

Unequal Marriage Exchange Between Majority and Minority Groups: A Case Study From Inner Mongolia, China

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Abstract

Since the 1960s, social integration theorists have considered intermarriage to be an effective tool for promoting social solidarity. However, from a demographic perspective, unequal marriage exchange between groups can create social division and conflict. This Chinese study is a contribution to these debates. This paper explores the issue in the context of a rural minority community in Rightqi, Inner Mongolia, taking social statistical methods and anthropological in-depth interview methods to investigate intermarriage between Mongolian and Han. The paper shows that the number of Han males married to Mongolian women is far greater than the number of Mongolian males marrying Han women. Most Han people live in urban areas, while Mongolians predominantly reside in pastoral areas and there has been a significant trend for girls from the pastoral areas to marry urban males. Since the proportion of males to females in China has been increasing, the competition between men over female partners has intensified, leading to urban males recruiting partners from the countryside. As a result, young men from minorities in the rural areas are finding it increasingly difficult to marry and this generates a lot of social problems.

Keywords

Intermarriage, marital deprivation, ethnic relationship, minority areas

Over the last few decades, there has been a tremendous growth in information and transportation technology as a result of which the movement of people between different countries and within countries has increased. People from diverse backgrounds are interacting and communicating on a global scale. Admittedly, racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries still exist, but they have weakened to some extent (Li 2002: 109-124). Globalization and international immigration have reduced the barriers of marriage between couples from different national, social, economic, and religious backgrounds. Hence, intermarriage has increased and in most multi-ethnic societies, interracial partnering (dating, cohabitation,

and marriage) is rising, especially among young people.

In Britain, about half of British-born Black men with a partner live with a White woman, and about one third of British-born Black women with partners live with a White partner (Berrington 1996: 121-133).

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While not as high as White/Black partnerships, White/Chinese and White/South Asian partnerships, are also rising in Britain (Berthoud 2005: 222-254). In France, according to Meng and Meurs (2009: 127-144), 35% of the French male immigrants and 33% of the French female immigrants intermarry. Meng and Meurs claimed that European immigrants had the highest probability of intermarriage (46% and 50% for males and females, respectively). Other studies show evidence of high rates of intermarriage such as Israel (Shavit and Stier 1994: 18-23), Taiwan (Tsai 1996: 301-315), Singapore (Lee 1988: 255-265), and Latvia (Monden and Smiths 2005: 323-345).

The meaning and methods of defining intermarriage in different countries and different regions vary greatly. In the UK, intermarriage involves people from different ethnic groups, i.e., White, mixed, Asian (meaning South Asian), Black, Chinese, etc. However, in Germany, intermarriage refers to marriages between Germans and “foreigners” (Menz 2013: 99-116), while in China, intermarriage refers to the marriages between 56 nationalities. In other words, there is no unified and substantive definition. Yet, intermarriage is clearly related to those who are marrying across group boundaries whether these be ethnic, racial, religious, or national.

There is no doubt that intermarriage is a very complicated business. Though there is a lot of literature on intermarriage, three significant deficiencies are evident:

(1) Research has been mainly conducted from the perspective of mainstream society or the majority, paying less attention to non-mainstream or minority groups;

(2) Research on the flows involved in intermarriage is weak. For example, what is the direction of intermarriage between the dominant and subordinate groups? Precise information about “who marries whom” is lacking;

(3) There has not been sufficient analysis of the function of intermarriage.

In fact, the inadequacy of research in (1) and (2) has led to the emergence of (3), which is the core problem to be investigated in this paper.

THE FUNCTION OF INTERMARRIAGE

Milton Gordon argued in *Assimilation in American Life* (Gordon 1964: 80-81) that there was an explicit link between the process of “assimilation” and intermarriage. Intermarriage was apparently the inevitable outcome of what he calls “culture assimilation”, i.e., adopting the cultural patterns of the “host society”. More recently, Michelle Carnegie (2013: 81-98) claimed that intermarriage between Christians and migrant Muslims in the village of Oelua on Roti Island, Indonesia, helped to prevent conflict by cutting across cultural divisions such as religion, indigeneity, ethnicity, and livelihood orientation, and helped local people to mix together and share knowledge. This cultural integration approach insists that intermarriage fosters intercultural encounters where they “choose, combine, downplay, or avoid singular elements of their gender roles, their ethnic background. In doing so, new cultural combinations and syntheses are formed: the hybrid” (Schleche 2001: 10-15).

Intermarriage can entail the transcending of racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries, therefore. Meng and Gregory (2005: 135-175) saw intermarriage as a way for immigrants to acquire host country customs, language skills, and knowledge of the local labor market, and obtain contacts and connections. It improves their job prospects and increases the rate of economic assimilation. Furtado and Theodoropoulos (2009: 116-126) also showed that marrying a native increases the immigrant’s employment probability by approximately 4% through accessing to local networks in U.S. Bisin and Verdier (2000: 955-988) concentrated on another aspect of intermarriage—the desire of parents to transmit their own cultural traits to their children.

Scholars also found that intermarriage had given rise to milder forms of racism in Brazil when compared with the United States (Byrne et al. 1995: 389-397; Harris et al. 1993: 451-462). They contended that intermarriage leads to commonsense expectations and behavioral goals that give Latin American countries an advantage over the United States in combating racism (Bailey 2002: 406-439). In the United States, the focus has been on the role of such seemingly race-neutral principles as egalitarianism and individualism in shaping racial attitudes. In contrast, across Latin America intermarriage involves racial boundaries, which may facilitate their use as frameworks for racial attitudes and behavior.

Additionally, some regard intermarriage as social indicator. Jeroen Smits (2010: 417-432) found that ethnic groups with relatively high rates of intermarriage had low involvement in armed conflict, suggesting that information about intermarriage could be useful for models of ethnological monitoring and early warning systems concerning ethnic conflict. However, Kang Fu and Wolfinger (2011: 1097-1117) find that “Seventy-two percent of endogamous Latino marriages remain intact at 15 years, but only 58% of Latino husband/White wife and 64% of White husband/Latina wife marriages are still intact” in the USA.

INTERMARRIAGE IN CHINA

General Situation

Ethnic intermarriage has a long history in China. Fei Xiaotong (1989: 20-27) claimed that the Han majority had absorbed a large number of other ethnic groups. In 2000, 1,625,500 people were involved in intermarriage, accounting for 3.23% of all marriages that year. About 8,952,100 people in 55 ethnic groups were involved in intermarriage, of which 81.58% married Han Chinese while only 18.42% married other ethnic groups. There is a great discrepancy in

intermarriage rates among the 56 nationalities, therefore. It was higher than 70% among six ethnic groups and lower than 10% in another seven. The Gaoshan ethnic group boasts the highest intermarriage rates, i.e., up to 86.96% on the Mainland, followed by Oroqen (86.19%) and Hezhe (84.13%). In contrast, the rate of intermarriage among the Uygur is only 1.05%—the lowest among all ethnic groups. Half of all ethnic groups’ intermarriage rate was between 10%-30% and 12 were more than 50% (Li 2004: 68-74). Hence, intermarriage involves only some ethnic groups, especially those in the northeast and the south, where it is even more prevalent than endogamy.

A lot of research has been conducted on intermarriage in China and has focused roughly on the following aspects:

(1) The status quo and the main features of intermarriage, including its regional traits, quantitative features, and changes in government policies on ethnic intermarriage (e.g., Li 2004: 68-74; Guo and Li 2008: 98-116);

(2) Factors influencing intermarriage (e.g., Liang 2004: 173-187; Zhuang 2006: 95-98);

(3) Intermarriage between different nationalities, such as that between Mongolia and Han, Hui and Han, etc. (e.g., Surna and Sarge 2005: 65-69; Huang and Liu 2010: 5-8);

(4) Intermarriage in certain regions such as Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Xizang (e.g., Tang and Gao 2004: 32-39; Sarena 2007: 61-65; Ma and Deng 2008: 43-48).

The Functions of Intermarriage in China

Ma Rong (2004: 453) argues that when two groups have a high degree of mutual acceptance, intermarriage is encouraged. Each person can feel very close to and accept another person emotionally and psychologically. It is possible for him/her to consider the possibility of intermarriage. Intermarriage is an exchange and interaction process involving different sections of society (such as the clan, family,

village, and so on). It can launch ethnic individuals from different cultural backgrounds into a long and stable interaction, making them share resources through a series of material, spiritual, and symbolic exchanges, and urging the different units of society to be in contact with and understanding each other (Chen 2011: 23-27).

Intermarriage involves the movement of attributes from groups where such attributes are relatively abundant to groups where the same attributes are relatively scarce (Li et al. 2002: 109-124) and which can involve the absorption of the outsider.

From the social development perspective, intermarriage also contributes to urbanization. This perspective contends that intense marriage competition forces minority males to adjust their strategies. They are more willing to integrate into the majority group by opening shops, working in mechanical repairs, finding jobs in the catering industry and commerce, etc. Minority young people are increasingly reluctant to follow their forefathers' traditional grazing or farming jobs and move into the cities. Intermarriage encourages urbanization and forces a large number of unmarried youth to move from traditional rural occupations to urban employment and lifestyles.

INTERMARRIAGE IN INNER MONGOLIA, CHINA

In China, there is a strong preference for sons and discrimination against girls; this has resulted in men finding it difficult to marry. According to calculations, the number of men, who are marriageable age, will exceed that of women by about 30 to 40 million by 2020, which means an average of 20% of males will be unable to find a mate (Liu 2008: 36-47). Inner Mongolia is a frontier area in Northern China, whose sex ratio is similar to that of China generally. Compared with the 2000 national census, data from the sixth census of 2010 shows that the sex ratio of the

resident population in Inner Mongolia is 108.05. This means that the ratio has risen by .88 and is higher than the national average of 105.2 by 2.85. The sex ratio at birth in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region is also relatively high overall and continues to increase in some areas¹. This raises a key question: What are the consequences of intermarriage when males from the majority community (Han) marry females from the minorities on a large scale?

In order to find out the answers to this question, the authors have investigated five-year intermarriage data of Rightqi between 2009 and 2013.

Five-Year Intermarriage Data in Rightqi

The Rightqi region within Alxa League is located in Western Inner Mongolia and covers a total area of 80,412 square kilometers, including 23 towns, 150,000 people, and 14 nationalities, such as Mongolian, Han, Hui (Muslim), etc. The Han constitutes 71.7% and among the minorities, the Mongolian community is the largest. Figure 1 reflects the position in China.

Ethnic intermarriage has always been more common in Inner Mongolia. According to the 2000 statistics, cross-national marriage between the majority and minorities accounts for 11.7% of all households, ranking first in the country (Ma 2004: 453). The number of cross-national families in Rightqi has been one third of the total in recent years. The specific data are as follows:

In 2009, 959 couples got married², among whom 319 couples were involved in intermarriages, accounting for 33.3%. The number of intermarriages between Mongolians, the largest minority population and Han accounted for 76.8% of the total. One hundred and fifty-six (156) couples were Han men marrying minority females, accounting for 49% of the intermarriage number.

In 2010, 1,052 couples got married, among whom 304 were involved in intermarriage, i.e., the ethnic intermarriage rate was 29%. Two hundred and



Figure 1. Rightqi of Alxa.

fifty-eight (258) couples were marriages between Han and Mongolian, accounting for 85% of the total intermarriages. One hundred and fifty-four (154) couples were Han males marrying minority females. There were 127 minority males who married Han females, and 23 other couples were from various ethnic minorities.

In 2011, one thousand two hundred and fifty-five (1,255) couples got married in 2011, among which 307 were intermarriages, accounting for 24.5% of the total. The number of intermarriages between Han and Mongolian were 241 couples, accounting for 79% of the total. There were 142 Han males who married minority females.

There were 1,085 couples getting married in 2012, the couples involved in intermarriages were 329, accounting for 30.3%. There were 1,027 couples that got married in 2013, among which 332 were intermarriages, accounting for 32.3%. The annual average of ethnic intermarriage rate was 29.88%, specific data are shown in Figure 2.

Urban Majority Males Marrying Rural Minorities Females

This kind of marriage refers to Han males in relatively developed areas marrying females from various ethnic minorities in less developed areas, which is a special form of intermarriage. The relatively developed areas refers to the cities and towns, where there are perfect social service system and complete infrastructure; there will also be a developed order and organic unity. Less developed areas refers to the rural and pastoral areas which are far away from towns, cities, where people are engaging in farming and raising animal husbandry for a living, with little traffic, undeveloped information system, and imperfect infrastructure. Thus, it is the embodiment of a traditional mechanical solidarity community.

In order to study this kind of marriage, the authors have carried out an investigation in Rightqi about its main regional economic conditions, people's living patterns, infrastructure and traffic conditions, the

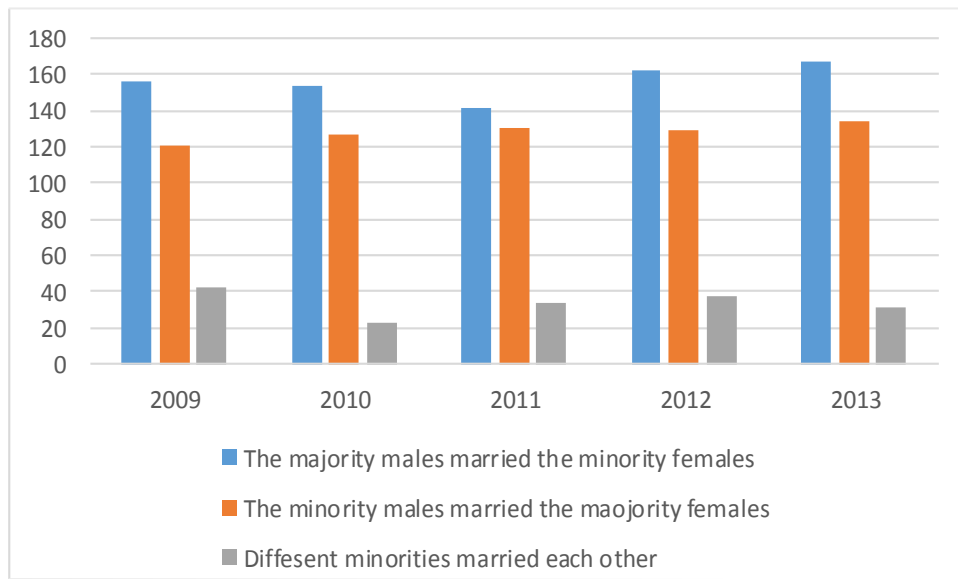


Figure 2. Exogamous Marriages Over Five Years in Rightqi (Couples).

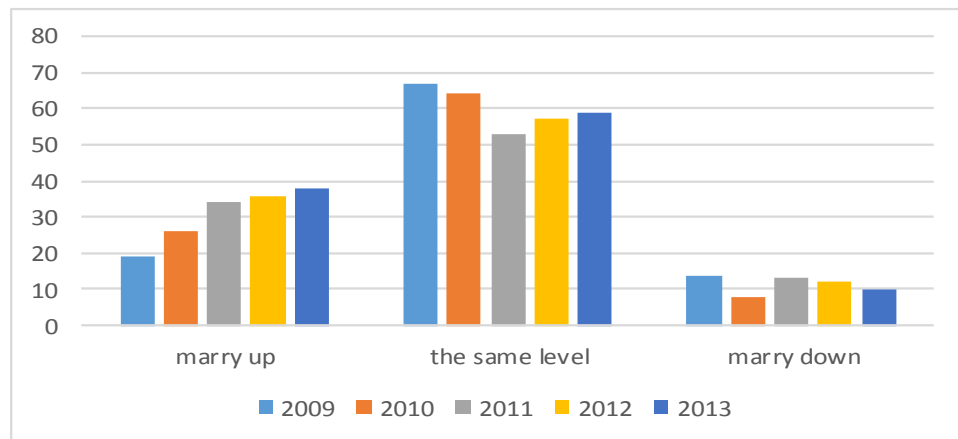


Figure 3. Different Marriage Direction Over Five Years.

quality of life, in order to discover how to rank the different places based on local popularity attitude sorting. Of course, because individuals have different feelings about the same region due to their likes and dislikes, there will be bigger differences of attitude. The authors attempt to rank the areas on the basis of people’s attitudes.

Minority female marriage can be divided into three types: Figure 3 reflects different marriage direction.

(1) Marrying up. Minority females in less developed regions marry males in the developed region, which accounts for 36% of the total;

(2) Marrying at the same level. Here women marry someone who shares the same level in reputation ranking, which accounts for 57% of the total;

(3) Marrying down. Minority women from the developed region marry majority males in the undeveloped region, which accounts for 7% of the total.

It is possible to identify the following patterns of marriage migration:

The number of Han males in developed areas marrying minority females in undeveloped areas has always been more than the number of Han females in undeveloped areas marrying the minority males in developed areas. Between 2009 and 2013, the number of couples marrying up rose from 15 to 38. During the same period, same status marriages correspondingly declined.

Minority females in undeveloped areas married into the developed areas more than they married into the less developed areas. In Rightqi, rural women have always centered around the town of Bayanhaot and formed a “magnet effect”, which creates a form of regional marriage gradient;

(4) In terms of marriage migration, there is clearly a one-way of movement of ethnic minority females flowing into the Han. Conversely, fewer Han females are flowing into the ethnic minority areas. Thus, the further minority young males are from the town, the more difficult their marriage will be. There are roughly five types of excluded minority males, therefore: the poor, the older single, the disabled, the middle-aged widowed, the orphan and those who have many brothers.

Why Does One-Way Intermarriage Happen

Many preferential policies are given to ethnic minorities in China, such as having more children, the children enjoying almost free schooling and easier access to higher education. Ma Rong contended that the government’s preferential policies make members of ethnic groups a “special priority” in terms of social mobility and economic resource allocation. This position gives them very substantial benefits and their interests are institutionalized and protected by the government. This gives preferential “ethnic identity” a special “gold content”, and this can be hereditary as social capital (Ma Rong 2004: 440). Therefore, Han males are willing to marry minority females in order

that the couples and their offspring can access preferential legal policies.

Minority females from rural areas choose to “marry up” so that they can quickly transform their rural role into an urban one; this has the lowest cost and is the most direct, optimizing option. Moreover, because of their marriages, women are able to affect the next generation. In Schacht’s view, “women always choose to marry a person who they believe in and can provide their offspring the most parental investment and have higher economic resources” (Schacht 2009: 10). Therefore, one-way intermarriage is booming.

WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES OF INTERMARRIAGE

Intermarriage Gradually Becomes a Kind of Marital Deprivation

The Chinese population statistical yearbook (2009) showed that the gender imbalance has become more serious in recent years. The lower the population age, the higher the sex ratio. The sex ratio for those under the age of nine has been more than 115 since the beginning of the 21st century and reached 121.40 in 2008 (Chen 2006: 17-21). As for the permanent population of Rightqi, the fifth national population census in 2000 revealed that the sex ratio was 115.04 while by the sixth census in 2011, this had risen to 119.92³.

As for the Mongolian sex ratio, the figures for those under the age of 19 in 2000 are as follows: between zero and four years old, it is 108; for five to nine, it is 105 and for 10 to 14, it is 103⁴. In other words, in the future, women will be a scarce resource in the marriage market. When Han males marry Mongolian females in large numbers, it will undoubtedly increase Mongolian male exclusion from the marriage market. Hence, in 2000, the number of ethnic minority males marrying Han females was 3.4

million, while Han males marrying minority females was 3.9 million. The number of minority females marrying into the Han is 550,000 each year⁵. The problem is even greater for some of the minorities, in particular. Among the Elunchun, Hezhen, and Xibo, for example⁶, their population is no more than 10,000.

Obviously, if the Han in urban areas is able to draw on geographical advantages, economic resources, development opportunity, etc., to attract a proportion of the minority females in rural areas, this will result in some minority males of marriageable age being unable to marry. In 2009, 30-39 years old unmarried males numbered 74 million and exceeded unmarried females in the same age group (55 million) in China (2010). Older unmarried males mainly concentrate in the rural areas, accounting for 81.6% of the total (Tang 2010: 5-10).

Nationally, the eastern region (the more developed areas) has attracted females from the western region and many of these marry Han men. Within only five years in the south-western region, 700,000 women flowed into the eastern region as a result of marriage (Yang 2008: 41-45). Thus, the phenomenon of the "bachelor villages" will shift gradually from the Western Han areas to the remote minority areas. For example, according to writer's statistics, 24% of older single adults have never married in Yingen Township.

Yingen Township is affiliated to the Rightqi county of Alxa in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. It is 225 kilometers from the county capital—Bayanhaote city, and administers three villages. The northern part of the county is on higher ground than the south. The Yingen basin is the lowest of the county, i.e., 742 meters above sea level, and is surrounded by lakes and the Gobi desert. The origin of the name, Yingen, comes from a Mongolian transliteration, which means "female camel". Before 1949, it belongs to Bagetu jurisdiction. Currently, Yingen Township has an area of 6,573 square kilometers and a population of 975 people, among of

whom Mongolian accounts for 82%. People are mainly involved in traditional animal husbandry and are becoming increasingly impoverished because of grassland desertification. As a result, many young adults are migrating to the cities to find better paid job.

Case 1

X is a local herdsman, aged 31, has three brothers, the eldest daughter got married, X is the second, the youngest is 27 years old this year, and still single. He talked about his own situation.

I was born in 1984, parents are the local Mongolian herders. When I was in childhood, because our family couldn't afford my school fee difficulties I had to drop out of junior school. Since then, I have been engaged in animal husbandry. Our family made an effort to find a wife for my older brother for nearly 80,000 Yuan (2005), most of which was a loan. When I should be married, our family was too poor and could not afford the bridewealth. Another problem was that no girl would marry me because I have no special skills. Several years have passed and now it seems to me that I am the only bachelor. There is no way I will marry (he sighs). In recent years, many local Mongolian girls migrate to the cities to look for well-paid jobs, and marry in the better conditions of urban areas. Han girls detest this place as too remote, economically backward, and don't want to marry here, resulting in many local men becoming bachelors.

According to him, there are 54 unmarried males who are over 27 years old (someone over 27 years old in rural areas is known as a bachelor), accounting for one-third of those who are marriageable and the number is increasing now.

Case 2

Z, a Mongolian girl, comes from Yingen Township. After graduating from Inner Mongolia University, she has been working in Hohhot. In 2010, she got married to a Han. When the author asked her why she chose to marry a Han, she smiled cheerfully: "Now who cares the nationalities when they find their mates, as long as

the mate is good for you?”. The author then asked: “Does your family agree with you when you decide to marry Han?”. She replied: “At first, my parents are not very satisfied, but they eventually agreed, and they mainly looked at my attitude. Also my husband was my high school mate; we have a good emotional bond”. He further asked: “Currently, many Mongolian girls marry Han, with the result that Mongolian young adults can’t marry. What do you think this?”. She replied:

It is indeed a big problem. I think the government should encourage Mongolian girls to marry in remote areas. Also, the government should make efforts to support minority areas so that Mongolian women can stay in the backward places. You know marriage is free in law, anyone can’t intervene others’ freedom of marriage, so the government only adjusts it at the macro level.

Case 3

Y, aged 85, is a Mongolia herdsman living in Yingen Township. He was interviewed on November 4, 2013, and here are some of his reflections:

I was born in 1930 and experienced the period of Kuomintang rule. After liberation, I witnessed other periods, such as the period of the Agricultural Cooperatives, the Cultural Revolution, the Household Contract System, and the Reform and Opening Up Period. Before the Reform and Opening Up Period, local Mongolian and Han people didn’t interact frequently, they had their own geographical territories. Mongolians were engaged in a variety of grazing, while Han took up agriculture. Some also fed a number of cattle and sheep. The border line used to be distinct for them as both were unwilling to pass over. I almost never heard of a case of intermarriage.

One reason was the cultural disparity. The second was Mongolian parents disapproved of their children marrying Han. I remembered vividly that once time, some old people said that our girls married Han easily, conversely it was difficult for our adults to marry Han girls. But they acquiesced to Mongolian marrying Han girls.

Since the Reform and Opening Up Period, with economic development and the freedom policy of marriage being implemented, intermarriages between Mongolian and Han have been common. Rather than stay in the grassland,

many Mongolia youth like to go to the city to find jobs, and many girls marry Han males, I assume that intermarriage could account for one third of the total.

As far as I am concerned, intermarriages have two main effects. Firstly, it is conspicuous that many Mongolian girls marry Han but Mongolian adults can’t marry Han girls, thus leading to some Mongolian adults being unable to find their mates. Our village has several singles who should be married.

Secondly, what worries me is that our Mongolian culture is weakening. Most of the hybrid children from exogamy families want to join normal schools rather than Mongolian schools. Neither can they speak and write our ethnic language, nor do they like to wear ethnic costumes, let alone following our ethnic habits, religious festivals, and other traditional culture. In the long term, our Mongolian people will be slowly assimilated into the Han; our ethnic group will be doomed because we lose the foundation of ethnic existence—ethnic culture.

Thus, we can see that an ethnic group’s economic development level is an important index for measuring the degree of marriage squeeze in the future. The faster the group’s economic development, the more it can attract other ethnic group females to the marriage market and thus the less it faces social problems. If an ethnic group’s economic development is weak, the more it will lose female resources and the more serious will be its welfare problems. It is worrying that marriage exclusion has just begun and there are no signs that it will stop.

The Impact on Relations Between Han and the Minorities: The Case of the Ewenke

Since Han are marrying minority females in substantial numbers, this is bound to cause inter-ethnic tension. The intermarriage rate between Han and female members of the Ewenke minority group in Aoluguya, Inner Mongolia, is now over 78%, and their children are brought up basically as Han. Gao Bingzhong claimed that there are three reasons to explain this situation: (1) Ewenke males like drinking and easily get into trouble; (2) they live in harsh conditions; and (3) the low levels of Ewenke children’s education (Gao 1997: 345).

This process of Ewenke female exogamy has created a large number of unmarried Ewenke men. They have been joined by divorced men, who are finding it too difficult to remarry. This situation will damage this minority's overall welfare and hinder its sustainable social and demographic development. The unmarried find it easy to blame the situation on the wider "society" and even attribute the marriage problems to discrimination by the Han majority. They begin to detest the Han and even refuse to interact with them, hence damaging harmonious relationships between the two ethnic groups.

Intermarriage Influences on the Healthy Development of Ethnic Areas

The dynamism of the minority areas has been weakened by marital exclusion. Firstly, with large scale and long term marriage of the Han, some minority young men have to leave the region, resulting in a residue effect. Simultaneously, intermarriages have indirectly triggered social instability and regional insecurity in ethnic areas. The exclusion of minorities by the Han has resulted in poverty, social unease, and such indices of instability as violence, drunkenness, and crime. The poor minority areas contain a high number of sex starved adult men, who will be more prone to violence, drunkenness, and crime.

Secondly, suicide is another phenomenon that is linked to the marriage problem. While the Chinese average suicide rate is 23, i.e., among the highest in the world, according to the author's survey (He 2013) in the western minority regions, the suicide rate reached a staggering 94/per 100,000, i.e., four times the national average. The causes of suicides are mostly related to marital problems. Wedding scams happen frequently because older youths are too anxious to get married. For example, 300,000 RMB of (about 42,000 dollars) betrothal gifts were misappropriated in four villages of Liaocheng⁷.

Thirdly, intermarriages also affect the security of

women in ethnic regions. As the number of "bachelor villages" increases, traditional morals break down and the women or children left behind become "the vulnerable among the vulnerable". For example, a criminal suspect named Fan X robbed 25 times and raped 15 times in the border area of Anhui and Henan Province in 2004. Most of his victims were rural women, who had been left behind (Yan 2005: 17-21).

Fourthly, because of "intermarriage exclusion", trafficking, consanguineous alliances, exchange of sisters and under-age marriages are increasing. It is also likely to create a black market of "buying and renting wives". Polyandry, mixed cohabitation, prostitution, and other social evils become likely and the cost of social security will inevitably increase.

The illegal marriage of rural people across borders has emerged in minority areas. For example, Chinese policemen found that there were over 10 trafficked Vietnamese cohabiting with local people in a village of Gansu Province. There is a shortage of accurate data on the overall number of Vietnamese women "marrying into" China, but Vietnamese statistics suggest that it is not a small number. A Vietnamese officer, who was a member of "national action project" aimed at combating trafficking women and children, said in 2012, China was the biggest country of destination for human traffickers, accounting for 65% of all relevant cases between 2004 and 2010⁸. In the northern area of China, some people cohabited with smuggled women from North Korea; most of them already had children, but their children are unable to obtain legal status.

CONCLUSIONS

It is often claimed that ethnic intermarriage encourages a more open-minded society and "social respect" between groups in a multi-ethnic society (Sidanius and Pratto 1998: 290-305). It is very

common that some ethnic groups have more intermarriages than marriages within the same ethnic group. Intermarriage may promote exchange between different ethnic groups in the short term. However, it is affected by the unequal distribution of social resources and the predatory behavior of strong groups toward vulnerable groups. In this study, the authors have shown the problems caused by unequal exchange between the majority and minorities within China. In the development of national regions, the loss of marriage resources is worse than economic backwardness since it greatly exacerbates social problems. Therefore, rather than blindly extolling intermarriage's positive function in ethnic relations, we need to consider the problems associated with intermarriage where groups are unequal.

Notes

1. Comprehensive treatment has been taken for high sex ratio at birth by six departments in Inner Mongolia. The Government's website. Retrieved March 8, 2012 (http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqpl/zggc/2012-03-08/content_5355330.html).
2. The data come from the authors' investigation to marriage registration departments of Rightqi.
3. The bulletin of 2010 sixth census data of Alxa. Source: ALXA daily's website, May 27, 2011.
4. The fifth population census in 2000. Retrieved September 28, 2010 (<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/>).
5. The fifth population census in 2000. Retrieved September 28, 2010 (<http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/>).
6. The three ethnic groups' intermarriage rate was respectively 86.19%, 84.13%, and 75.25% in 2013. Li, Xiaoxia. 2004. "The Analysis of the Status Quo of Intermarriages Among Ethnic Groups in China." *Population Research* 28(3):68-75.
7. "Five Vietnamese Brides Disappeared Together in Four Villages of Liaocheng, Losing Betrothal Gifts Three Hundred Thousand RMB", April 25, 2013. Source: Liaocheng News Network. Retrieve (<http://news.lcxw.cn/liaocheng/shehui/20130425/372837.html>).
8. Vietnamese officials alleged that China was the most country to which Vietnam's women were trafficked. February 22, 2010. Source: Global Network. Retrieve (http://shehui.daqi.com/article/2823379_1.html).

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