voting and being equal in law; causing impact on cultural practice and standards in ways in favour of women (Barker, 2011: 388-390). Feminism has diverse schools, each considered or explained gender distinction from a specific perspective. Let's take socialist feminism for instance which emphasises that gender inequality comes from the mutual relation of social class and gender while liberal feminism explains the differences between male and female as the results of socioeconomic and cultural formation, not of biological nature. This article based on different feminism schools attempts to find the general points of those schools in order to support and open equal chances for women in every field.

Comparative cultural studies

Comparative cultural studies research the relationships between the cultures of nations, the culture(s) in each area to highlight the values, the cultural identities of each nation, the unity in diversity of regional culture, the human culture. They also aim to clarify the rules on which world cultures operate. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (2003: 1) said that “comparative cultural studies are a field of study in the humanities and social sciences where tenets of the discipline of comparative literature are merged with the field of cultural studies; the objects of study are all sorts of culture and culture products”, and “comparative cultural studies are no master theory, but one framework among several others; they have to be tested and applied, and to be used as a tool in order to understand and to produce new knowledge”. In practice and from an academic viewpoint methods in comparative cultural studies favour the systemic and empirical approach. Zepetnek (2003: 3) emphasised “It is also an inter – and multi-disciplinary approach borrowing from a number of areas in the humanities and social sciences, including (radical) constructivism, systems theories, the empirical, cultural anthropology, ethnology, reception theory, the sociology of knowledge, cognitive science, etc.”. Bringing new and objective insights into the similarities and differences of cultures, providing deep knowledge as well as profound understanding of cultures are some of its purposes. Thus, people empathise to live better and more harmoniously.

It is said that the object of comparative cultural studies is very diverse, and can be any aspect or any phenomenon of culture. Definitely, women’s position is a cultural feature bearing universality and differences in all cultures in the world. In this article, from the framework of comparative cultural studies developed by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (2003), we applied a certain sub-method to conduct research on Korean and Vietnamese female position as follows:

Affectual/Consequential comparison reveals the similarities and differences of the two cultures with historical contact and interexchange, teaching the ways in which one tradition borrows from or reacts to another tradition i.e., influencing source, influenced source and intermediary source.

Parallel comparison discloses the similarities and differences between the two cultures without historical influence or contact.

Synchronic and diachronic comparison mainly focuses on the similarities and differences of the two cultures through the perspective of time both in the past and at the present.

Cross-cultural comparison provides us with some similarities of the two cultures in the background of most countries in Asia as well as in the world.

Our initial interesting findings will provide a better and deeper understanding of women's role and position in Eastern culture, hence fostering the effective application of comparative cultural studies to discover new knowledge from a new perspective.

Korean and Vietnamese women's position in the past

The similarities in traditional position

It is clear to recognise that in traditional society, women's roles in Korea and Vietnam were confined to the home. From a young age, women were taught the virtues of subordination and endurance to prepare for their future roles as wives and mothers. Women, in general, could not participate in society as men did, and their role was limited to household matters: taking care of the house and family, rearing children, cooking dinners and sewing. One strange point is that many researchers considered Korean women to have once enjoyed nearly equal legal status with men. Katrina Maynes (2012: 1) thought that:

The Kingdom of Silla (57 BC – 935 AD) granted women considerable rights. Females were not solely viewed as secondary citizens, and many women made considerable political and domestic contributions. Unlike later periods, Silla women were not confined to their homes; they largely contributed to the tax and labor force, and lower and middle class women, regardless of marital status, often worked in agriculture and assisted their male relatives in learning trades.

Researchers confirmed the Koryŏ dynasty (918 AD – 1392 AD) initially took a fairly liberal stance on women, but the growing influence of Confucianism ultimately caused the status of women to increasingly decline. "These trends intensified during the Chosŏn dynasty (1392 AD – 1897 AD), which implemented widespread Confucianism and viewed women as weak burdens. Early Chosŏn emperors, such as Yi Song-gye (1335 – 1408), strengthened Chosŏn sovereignty by enforcing Confucian morals, such as the Mandate of Heaven and filial piety" (Maynes, 2012: 3). During this period (approximately five centuries) women were not to be seen by anyone outside the family and they remained confined at home (Gender Roles, 2021). In ancient history, Vietnamese people were considered to follow matriarchy, to highly respect women and their roles in society and family. The traces are still evident in some ethnicities in the Southeast and Northeast region nowadays. Then, influenced by Chinese feudalism, especially Confucianism, Vietnamese society and people changed. One of the powerful and profound shifts pertained to women and to the men closely related to their life: father, husband, son. Their position was not in society, but at home.

In feudalism, in Korea, there were four classes, the yangban nobility, the "middle class" chungin, sangmin, or the commoners, and the cheonmin – the outcasts at the very bottom. During this period Noblemen could have one wife and several concubines

but their children born from commoner or slave concubines were considered illegitimate and denied any yangban rights. Meanwhile, women could only get married to one man. A very famous saying in Vietnamese culture goes “A man could have five or seven concubines (apart from one official wife), a virtuous woman could only marry to a man.” (Vietnamese folk verse).

Even the female position in family was lowly assessed in a traditional concept “if you had one son, this means you had children, if you had ten daughters, this means you had none.” (Vietnamese folk verse).

The women’s role and rights were completely hidden from the outer world and every woman had to conform to Confucian ideals of purity, obedience, chastity and faithfulness. Women were subjects of male dominance throughout their lives, obliged to listen to and obey their fathers, husbands, fathers-in-law and firstborn sons. Homes were divided into male and female quarters to separate the genders. This originated from the Chinese Confucian tradition “When at home, women had to obey their fathers; when being married, women had to obey their husband; when being a widow, women had to obey their son”; and “at each stage in her life, a woman belonged to a man. They were not trusted to dictate their own lives, and men made their decisions for them” (Maynes, 2012: 3).

Similarly, women were confined to the domestic sphere, while public life was reserved for men throughout most of Western history. In medieval Europe, for example, women were not given the right to study, to participate in public life and even to own property. At the end of the 19th century, let’s take France for instance, women were still compelled to cover their heads in public, and, in parts of Germany is another good example, a husband still had the right to sell his wife. Even in the early 20th century, women could neither vote nor hold elective office in Europe and in most of the United States. If doing business, a woman had to be assisted by a male representative like her father, brother, husband, legal agent or son. Moreover, women had little or no access to education and were barred from most professions. Even in some parts of the world, such restrictions on women continue today. Sherry B. Ortner (1974: 68) identified “the universal fact of culturally attributed second-class status of woman in every society”. She also confirmed:

The universality of female subordination, the fact that it exists within every type of social and economic arrangement and in societies of every degree of complexity, indicates to me that we are up against something very profound, very stubborn, something we cannot rout out simply by rearranging a few tasks and roles in the social system, or even by reordering the whole economic structure (Ortner, 1974: 67-68).

Thus, women’s position in the past was not highly appreciated in every corner, every culture in the world, even poor or rich countries from West to East.

The differences in traditional position

During the dawn of history and the flourishing period of primitive society, many nations underwent the matriarchy in which women were the head of the family, lineages; women played a great role in economic activities, social life as well as in cultural and spiritual life.

When entering patriarchy, the transition always took a classical, harsh and extreme form, but many societies turned to patriarchy under a “gentle, flexible” form. Old Vietnamese women were in this second case. In Vietnam, in the primitive era, women were the main ones who did the gathering, primitive agriculture, breeding, handicraft and housework, then in the age of a class-divided society, the woman was still fully involved in all stages of labour in society and the family.

Whereas in Korea in the ancient world, women were only involved in housework. “The Confucian ideal of strict separation of males and females led to the division of labour into inside and outside work. Men laboured outside, taking care of major field crops, while women worked inside doing housework, spinning, weaving and cooking” (Sorenson, 2021). So, it can be said that the core Confucian values that shaped the role of men and women were still a great force in Korean traditional life.

In Vietnam, researchers believed that the family was owned by a man, but this was true in theory only. In reality the woman was still in control of most of the housework and took part in the family and in most social activities. This was the premise for the ancient Vietnamese women to continue to make great contributions to the nation’s history.

Since ancient times, the role of the mother and the woman has been respected and appreciated in Vietnamese society. They had a decisive range for their children’s development in many aspects (physical, emotional, ethical ...). Vietnamese folklore has lots of sayings that praised the role of mothers, for instance “If a child was bad, it was his/her mother’s fault. If a grandchild was bad, it was his/her grandmother’s”; “A child can only get a blessing thanks to his/her mother”; “Creating a birth to a child was his/her father’s role, but rearing him/her was his/her mother’s role”.

In traditional Vietnamese society, the wife was considered more important than her husband “his orders are not equal to hers” (Vietnamese folk verse). The woman was “the hand that holds the key of the safe”, she was “the internal General”. When the family or country faced problems, hardship or invaders, Vietnamese people thought that protecting and building their country is the responsibility of all citizens regardless of gender as shown in this proverb, “when the enemy comes, women will fight against them” (Vietnamese folk verse). Vietnamese history has witnessed many female Generals in times of struggle or wars against the enemy or invaders from ancient to

modern times. Their names have been recorded forever and always respected by the entire nation. Let's take some examples of Generals like Trieu Thi Trinh, Trung Trac, Trung Nhi, Bui Thi Xuan...

What is more, Vietnamese customs of goddess worshiping have been practiced for a long time and has developed through historical periods on the basis of the tradition of respect for the female role. The image of Vietnamese women was built and handed down from the legendary Mother Au Co, with Father Lac Long Quan being the first Creators of Vietnamese people to worship the agricultural goddesses "Mother of Rice". Almost everywhere in Vietnam, many temples to worship goddesses are found easily. This reflects the important role of women in farming from ancient times and throughout history to the present day based on the cause of cultural background. Though alike, Vietnamese and Korean cultural backgrounds are quite different. Tran Thi Thu Luong (2016: 79) explained that Korean culture has the East Asian background with the typical features: dry rice culture, male respect, hierarchy while Vietnamese culture has Southeast Asian background with typical features: wet rice culture, female respect and commune democracy. These differences will make the contact and acculturation of Confucianism certainly distinctive.

Vietnam is a country located in the region where wet rice agriculture originated. History has proven that during the development of wet rice civilization, women always play a pivotal role in production. Scientists proved that collecting culture respects the women's role while hunting culture appreciates men's role (Luong, 2016: 91). Moreover, "the hierarchical thought of Confucianism was more easily accepted and adapted by class-divided society like Korea. Even Chinese people confirm the Korean believe and practice this thought more seriously and faithfully than the Chinese people themselves" (Luong, 2016: 158-159).

In terms of folk beliefs of the two countries, they practice polytheistic beliefs. The differences lie in the points that the Korean people worship both male and female Deities. The Gods are oriented towards outer spheres while Goddesses are mainly oriented towards domestic fields. We can see this through some pairs of Deities like Yeomna – God of Death; Samshin – Goddess of Human Birth (Gashin) / Goddess of Life and Childbirth; Haemosu – God of the Sun; Jishin/Teojusin – Goddess of Earth; (Gashin)/ Dalnim – Goddess of the Moon; Hwanung – God of Laws (Gashin); Gameunjang-agi – Goddess of Fate and Luck (Wozniak, 2011).

Whereas, in Vietnamese folk belief, "Tam Phu" belief and "Tu Phap" belief both adore Goddesses. "Tam Phu" belief adores Three (Tam) Goddesses including the Sun, Mountain, Water (later this belief was added one Goddess of the Earth then became "Tu Phu" which means Four Goddesses). "Tu Phap" belief worships Four Goddesses

consisting of the Cloud, Rain, Thunder and Lightning representing natural phenomena that play an important role in the agricultural society in Vietnam.

To sum up, Korean and Vietnamese women's position in the past had a variety of differences and similarities. The similar features are shown on the surface culture and the different characteristics are expressed in the deep culture.

Korean and Vietnamese women's position at present

The similarities in modern society and family

The female position and role have changed since the wars in the two countries finished, although the time is not identical for both countries (Vietnam in 1945, Korea in 1948). Over nearly seven decades the status and role of women in the two countries have dramatically changed in order to show their great contribution to the national development. The similarities are presented below:

1. It is significant to mention the role of women recorded in the wars. None can deny the great female contribution, they themselves made a part of the victory of the nation.

“The reality was that during the Korean War, there were 120,000 women on active duty. A third of them were healthcare providers. Others stepped up when their country called on them, volunteering for service in the Women's Army Corps (WAC), Women in the Air Force (WAF), Navy Women's Reserves and Women Marines” (Korean war legacy foundation 2021). Again, “many women served in Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals (MASH), on MEDEVAC aircraft, and on hospital ships, in military hospitals in various parts of the United States. Countless women held down their households while their husbands went to war or took the place of men in the workforce” (Korean War Legacy Foundation, 2021).

While in Vietnam, in the resistance to protect our country, women's forces, who can do everything in society like men, occupy an important position in the militia and guerrilla forces in the communes and hamlets. Up to 1961, there were 28,000 female guerrillas in the whole South. South Vietnamese women also participated in the main force playing a key role in building fighting villages from 1961 to 1965. There were 1,860,000 participants in the whole South (Quynh, 2018).

When the countries regain their independence, women achieved constitutional rights for equal opportunities to pursue education, work, and public life. There is no doubt that the female labor force contributed significantly to rapid economic growth. An increasing number of women work in professional fields. “Korean women today are actively engaged in a wide variety of fields, including education, medicine, engineering, scholarship, the arts, law, literature, and sports. Women are thus making significant contributions to society” (Korean Overseas Information Service, 2021).

2. In law field, both countries have Acts, clauses and organizations to respect, protect, and support women to gain their equality in all fields. For instance, Ministry of Gender Equality (Korea) was established in 2001, Gender Equality Law (Vietnam) was promulgated in 2008. The purpose of these laws and organizations are to revise and establish laws and rules that involve discrimination in any sector and to increase the representation of women, to facilitate women's employment and provide support for female workers, to increase educational opportunities for women to be competitive in the labor market, to provide social welfare policies for women, to promote women's involvement in various social activities including volunteering work and women's organization activities, and to strengthen the cooperation of domestic women's organizations with international women's organizations (Korean Overseas Information Service, 2021).

3. Women have taken their part in educational and economic fields. Vietnam started as an illiterate country (90% of the population) and women had no right to school in feudalism. However, after seven decades, more than 90% of girls go to school, of which 36.24% graduate at university level, 33.95% have master's degrees and 25.69% doctoral degrees (Thuong, 2019). This ratio in Korea is similar, but a little bit higher with 99.5%, where 30.9% of university or college students are female, and 22.5% pursue doctoral degrees (Van K. & Dung N.A, 2010: 684). The female labour force also increased in both countries. For example, the Overview Report on Women Workers in Vietnam shows that female workers account for over 70% of the workforce in major export industries such as textiles, footwear, electronics and 64% of workers in industrial zones (Mai, 2018). While these proportions in Korea are 80% and 53.9% respectively (Van K. & Dung N.A, 2010: 687). Reality reveals that lots of women hold managerial positions or are CEO's in big companies. Once they are independent on an economic aspect, they have equal roles in the family like educating children, the right to take important decisions for the family and equal rights to possess their property or estate. Women in both countries get paid maternity leave with full salary.

4. Recently, women in Vietnam and Korea have shown their own role and advantage in the political field. Vietnam had its first Chairwoman of the National Assembly in 2016, Mrs. Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan; while Korea had its first woman President in 2013, Park Geun-hye. This was a turning point in the role of women in South Korean politics.

The above-mentioned similarities between Korean women and Vietnamese women are uncovered in various fields in modern age, however, the differences are disclosed in some extent and facets.

The differences in modern society and family

At first, the discrepancies and inequality display in the assessment and acknowledge female contribution in the wars. In Korea, "the memorial, like many others, does not reflect

the sacrifices that women made on the home front. It doesn't adequately acknowledge their crucial roles as medics, caretakers, logicians, and communications operators, and it certainly doesn't portray them in combat" (Korean War Legacy Foundation, 2021). Moreover, if women have positions in the memorials, they are designed to better reflect the male statues, reinforcing the idea that women played a secondary role in the war (Korean War Legacy Foundation, 2021).

In Vietnam, memorials and statues present women's sacrifices everywhere in the country. On March 8, 1965, on the 55th anniversary of International Women's Day (1910-1965), to appreciate the contributions of women in the South during the struggle for independence, Uncle Ho (the President), on behalf of the Party and the government, gave Vietnamese women an embroidery with 8 golden words: "Heroic – Indomitable – Frank – Considerate".

Secondly, the research data of the Women's Association of Small and Medium Enterprises reveals Vietnam currently has about 25% of the leadership team, and business owners are women. The Vietnam Women Entrepreneurs Forum recognises that most women who run or own businesses operating in the fields of trade, service, and consumer goods production are extremely important areas of the market economy. In the national strategy on gender equality from 2011 to 2020, Vietnam sets the target of bringing the percentage of female business owners to 35% or more by 2020 (Thuong, 2019).

Korea has accomplished outstanding economic success, becoming the 11th largest economy in the world, however, the country's women leaders are still considered token because only a small number of women take leadership positions in almost every corner of society. In 500 Korean companies by income, women executives make up 2.7% of total executives; in 31 companies, there are only 4 women board members (1.6%) from a total of 245 members; 27 companies did not have a single woman board member. As a result, Korea has among the lowest women representations in senior roles, boards, and executive committees both in Asia and in the world (Cho, 2018).

Thirdly, the *Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments* (2021) demonstrates that Vietnam stands in 70th place with 26.7% of women in parliament (132 women/494 members) while Korea lies in 121st place with 19% women (57 women/300 members) even though both countries had women who obtained vital positions in parliament. This rate, if compared to the proportion in developed countries in the world, especially European countries like United Arab Emirates 50%, New Zealand 48% or Sweden 47% is just a "humble" figure.

To explain this phenomena, Archie Resos (2014) cited a comment by the Dean Eun Mee Kim of the Graduate School of International Studies, Ehwa Women's University in Seoul, South Korea in his personal interview conducted on January 17, 2006 that:

Korea has been heavily influenced by traditional thoughts such as Confucianism that really made it difficult for women to be respected equal to men. The value and position of women was much lower in the society. Even if you look around the world, there were more women presidents, leaders, and vice presidents but we have not had that in Korea. Discrimination against women made it difficult.

Another scholar, Rosa Kim (1994: 147-148) also stated:

Fundamental to the Confucian philosophy is the belief that inequality in social relationships-between the generations, the classes, and the sexes-is not only natural but essential for peace and harmony... While it is inevitable that social change accompanies modernization and industrialization, the Confucian model of the family has remained largely intact in Korean custom throughout the twentieth century. Because women continue to hold an inferior status in the family by custom, the effort to grant women greater equality has encountered ideological opposition. Social change for women is slow and difficult because residual Confucian institutions continue to permeate Korean society.

Confucianism is a strong force which has powerfully influenced traditional and modern Korean society. Although Korean society increasingly develops Confucianism still leaves a deep imprint on Korean women's lives and careers. "Confucianism has contributed to the gender divide in family and the workplace. The military culture aligned with Confucianism has created a male-dominant organisational culture so that women have difficulties in career success." (Cho, 2018).

According to historical documents, during the period that the South of Vietnam was under the control of the regime of the Republic of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh city was called "Sai Gon". At that time, Sai Gon was considered the "Pearl of the Far East" because of its development, civilisation and luxury and charm. Many young Korean women came to Sai Gon to find good jobs. But from the 1980s to the 2000s, the Korean wave (Hallyu Wave) spread to Asian countries including Vietnam, then the movement of getting married to Korean men by Vietnamese women developed powerfully. What is more, young girls in Vietnam have admired and adored Korean stars or celebrities in Korean showbiz, especially in romantic films and Korean popular music (K-pop). They rush to use Korean-made products like cosmetics, fashion, accessories, mobile phones, office ware, functional foods and specialties. Many Vietnamese women try to find jobs in Korea through Labour Export Services run by state or private companies and to get married to Korean men using matchmaking service with the dream of having a better life. Most of these people come from the rural or remote areas in Vietnam where their life is very rough. According to the Korean Statistics Agency, throughout Korea in 2018, in terms of the nationality of the wife, Vietnamese multicultural families accounted for the highest proportion (30%), China (21.6%) and Thailand (6.6%) ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively (Hong 2021). These are the phenomena expressing the reality that women are willing to migrate to find a better life outside of their homeland

borders. It is confirmed that lifestyle, culture and economy of the two countries have influenced each other in a certain historical period.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, Korean and Vietnamese women have lots of similarities in their positions in traditional and modern society as the result of universalities of gender culture in general and the social and cultural contexts of the two Eastern cultures. But they have no less differences due to each cultural configuration during the process of acculturation from China, specially Confucianism. As a hierarchical and class-divided country Korea certainly is different from a commune-democracy country like Vietnam in receiving Confucian influence. The similarities can be clearly seen on the surface culture which is truly hiding interesting differences in the deep culture. That is what we can sum up from our initial comparison. Accordingly, this initial assessment will need to be confirmed by more evidence in future research.

“Men are supposed to be more concerned with achievements outside the home-hunting and fighting in traditional societies, the same but translated into economic terms in modern societies. While women are supposed to be more concerned with taking care of the home, of the children, and of people in general – to take the tender roles” (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 1991: 137-138). This thought has been appearing since ancient times. So, gender inequality has always been a difficult problem that humans need a lot of time and energy to improve. Gender inequality poses significant challenges to women in Korea and Vietnam because it takes away opportunities from talented and passionate women whereas natural resources are scant and human capital has been the driving engine of the economic development. Gender inequality is a serious hurdle both countries need to overcome for continuing growth. Women themselves need to keep moving forward and help the nation achieve swift democratization. If on-going democratic experiments in Korea and Vietnam falters, the momentum and unity that have been achieved so far can easily fade away.

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