

Marriages and Spouse Selection in Tibet¹

Family is the basic unit of human society and people formed their families through various patterns of marriages. “The family is the only social institution other than religion that is formally developed in all societies” (Goode, 1982: 5). When people consider spouse selection, it is generally not only the personal matter. “The relative evaluation the society places on the spouses,they do for the family line” (Goode, 1982:58). Different ethnic groups and social classes might have different patterns of marriage and different evaluation on spouse selection. Therefore, by studying marriage and family formation, the fundamental basic forms and networks of human organizations can be learned, the social stratification and mobility within various societies can be learned. Besides, the general norms and value systems of various societies and communities also can be learned in an indirect way through examining the standards of spouse selection of their members. It is why marriage and family studies have been one of major fields in sociology.

Approximately 4.59 million ethnic Tibetans lived on Tibetan Plateau in 1990. They have a long history and a brilliant cultural tradition. Due to its isolation from other parts of the world for centuries, the studies of Tibetan’s marriage and family formation have been limited in both China and the world.

The Institute of Sociology and Anthropology (ISA) at Peking University had a jointed research project, “Social Development in Tibet”, with the China Tibetology Research Center (CTRRC) in the late 1980s. As a part of this project, our joint research team carried out a sampling survey in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1988. The questionnaire used in this survey includes the questions on marriage, family, migration, education, occupation, income, consumption, language, and ethnic relations. This paper focuses on examining family of marriage patterns of the respondents in this survey.

Since this survey had two parts: rural counties and old urban area of Lhasa, the rural-urban comparison can be carried out in our analysis. This is an advantage of this survey. Moreover, intermarriage is a very important aspect in ethnic relation studies (Gordon, 1964:70) and seldom touched by other Tibetan studies, this issue will be discussed in this paper though the intermarriage cases were relatively small in our sample.

I. Research Literature of Tibetan Marriages

Accompanying the revival of social sciences in China since the 1980s, there have been some publications discussing marriage and family in Tibet in Chinese language. The literature can be divided into three parts. The first part was the studies based on historical records and investigation

¹ This paper was originally published in *Development and Society* Volume 30, Number 1 (June 2001), pp. 79-117. This is a revised version.

reports contacted in the 1950s². The examples of this part of studies are “Tibetans” (Lu Liandi, 1986:193-204) and “Tibetan Marriages and Families in Tibet before ‘Democratic Reform’” (Wu Chongzhong, 1991:480-499). These studies introduced several traditional marriage patterns in Tibetan society, and discussed the social and economic background for these patterns to emerge.

The second part of the literature analyze the basic structure and characters of Tibetan marriages based on census data. The examples are “Analysis of Marriages of Tibetan Population” (Wu Jianhua, 1992:145-157) and “Characteristics of Marriage and Family of Population in the TAR” (Cai Wenmei, 1992:167-179). This literature studied marriage structure, age difference between husband and wife, rates of unmarried, divorce, and widowed in Tibetan population based on demographic data, variables, and methods.

The third part of the literature is the research reports of recent marriage studies in Tibet. Some scholars have conducted field survey in the late 1980s and published their results of data analyses. An example is “Marriage and Childbearing of Tibetan Women in the TAR” (Wang Daben, 1993:44-52). As a teacher at Tibet University, he organized his native students to carry out a questionnaire interview survey in their hometowns during school vacations. The studies analyzed marriage patterns, age at first marriage, geographic circles of marriage spouses, and marriage decision-making processes based on the questionnaires of over 700 respondents.

In general, there are several marriage types among Tibetans besides monogamy. The patterns of polygamy, especially polyandry, have strongly interested many researchers. In Engels’ work *Origin of Family, Private Property and State* (1884:58), he discussed “polyandry in Tibet” as a special type of marriage. *The General chronicle of Sichuan: Western Frontier* (Sichuan Tongzhi: Xiyu) described that “popular local opinions (in western Sichuan) looked down the marriage of monogamy, and appreciated a woman to marry brothers of three or four for household harmony. In several areas of Litang, women must wear silver hairpins. One hairpin means one husband. If people see a woman with three or four hairpins, they know she is married to several brothers”(Chen Qingying, 1995:418). This record vividly described the phenomena of polyandry in western Sichuan and the positive attitude towards polyandry in local communities.

Rolf Alfred Stein described marriage patterns of Tibetans in his work *La Civilisation Tibetaine*. He believed that “the most typical marriage type seems to be polyandry. It is popular almost anywhere in both agricultural population and herdsmen, it just did not appear in Amdo (Qinghai)”(1982:93). Other publications mentioned that “in general opinion, according to the situation of abandoned land, population is reducing due to polyandry, ... but without systematical and reliable evidence” (Richardson, 1962:5).

The studies of Tibetan aristocracy marriages by Professor Nakane Chie also confirmed that “divorce, remarry, polygamy and polyandry are popular cases” (Nakane, 1992:343). Another study

² In the 1950s, the central government organized many research teams to send them to frontier regions to investigate the local communities of various ethnic minorities. Their reports became the base for policy designing towards local authority and organizations, also became the foundation for “minority group” recognition. These reports contain a lot of first-hand research records of the 1950s. Some of them printed in the early 1960s. These reports were re-edited and published in the 1980s as one of *Five Series of Ethnic Minority*.

stated that among marriages of Tibetans, “the most common arrangement is ‘Sasum’, it is a unit consisting of three spouses, regardless two females with one male or two males with one female, the last pattern is more popular” (Miller, 1987:338). Nancy Levine describes the polyandry families in southwest Tibet and their changes accompanying the system reforms since the 1950s (Levine, 1994).

The pattern of a woman married to several brothers is the basic type of polyandry. The pattern of several sisters married to one man is the basic type of polygamy. The marriage of brothers married to one wife often happened to aristocracy families, it would avoid the redistribution of family wealth by family splits. The marriage of sisters married to one man often happened to poor families, in many cases, the elder sister married the man, and younger sisters will live with him when they grow up. Father and son share one wife, and mother and daughter share one husband; these are the other two patterns of polygamy and polyandry, based on the principle of “marriage out of family”. “A man has the right to marry the daughter from his wife and her former husband. In general, a man married the widowed woman with a young daughter. When the daughter grows up, she sleeps with step father” (Chen Qingying, 1995:419).

Polyandry in practice actually has been accompanying by “informal union”. Among the brothers who are married to the same women, one or more might have other single women as “informal unions”. They visited these women regularly, and provided expenses to “their” children, but these children had no rights of the household property. Their unmarried sisters lived with them and also have their “informal union”. This is called “sibling household”. It is explained by “low valuation of marriage and distrust of in-laws” among Tibetan peasants; it seems that “sibling co-residence” and “informal union” has become popular in some rural areas in Tibet in the 1990s, “they are far more common now than in the past and no longer serve as an index of landlessness or poverty” (Levine, 1994:478).

Barbara Aziz studied a Tibetan community in China-Nepal border area. Among total 430 Tibetan households she studied, 122 (28.4%) were either polygamous or polyandrous. The structure of these 122 households was as follows: fraternal polyandry (80), sororal polygamy (14), unrelated males sharing a wife (2), unrelated females sharing a husband (8), father and son sharing a wife (8), mother and daughter sharing a husband (10). Although only about 28.4% practiced polygamy or polyandry, Tibetans had a positive attitude towards these marriages. “When they cite polygamous marriages, Tibetans do so as a recognition of success. They praise that partners for not being jealous,” and such marriages can keep household prosperous. “Almost all of these occur in the wealthiest households of a village” (Aziz, 1978:139,143).

Chinese scholars noticed that Tibetan had exogamy restrictions in partner selection. Barbara Aziz also found serious restrictions among these Tibetans. “The rules of exogamy declare anyone who is a kin ineligible as a marriage or sexual partner, and anyone who is not a kin a potential mate. ... Whereas people express abhorrence at the idea that they might have sexual relations with a kinsperson, they delight in the idea of having access to the spouse of a kinsperson” (Aziz, 1978:137)³.

³ For the studies of polyandry, there are also some other literature focusing on local communities in Himalayan regions outside Tibet which might provide helpful insights in understanding Tibetan marriages (Prince Peter, 1963; Parmar, 1975).

This is very different from Han Chinese customs. Han Chinese would delight to have marriages between cousins, but could not accept the idea that relatives (especially direct relatives such as father-son, mother-daughter) share the same spouse. It reflects the different social norms between Han and Tibetans in regulating relationship between generations (“Xiao”—filial piety--has been the most important moral norm in Confucianism), between brotherhood, among relatives and friends.

In Charles Bell’s description, age was a factor in polyandry. “Where polyandry holds, the husbands are brothers. Having married one of the brothers in a family, the wife married also the other brothers who are younger, but not any that are older than him” (Bell, 1928:192).

The common character of above studies is their focus on marriage types of Tibetans, and their discussions focused on the structure of marriages. In the 1950s, the Chinese government organized a series research projects in ethnic minority areas. The focus of these researches was historical and social changes of local communities of various ethnic minority groups. Some reports described local marriage patterns at that time. These reports were re-edited by “Tibet Social and Historical Survey Series Editing Group” (TSHSSEG) and published as a part of *Five Series of Ethnic Minorities* in the 1980s. The statistical data for marriages from these reports and other literature are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Some Survey Results of Marriage Types in Tibet

Survey site & date	Total		Mono-gamy	Poly-gamy	Poly-andry	2 husband & 2 wives	Other*
	# marriage	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Naqu. Kongma tribe (1957)	127	100.0	95.3	0.0	1.6	0.0	3.1
2. Naqu. Luomarangxue tribe (1958)	54	100.0	92.6	5.6	1.8	0.0	0.0
3. Naqu.Sangxiong.Aba tribe (1961)	267	100.0	84.6	4.9	10.5	0.0	0.0
4. Zhanang C. Nangselin Xika (1958)	104	100.0	84.6	5.8	9.6	0.0	0.0
5. Jiangzi. Kangma C. Xianieru (1962)	104	100.0	75.0	0.0	25.0	0.0	0.0
6. Lazi C. Tuoji Xika (1958)	44	100.0	79.5	11.4	9.1	0.0	0.0
7. Lazi C. Liu Xika (1958)	122	100.0	60.7	2.4	32.0	0.0	4.9
8. Lazi C. Helong Xika (1958)	76	100.0	40.8	7.9	31.6	6.6	13.2
9. Songpan C. Xiaminba Village (1952)	21	100.0	81.0	0.0	19.0	0.0	0.0
10. Hongyuan C. Tangke Tribe (1952)	63	100.0	88.9	0.0	11.1	0.0	0.0
11. Qiongjie. Qiongguo D. Xue X.(1959)**	188	100.0	97.9	1.6	0.5	0.0	0.0
12. Qiongjie. Quegou D. Qiangxin X (1959)**	97	100.0	-	-	3.1	-	-
13. Qiongjie. Quegou D. Qiangxin X (1987)**	160	100.0	-	3.1	-	-	-
14. Qiongjie. Jiuhe D. Jiu X (1959)**	70	100.0	-	57.1	-	--	--
15. Various areas in TAR (1988)***	753	100.0	85.0	1.7	13.3	0.0	0.0

* “Other” mainly refers to “formal concubine” with separate residence;

** The survey taken in 1987 but recorded the marriage situation in 1959 before the democratic reform”;

*** The survey taken by Tibetan University students during their summer vacation at home areas.

1. 2. 3. : TSHSSEG, 1987c: 13, 49, 219;

4 : TSHSSEG, 1987b: 157;

5: TSHSSEG, 1988a: 218;

6. 7. 8: TSHSSEG, 1988b: 113, 317, 595, 597;

9. 10: Ou Chaoquan, 1988: 81;

11. 12. 13. 14: Chinese Center for Tibetological Studies, 1992: 164-165;

15: Wang Daben, 1993: 45.

From this table we notice that monogamy was still the major type of marriages in most areas in Tibet in the 1950s and 1960s. Polyandry was the second group in size, and consisted of one third in

Liu Xika in 1958. Polyandry even consisted of 13.3% in total marriages interviewed by the Tibet University Survey in 1988. In contrast, polygamy existed in many places but its percentage in total marriages was usually lower than 10%, except some special cases (e.g. Lazi County, Tuoji Xika). These types of marriage also existed in other Tibetan-inhabited areas outside the TAR. For example, in Muli Tibetan Autonomous County, “polygamy and polyandry ... consisted of over 30% of total marriages in the Ming and Qing dynasties, even above 20-30% in 1956” (Wu Wen, 1984:43). The percentage is even higher than that in the TAR (Table 1).

Besides three major types of marriage (monogamy, polygamy, polyandry), there were some other types of marriages among Tibetans. The Survey Report of Zilong Xika, Lazi County introduced a type of marriage “two husbands with two wives”. “Two men married two women and live together. ... In a case that two brothers married two wives who are blood sisters” (TSHSSEG, 1989c: 592).

The Survey Report of Liu Xika, Lazi County described another type of marriage “Sumo” in details. “The woman openly living with a man who already has a wife is called ‘Sumo’ (‘Wai-shi’ in Chinese), meaning the woman standing aside. This kind of woman is different from lovers. Because her man put ‘side jade jewelry’ in her ‘bazhu’ (head ornaments), her relationship with that man is public. All these ‘Sumo’ are single women” (TSHSSEG, 1989c: 320). This relation is similar to “concubine” in Han regions. In most cases, concubines live with their husband and formal wife together in Han regions. This relationship should be considered as a marriage type. But it is very likely that this type of marriages were classified into a category of “the family with a mother but without a father” (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 13), or a category of “the family without a marriage” (TSHSSEG, 1988:157), or these women were ignored as single women.

Even among these major types of marriage, bride(s) living in the house of groom(s) house and groom(s) living in the house of bride(s) should also be distinguished, because there are some significant differences between the two settings (power over properties and children within family, status in community, etc.). In the case of Jiuhe District of Qionglie Zong, among its total 70 households, 41 were the case where grooms lived in brides’ house. “Among the 41 households, 39 households were the cases where a husband married two sisters, 1 household was a husband married three sisters, other one household was monogamy. The reason for these marriage patterns is that all these families were serfs (“Tre-ba”)⁴ of Rewudeying monastery. Since many males had to become

⁴ The serf stratification in Tibet had several “classes”:

- (a) “Tre-ba” cultivated hereditarily “duty land” from aristocracy or monasteries, their body is attached to the land. Their status was still serf, but they had a large amount of land to work on and also owned some animals and tools. Because of the variation of the land quality and other properties, “Tre-ba” could be classified into “rich Tre-ba”, “middle rank Tre-ba” and “poor Tre-ba”. The “poor Tre-ba consisted about 70% of the total Tre-ba”. “Tre-ba” pay various tax to lords in household.
- (b) “Du-jung” were serfs without “duty land”. They were in a lower rank compared with “Tre-ba”. “Du-jung” could be divided into four groups: (i) rent a piece of land from his serf-owner’s estates, (ii) rent a piece of land from rich “Tre-ba”, (iii) provide labor service and pay his serf-owner the duty tax, (iv) engaged in handicrafts and pay owner the duty tax. “Du-jung” paid their

monks and serve the labor duty of monastery, there were fewer men left in society for marriage. Therefore many households recruited a man at home as groom for their daughters. The older sister became bride first, then younger sisters became his wives later” (CCTS, 1992:165). This type of marriages (a man joins wife’s family, lives on its property and takes its name) was also described by Sir Charles Bell in his book (Bell, 1928:176).

Based on the reports from field survey, polyandry and polygamy can be classified into several “sub-types”: (1) brothers share a wife, (2) father and son share a wife, (3) uncle and nephew share a wife, (4) friends share a wife, (5) sisters share a husband, (6) mother and daughter share a husband, (7) aunt and niece share a husband, (8) female friends share a husband, etc. Based on the reports edited by TSHSSEG, several points regarding Tibetan marriages can be summarized as below:

(1) Tibetans basically followed the principles of “in-class marriage” (people should marry within their same social class in local hierarchy) and “out-kinship marriage” (people should marry outside blood kinship). There are many types and sub-types of marriages among Tibetans in different areas.

(2) Monogamy, polyandry, and polygamy are three major marriage types among Tibetans, but there are other types of marriage with a small numbers as the variation or complement of the three major types. If we only concentrate on three major types and ignore others, we cannot get the whole picture, and also cannot understand the three major types as well.

(3) There is great regional variation in structure of marriage types in Tibetan-inhabited areas. For example, monogamy consisted of about 90% of total marriages in Naqu areas of northern TAR, while polyandry consisted of one third in two Xikas in Lazi County.

People noticed the regional variation of marriage types a long time ago. In eastern Tibet (U), “out of every 20 households one might say that 15 would be monogamous, 3 polyandrous and 2 polygamous. In the northern plains, (it was) estimated the proportion at 10 polyandrous, 7 monogamous and 3 polygamous” (Bell, 1928:194). Hong Dichan gave the similar estimates (1936:54). An article in *Bianzheng Gonglun* estimated that “polygamous marriages consisted of 15% of the total in eastern Tibet and 50% of the total in northern Tibet (*Bianzheng Gonglun* (1), 1948). Literature supports the finding that polyandry was relatively concentrated in northern Tibet. Based on recent research, this type of marriage today still consists of a certain percentage in pastoral areas in the northern TAR.

Regional variations of marriage types has been associated with major economic activities (agriculture, animal husbandry), population density (available resources), types of economic organization (ownership, proportion of serf stratification), and the role of monasteries in local community. In general, there were more monogamous and “Sumo” marriages in the areas with richer “Tre-ba” households). For example, the survey in Zilong Shika in 1959 reported that among 26 “Tre-ba” households, 19 of them were polyandry with brothers sharing a wife, 1 household with father and

tax by individual, not household. This is a significant difference between “Tre-ba” and “Du-jung” besides the different tenure land (Goldstein, 1971: 65-67).

(c) “Nang-san” were slaves of serf-owners. They did not have any properties or freedom. Their owners could sell or kill them or give them to another serf-owner as gifts. Their children were also “Nang-san” (Tanzen and Zhang Xiangming, 1991a: 86-88).

son sharing a wife, and 6 were monogamous marriages. Among 50 “Du-jung” households, 20 were monogamous marriages, 2 were polyandrous, 1 was polygamous, 4 were “Sumo”, 5 were “lovers” and 19 were single (TSHSSEG, 1988b: 595-597).

In Charles Bell’s opinion, polygamy is for wealthy men who can afford two and occasionally even three wives. He described some weddings and was told that “the feasting will be on a smaller scale (for marrying a second wife)” (Bell, 1928:192). For regional variations, he cited different opinions. Rockhill believed that polyandry prevails largely among the peasantry but not among the nomads⁵. Reverend J. Huston Edgar thought “the nomads around Li-tang seem peculiarly given to polyandry” (Combe, 1926:73). A secretary of the Dalai Lama told Charles Bell that “polyandry is common among the communities of herdsmen in the Northern Plains, as well as in western Tibet, where the bulk of the people are herdsmen”. He explained the reason for polyandry among herdsmen “that they were needed to go to the lower countries to buy grain, as well as to go to the higher lands to procure salt for consumption and sale. ... And no doubt in the nomad’s wandering life women and children are somewhat at a disadvantage”. Another explanation Bell learned is that “polyandry is due to the fear of the family splitting up and of the family property being divided. This would impoverish the people”. Bell concluded that “polyandry is frequently practiced by both farmers and herdsmen” (Bell, 1928:193-194).

In most literature, scholars noticed the regional variation and peasant/nomad differentials in polyandry practice. They also notice the wealthier people had more polyandrous marriages. Goldstein suggested that marriage patterns should be studied in its relation to the system of stratification and land tenure. To a household, whether polyandry or polygamy would be in practice actually related to two factors. The first is its status in social stratification and land tenure (if they were “Tre-ba” or “Du-jung” in land tenure system, then they should pay tax by household or by individual). The second is the gender structure of the generation (how many males and females). Based on his study, he summarized two key features of marriages among Tibetans: (1) marriage patterns varied by social class, and (2) the wealthier “Tra-ba” households intended to contract only one marriage per generation and he termed “monomarital principle”; and this resulted in stem family (Goldstein, 1971:68).

In her study of Tibetan community in North Nepal, Nancy Levine more emphasized the impact of polyandry on interpersonal relationships and village political organizations. She associated polyandry with household systems and support of a special type of domestic economy (Levine, 1988: xiv).

There are quite different opinions about the polyandrous marriage in Tibet. Engels mentioned that “the most ancient family pattern was group marriage”, “It would be an interesting issue that

⁵ “The tillable lands are of small extent and are all under cultivation, so it is extremely difficult for any one to add to his fields, which as a general rule produce only enough to support one small family. If at the death of the head of the family the property was divided among the sons, there would not be enough to support the wants of all of them if each had a wife and family. ... The only solution of the problem in this case was for the sons of a family to take one wife among them, by which means their ancestral estate remained undivided, and they also saved considerable money. Among the nomads, where existence is not dependent on the produce of the soil, where herds of yak and flocks of sheep and goats are ever increasing and supply all their owners’ wants, this necessity of preserving the family property undivided can never have existed” (Rockhill, 1891:211-212).

whether the polyandry system in Indian and Tibet, ...came from group marriage, it needs further study” (Engels, 1884:58). In some Chinese scholars’ opinions, the description of “group marriage” is “close to the polyandry phenomena in Tibet” (Wu Chongzhong, 1991:493). Therefore “the polyandrous marriage in Tibet is the residual of ancient system” (Ou Chaoquan, 1988:83). Others emphasized that “the special types of marriages in modern Tibetan society were neither the residual of primary group marriage systems or the base of modern family and marriage patterns in Tibet; these were the results of feudal serfdom in Tibet” (Zhang Quanwu, 1988:99). The western literature as introduced above more emphasize the factor of stratification and households’ concern of family property splitting.

From this brief review, we can get a rough idea about the relevant research literature on marriage and families in Tibet. It must be said that we have not seen many systematical and large-scale studies concentrating on marriages in Tibet up to now.

The lack of research literature and historical materials make the study of marriages in Tibet very difficult to be carried out in a systematical and longitudinal way. Some western scholars such as Melyvn Goldstein and Barbara Aziz had to conduct out their studies of Tibetan marriages among the refugee communities in Nepal and India in the 1970s. For Chinese scholars, social science research has only been allowed since the 1980s due to political reasons. This explained why there were so few large social surveys in Tibet focusing on marriage and family in recent years.

Our 1988 survey included the aspect of marriage, but in our questionnaire only 17 questions were directly related to marriage. These data only can provide some basic information on marital status, basic situation of both sides (bride and groom) at the wedding time, and the first marriage for those who married more than once. Much of the content of our questionnaire (income, occupation, education, etc.) was not covered by other marriage studies. Therefore, this study might provide some useful information for the future studies of marriages and families in Tibet.

II. Marital Status of Interviewed Respondents in the TAR

Our 1988 survey covered 644 urban households under 4 street offices in old urban areas of Lhasa as well as 668 rural households under 24 Xiang in 3 prefectures. Tibetans consisted of the majority of all respondents (97.8% in Lhasa and 98.9% in rural areas). The percentage of Han population consisted of 36.8% in 1982 and 28.9% in 1990 in total population of Lhasa Urban District (urban sector of Lhasa). Because our sampling only covered the old urban area while most Han residents lived in new urban areas, the percentage of Han in our sample is really tiny. From the point of studying Tibetan marriage, this sample might have a higher representativeness.

Among Lhasa respondent household heads, 60.8% were women, compared with 24.7% of women for rural household heads. There might be some reasons for Lhasa households to prefer women as household heads. Lhasa household heads were 9 years older than rural household heads on average. This age difference should be kept in mind when marriages were compared between urban and rural household heads since marriage patterns might differ by age. In general, Lhasa respondents may represent the native part of urban residents in the TAR, while rural respondents may represents

the rural residents in most areas of the TAR. Some nomads lived in remote areas in northern Plateau might be different from our respondents, but their number is small in total.

There were 8 Han households and 13 Hui households in our sample; in order to concentrate on Tibetans, these 21 households are excluded in following discussions. Table 2 compared the 1990 census data on marital status of all residents at age 20 or above in the TAR (because Tibetan consisted 96.1% of the total, these numbers can represent Tibetans in general) and our 1988 survey data on marital status for only Tibetan household heads. Because our data do not include other household members (some of them also married) and the average age of our household heads was 52.8 in Lhasa and 43.8 in rural areas, our data would represent older generations compared with the census data. In contrast, the average age of the census coverage was 29.4.

The age difference between the respondents of our survey and census data may explain the higher widowed rates of our survey (13.2% vs. 5.3%). The age difference between urban and rural respondents in our 1988 survey (9 years) may also explain a higher widowed rate for Lhasa household heads compared with rural household heads (17.4% vs. 9.0%). The higher rates of single people in the census data are also due to the age factor. The city had a relatively lower rate of single compared with that of towns and counties. It seems that urban people marry at earlier ages than do rural people. This finding is different from the general impression. If it is not true, the only explanation is the general longer life for urban residents which makes a higher proportion of older population, and most of this population are not single.

Table 2. Marriage Status of Rural-urban Residents in the TAR

		Single in total %	Marriage status of married persons (%)				Total #
			With spouse	Divorced	Widowed	Total	
1990 census	City	22.4	94.7	2.3	3.0	100.0	79445
(Total population	Town	24.4	93.7	2.6	3.7	100.0	62334
Above age of 20)	County	25.6	90.6	3.4	6.0	100.0	550083
	Total	25.1	91.4	5.4	5.4	100.0	691862
1988 survey *	Lhasa	10.2	78.6	4.0	17.4	100.0	552
(Tibetan	Counties	11.6	87.9	3.1	9.0	100.0	555
household heads)	Total	10.9	83.3	3.5	13.2	100.0	1107

* The percentages were unmarried and married in total interviewed household heads.

The data in Table 3 confirmed the preference of Lhasa residents to have women as household heads since 66.7% of these female household heads lived with their husbands.

The percentages of divorce rates are similar between the two (3.5% vs. 3.4%). Considering the age difference of 18.9 years, this suggests a much higher divorce rates among Tibetan younger generation.

Among Lhasa respondents who reported as “divorced” or “widowed”, 34 were male household heads (12.3% of total male heads) and 84 were female heads (24.8% of total female heads)(Table 3). It seems that urban women were more hesitant to remarry as compared with men after divorce or lost their husbands. Rural women who were divorced or widowed were 37 (23.1% of total female heads) while the men in these two statuses were 30 (6.4% of total male heads). It seems that rural men

remarried more quickly than urban men did, while rural females shared the cautious patterns of urban females.

If the factor of times of marriage is taken into account, we might get a more reasonable explanation. If the single household heads are excluded, 9.5% of Lhasa male household heads and 8.1% of rural heads married at least twice; the rural-urban difference is small. Among female household heads, 14.8% of urban female heads and 8.9% of rural female heads married at least twice. Therefore, Lhasa women had a higher possibility of remarrying than Lhasa males and rural females. This finding contradicts the above discussion. Times of marriage are the bases to calculate remarriage rate. Marital status is only the current situation of marriage, it does not tell anything about whether remarriage happened in the previous process. Combining the information of marital status and times of marriage, the explanation is that urban marriages were not stable as rural marriages. Urban females had a higher proportion of being married twice than rural females, but their percentages of “divorce” and “widowed” were similar to rural females.

Table 3. Marriage Status of Interviewed Tibetan Household Heads (1988)

		Lhasa				Counties			
		Male head		Female head		Male head		Female head	
		Household	%	Household	%	Household	%	Household	%
Marriage status	Single	34	12.3	29	8.6	36	7.7	37	23.1
	Married	208	75.4	226	66.7	402	85.9	86	53.8
	Divorced	6	2.2	16	4.7	8	1.7	9	5.6
	Widowed	28	10.1	68	20.0	22	4.7	28	17.5
	Total	276	100.0	339	100.0	468	100.0	160	100.0
Times of marriage	None	34	12.3	29	8.6	36	7.7	37	23.1
	Once	219	79.3	264	77.9	397	84.8	112	70.0
	Twice	23	8.3	44	13.0	31	6.6	11	6.9
	> 3 times	0	0.0	2	0.5	4	0.9	0	0.0
	Total	276	100.0	339	100.0	468	100.0	160	100.0
Type of marriage	Monogamy	240	99.2	308	99.4	379	87.7	115	94.5
	Polygamy	1	0.4	1	0.3	24	5.6	4	3.3
	Polyandry	1	0.4	0	0.0	15	3.5	4	3.3
	Unknown	0	0.0	1	0.3	14	3.2	0	0.0
	Total	242	100.0	310	100.0	432	100.0	123	100.0
Registration status	Registered	116	47.9	113	36.5	164	38.0	49	39.8
	Unregistered	111	45.9	179	57.7	252	58.3	69	56.1
	Unknown	15	6.2	18	5.8	16	3.7	5	4.1
	Total	242	100.0	310	100.0	432	100.0	123	100.0
Ethn. status	Tibetan	227	93.8	297	95.8	429	99.3	116	94.3
Of present	Han	14	5.8	10	3.2	3	0.7	7	5.7
Spouse (incl.	Others	1	0.4	3	1.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Divorced but	Unknown	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Un-remarry	Total	242	100.0	310	100.0	432	100.0	123	100.0
Ethn. status Of first marriage	Tibetan	20	87.0	41	89.1	32	91.4	10	90.9
	Han	3	13.0	3	6.5	0	0.0	1	9.1
	Others	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Unknown	0	0.0	2	4.4	3	8.6	0	0.0
	Total	23	100.0	46	100.0	35	100.0	11	100.0

There might be two reasons for less stable marriages in Lhasa: (1) a higher geographic mobility than rural residents with more migrants, and (2) a large proportion of “unemployed” and self-employed people who have no stable occupations. Increased migration would separate husbands and wives, and unstable occupations would result in unstable income. The instability in residence, income, and social status as well as spouse separation is likely to result in instability of family and increase the possibility of divorce.

III. Marriage Types in the TAR

A total of 1,092 interviewed household heads reported their marriage types, including both rural-urban residents and both genders. About 95.4% were monogamous marriages, 2.7% were polygamous and 1.9% were polyandrous marriages (Table 4). Most of the polygamous and polyandrous marriages were found in rural areas, but we did find some cases in Lhasa. This result probably represented the basic marriage pattern in Lhasa, Shigatse and Shannan areas, the most populated area along the middle reaches of Tsangpo River.

Tibet University students contacted a marriage survey in the summer vacation of 1988. The students returned to their hometowns and interviewed the households of local communities. They found a higher percentage of polyandry (14.7%) and less polygamy (1.9%) in rural areas compared with our 1988 survey. On the other hand, they found only monogamy in city and towns. Since some of their survey sites were located in pastoral areas in Naqu (a prefecture in northern TAR), their result partly represent marriage patterns in this area. The comparison between the results of our survey and that of Tibet University survey in the same year confirmed regional variations in marriage types, which was described by Charles Bell and Hong Dichen in their publication in the 30s and 40s (Hong Dichen, 1936).

Table 4. Comparison of Two Surveys in the TAR in 1988

Marriage type	Tibet University Survey 1988 *			Peking University Survey 1988		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Monogamy	83.4	100.0	85.1	91.3	99.4	95.4
Polygamy	1.9	0.0	1.7	5.2	0.4	2.7
Polyandry	14.7	0.0	13.2	3.5	0.2	1.9
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total households	680	73	753	541	551	1092

* Source: Wang Daben, 1993: 45.

From both surveys, it is clear that monogamous marriages dominate in urban areas, while there are polygamous and polyandrous marriages in rural areas in the TAR. The other two types of marriage have existed in Tibet for centuries, and still have some influences among Tibetan people. According to a questionnaire survey from Tibet University, “64.2% of 53 Tibetan students believed that polyandry and polygamy ... will benefit the family harmony and its labor division and cooperation” (Liu Rwei, 1988:275). If young university students in the late 1980s believe the advantages of these two marriage types, there must be a rational for these marriage types under the

current economic and social conditions. These types therefore are still accepted and practiced by some residents, and probably will last for a period of time in Tibet.

Marriage registration was introduced into the TAR after the 1959 land reform. “Except for government employees, workers and some urban residents, this system actually has not been in practice in many rural areas”(Liu Ruei, 1988:268). Table 3 shows that there were still about 45-58% of the household heads without official marriage registration in 1988, and there were more residents in rural areas without marriage registration.

Regardless rural and urban areas, there were more female heads with a marriage registration compared with male heads. In general, women and rural residents have less contact with administration and the outside world; they were less influenced by government encouragement of marriage registration. Marriage registration is a legal status for the marriages which are protected by laws and also for the rights claimed for household properties by couples and their descendants. The fact that a large proportion of urban and rural Tibetan residents are without marriage registration reflects that many Tibetans still maintain traditional views about social relations and marriage.

IV. Decision Making of Marriage in the TAR

When people are going to get married, who make the decision in selecting spouse is a key issue in marriage studies. Whether decision is made by young men and women themselves, by their parents, or even by the community leaders may reflect the stages of social development of a society. In the early stage of human civilization, men and women were quite free to be together. Accompanying the emergence of private properties and strengthened power of family and clans, parents and clan chiefs decided people’s marriage partners at a great extent. A marriage was not a simple affair between two young people, but related to the interest of two families, two clans, and two communities. When a society develops into a higher stage, young people have more rights as citizens in society and become more independent in social and economic affairs; they also obtain more rights in selecting their spouse. Their rights are also protected by the law.

The 1950s’ investigations gave some attention to marriage decision patterns in ethnic minority areas. The survey in Qiongjie Zong (Shannan) revealed that there were limitations on marriages in aspects of social status and blood relations: marriage was prohibited between descendants of paternal and maternal sides within 6 generations⁶. Marriage between aristocratic and ordinary people, between general occupations and “low class occupations” (blacksmith, butcher, beggar, corpse carrier, etc.) were also forbidden.

In Shannan region, “the cases of parents making decisions for their children in spouse selection occurred more often among the rich, while poor people had more freedom in their marriage” (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 98). Similar situations were also found in the field surveys in other areas⁷. In

⁶ Other studies argue that marriages rules in Tibetans “prohibit descendants of paternal sides for ever, and allow descendants of maternal sides to marry after 7 generations” (Lu Liandi, 1986:194).

⁷ For Tuoji Shika (Lazi County), “Tre-ba’s marriages were mainly decided by their parents, ... and there were loose of parents’ control on spouse selection for Du-jung” (TSHSSEG, 1989c: 112). For Niu Shika (Shigatse), “the marriages of aristocracy or rich Tre-ba were basically arranged by parents, ... the young people of poor Tre-ba

Tibet before 1959 land reform, there were social and economic reasons for the poor youth to have more freedom in their marriages. “Since Du-jung and Qian-dou had no ‘Tre-gang’ lands or ‘Ma-gang’ lands, they were not bonded by the land properties and duties and therefore had more freedom in marriages”(TSHSSEG, 1989c: 112). But the serfs belonging to different estates could not get married without permission of their owners. If a female serf of one estate married a male serf of another estate, the owner of male serf should give a serf to the owner of female serf as a compensation (CCTS, 1992:161-162). “The children of serfs who belong to different owners will be owned by their gender, boys belong to the owner of father serf, girls belong to the owner of mother serf (CCTS, 1992:125). Therefore, the “freedom” for the poor had limitations under the serfdom and estate system.

The channels for young people to get to know each other before their wedding are introduced in Table 5. “Decided by parents” is also as one of the channels. In general, “known by themselves” is the leading group in both rural and urban areas, as well as in various periods of time. These young people might have consulted their parents, but they made the decision. Lhasa urban residents had a lower percentage of marriages decided by parents (11.7%) as compared with rural residents (18.8%). Urban youth would have more opportunities to know each other in work place or social communications; 81.5% knew their spouses by themselves. In contrast, only 64.7% of rural respondents knew spouse by themselves.

Table 5. The Channels of Getting Know Each Other Before Wedding for Interviewed Tibetan Household Heads

Date of Wedding	Lhasa					Total	Counties					Total
	1*	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	
-1930	16	1	1	1	-	19	3	1	-	1	-	5
1931-1940	28	4	1	1	-	34	10	5	1	1	-	17
1941-1950	64	14	2	1	-	81	29	2	8	-	1	40
1951-1960	100	12	6	1	-	119	84	18	10	7	1	120
1961-1970	88	11	5	-	-	104	98	39	11	5	-	153
1971-1980	70	8	8	-	-	86	63	22	12	10	-	107
1981+	39	8	7	-	-	54	36	7	8	5	1	57
Total households	405	58	30	4	0	497	323	94	50	29	3	499
Total (%)	81.5	11.7	6.0	0.8	0.0	100.0	64.7	18.8	10.0	5.8	0.6	100.0

* The channels: 1. By themselves; 2. Decided by parents; 3. Introduced by friends; 4. Introduced by matchmaker; 5. Others.

The effect of “professional matchmakers” disappeared in Lhasa since the 1960s but kept active in rural areas (5.8%). Because of low density, smaller population size of villages and distance between villages, the matchmakers traveling among villages played a role in marriages in rural areas.

The structure of channels also experienced some changes in the past several decades. The percentage of “decided by parents” obviously reduced in rural areas from 26.5% in the 1960s to 20.6% in the 1970s, then to 12.3% in the 1980s. This percentage reduced in Lhasa from 10.6% in the 1960s to 9.3% in the 1970s, but increased again to 14.8% in the 1980s. After the 1959 land reform,

and Du-jung families had more freedom in their marriages” (TSHSSEG, 1991: 397). For Luomarangxue Tribe (Nagchu dzong), “Parents usually had a strong power in selecting spouse for their children, but there were relatively more marriages based on the decision of young people themselves among the poor” (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 49).

the government encouraged young people to select spouses themselves and considered “decided by parents” as a residual of “feudal system”. It resulted in more young people making decisions about their marriages in both rural and urban areas. The increase of importance of parents in marriage might reflect the revival of traditional customs.

After the implementation of the “household responsibility system” in rural areas of Han regions, economic function of family and controls of household heads on properties were strengthened. This has resulted in significant growth of “parents-decided” marriages in rural areas. Among our respondents in Lhasa old urban areas, over 50% were “unemployed” and “self-employed”. Their income improved in the 1980s under the new “reform” policies; the economic activities and the financial power of household heads increased as the peasants in Han regions. This might partly explain the increase of “parents’ decided” marriages in urban Lhasa. Why did this situation occur in rural areas of Han regions and among some Lhasa urban residents but not in rural TAR? This question needs a further study to explain. Since the sample size is small, small numbers remain in each cell after grouping by rural-urban sectors and by years; thus the significance of percentages of the cells reduced. These numbers may only be used for reference.

Even in the 1950s, many young people had the right to select their spouse. They were free in dating, the children outside marriage were not discriminated against in their communities. “The women carrying children outside marriage generally brought these children to groom after getting married, and they were not discriminated by groom’s family. Sometimes, these children were raised by the uncle or mother’s parents, become a member of mother’s family” (Chen Qingying, 1995:424). “Among 63 households of the Tangke Tribe, 22 women had illegitimate children, ...among 69 women of 19 ‘Ta-wa’ (serf of monasteries) households under Suoge Monastery, 20 women had illegitimate children” (Li Zhichun, 1984:116). These reports show the tolerant attitude of parents and the community towards lovers and sexual relations before marriage.

The 1988 Tibet University Survey also studied decision-making in marriages. Differing from our 1988 survey, this survey only interviewed married women, and not the household heads of both genders. The results of this study show interesting comparisons. (1) In urban areas, young people making the marriage decision themselves consisted of 36.5%, “parents selected then agreed by youth” consisted of 32.4%, “self-selected then agreed by parents” consisted of 31.1%, none of the urban marriages were completely decided by parents. (2) In rural areas, “self-decided” only consisted of 17.3%, “parents selected then agreed by youth” and “self-selected then agreed by parents” consisted 16.2% and 11.0% respectively. Very different from urban areas, “parents decided” marriages in rural areas consisted of a high percentage of 52.5% (Wang Daben, 1993:47). A higher percentage of “parents decided” marriages in rural and a higher percentage of “self-decided” marriages in urban areas confirmed the result of our survey.

There might be many methods to classify marriage by decision-making of spouse⁸. The same type of decision-making or the same channel for married couple to know each other might have different meanings in different societies. For example, “professional matchmaker” may play a quite

⁸ For example, there might be four types of methods for spouse selection: (1) parents make decision, (2) self-select but must get approval of parents, (3) self-select, and (4) parents decide and self-decide co-exist (Herter, 1981:147).

different role in the “parents decided” marriages and “self-decided” marriages. In the first case, she may have a definite role and function, while in the second case she may function just as an “introducer”. There are always many complicated issues related to marriages: heritage of social/hierarchy title, heritage of properties, and new social network based on marriage which may bring benefits/advantages as well as obligations/risks. These issues become more complicated if the marriages involve people of different race, ethnicities, religions and cultural customs. In this paper, we only intend to discuss several issues based on our survey data.

V. Comparison of Bride and Groom by Education, Occupation and Family Background

In order to understand the principles of spouse selection (scope of selection) and criteria (detailed requirement), an important measure is to compare the situation of both sides (bride and groom as well as their families) at the time of wedding (or more accurate, at the time of the decision of marriage). Therefore, our questionnaire included the questions about education and occupation of household heads as well as the comparison of standard of living of both sides at the time of wedding. From the relevant information, both the impact of social and economic background on marriages and the impact of marriage on social mobility can be examined.

From Table 6, we can see the percentage of marriages with both bride and groom illiterate was high in both rural and urban areas (61.4% and 47.2% respectively). This reflects the general low level of education in Tibet, and also indicates the trend of selecting “similar” educational background for marriage in the TAR. The second large group is the pattern of “primary school (husband)-illiterate (wife)”, consisting of 16.6% in Lhasa and 22.7% in rural areas. The third large group is the couple, both with primary school education, about 9.3% in Lhasa and 8.6% in rural areas. Therefore, same education (both are illiterate or with primary school education) or husband has a little higher education are two patterns in Tibetan marriages. Similar situations were also found in many other regions in China, so Tibet shares this pattern with other regions. There are a few cases with a wide education gap between husband and wife (3 women with college education married illiterate husband in Lhasa, cf. Table 6), but they are very small in percentage in total.

Table 6. Educational Background of Husband and Wife at Wedding Time

Husband	Wife (Lhasa)						Total
	Illiterate	Prim. School	Junior middle	High school	Prof. High S	Univ./College	
illiterate	228	28	8	-	4	3	271
Prim.school	80	54	3	2	2	-	141
Junior middle	19	12	7	1	1	-	40
High school	5	3	3	1	1	-	13
Prof. High Sc	2	2	-	4	-	-	8
Univ./College	3	1	2	-	2	2	10
Total	337	100	23	8	10	5	483

Husband	Wife (Counties)						Total
	Illiterate	Prim. school	Junior middle	High school	Prof. High S	Univ./college	
illiterate	313	14	2	-	-	-	329
Prim.school	116	44	2	-	-	-	162
Junior middle	10	3	5	-	-	-	18

High school	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Prof. High Sc	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Univ./College	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Total	439	61	10	0	0	0	510

Occupational background of Tibetan couples at the time of the wedding in Lhasa and rural areas are presented in Table 7 and Table 8. A common phenomenon is that most people married others with the same occupation in both rural and urban areas. The numbers at the diagonal line from left-top to right-bottom are generally larger than numbers in other lines. Thus, 40% of total marriages in Lhasa and 89.2% of total marriages in rural areas belong to this pattern: husband and wife had the same occupation at the time of the wedding. Because there was a high level of homogeneity of occupational structure in rural areas (91.7% of males and 88.1% of females in these couples were farmers), farmer-farmer couples consisted 89.2% of the total.

There was a higher diversity in occupational structure among Lhasa residents. Different occupations actually share similar income and social status. For example, cadres, workers, and professionals (all working in state-owned enterprise or institutions) are quite similar in their income and social status. The marriages between these three occupations were quite common in Lhasa (Table 7).

Table 7. Occupational Background of Tibetan Couples at Wedding in Old Urban Lhasa

Husband	Wife												Total
	Worker	Cadre	Profession- ional	Service labor	Unemp- loyed	Peasant	Handi- crafts	Collect. worker	Soldier	Nun	Self- employed	Others	
Worker	66	3	3	9	18	17	10	8	-	-	-	1	135
Cadre	8	17	-	3	7	6	3	8	1	-	-	2	55
Professional	1	-	2	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9
Service labor	4	1	-	23	7	22	3	1	-	-	2	1	44
Unemployed	8	1	1	-	20	11	3	3	1	1	2	3	44
Peasant	6	-	-	1	8	23	4	2	-	-	-	1	45
Handicrafts	3	2	1	4	16	4	10	5	-	-	1	3	49
Collect. Worker	4	1	-	2	7	5	1	25	-	-	1	2	48
Soldier	4	-	-	4	1	2	-	3	2	-	-	2	18
Monk	3	-	-	2	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
Self-employed	1	-	-	-	2	2	-	2	-	-	5	-	12
Others	5	1	-	1	4	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	12
Total	113	26	7	51	98	63	34	58	4	1	11	16	482

There were 16 handicraftsmen married “unemployed” women. Some of the craftsmen in Lhasa were from rural areas; they did not have government jobs and were unable to marry female government employees, so they married daughters of Lhasa residents instead, and their brides had no particular jobs at that time. Among 18 men serving in the military force, only 2 married females in the military services. Because there are much more men than women in the military force, the majority of these men found their spouses among civilians.

Because of the high degree of homogeneity of occupations in rural areas, marriages between farmer and other occupation for both genders were dominant besides the farmer-farmer marriages which consisted of 85.1% of the total.

Table 8. Occupational Background of Tibetan Couples at Wedding in Rural Counties

Wife	
------	--

Husband	Worker	Cadre	Profess- ional	Peasant	Collect. worker	Nun	Self- employed	Others	Total
Worker	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	9
Cadre	-	4	-	11	-	-	-	-	15
Professional	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Service labor	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Peasant	10	2	2	473	-	-	2	1	490
Handicrafts	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	3
Collect. Worker	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
Soldier	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Monk	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	3
Self-employed	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Others	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	21	27
Total	10	7	2	510	1	2	2	22	556

When the comparison is made between the standard of the living of the bride's family and groom's family, the trend of "match for similarity" also exists. Cases in which the standard of living was quite similar for both families (the level of consumption directly reflects the level of income and properties) consisted of 54.4% in rural areas, and 62.0% in Lhasa old urban areas (Table 9). Economic conditions (income and properties) of the family, educational achievement, and occupation are the major indicators of family background and social status. "All systems of spouse selection have the tendency of 'marriage of same kind', it means that people who have similar class status can get married to each other" (Goode, 1982:75). The tendency we found in the analyses of above three variables is consistent with this general principle.

Table 9. Comparison of Living Standard between Bride's and Groom's Families at Wedding

Comparison	Lhasa		Counties	
	Household	%	Household	%
Groom's family better than wife's family	105	19.4	135	25.2
wife's family better than Groom's family	101	18.6	109	20.4
Both families quite similar	336	62.0	291	54.4
Total	542	100.0	535	100.0

There is another character besides "tendency of similarity". The marriage pattern of groom's family being better off than bride's family was more popular than the pattern of bride's family being better off than groom's family. The difference between the two patterns was 4.8% in rural areas and only 0.8% in urban Lhasa. It suggests that the first pattern (groom's family is better off than bride's family) is also a popular trend in the TAR as in other parts of China, and more popular in rural areas as compared with urban areas. This difference reflects greater economic independence of urban young women and equal status to men, compared with rural women.

VI. Geographic Distance between Spouses before Wedding

Considering of migration, the geographic distance of residences between bride and groom before they got married was also asked in our questionnaire. In general, accompanying the development of market economy and urbanization, people's geographic mobility increases. Since the residential registration system and relevant migration restrictions have been practiced in China for several

decades, “marriage” has been one of the legal channels for migration⁹. In other areas, it was found that “marriage” had been the major legal reason for women to migrate from poor villages to rich villages, and from villages to towns (Ma Rong, 1989:48-50). Our 1988 survey reported that 16.6% of in-migrants among interviewed Lhasa household heads and 14.3% of rural household heads claimed their reason of migration was “marriage”.

Urban residents usually have a higher geographic mobility compared with rural residents. This is confirmed in the 1988 survey. The marriages between men and women who living in the same Xiang (or same street office in urban areas) consisted of 74.7% in rural areas and only 39.4% in old urban areas of Lhasa (Table 10). The marriages crossing borders of counties and prefectures consisted of 26.2% and 13.8% respectively in Lhasa, but only 4.9% and 1.0% in rural areas. Therefore, it is clear that the geographic scope for peasants to select their spouses was three-fourth within Xiang, one fifth in nearby Xiang but within county, only 6.2% crossing county border.

The population density is generally very low in the TAR; the density of most counties besides Lhasa and nearby areas is lower than 1 person/km². Although Tibetan tradition emphasizes marriages “outside blood relation”, the sparse population distribution increases difficulties in selecting spouses and marrying across geographic distances.

Table 10. Distance between Bride’s and Groom’s Residences at Wedding

Date of Marriage	Lhasa						Counties					
	In Xiang	In county	In prefec.	In TAR	Across R	Total	In Xiang	In county	In prefec.	In TAR	Across R	Total
-1930	4	4	6	5	0	19	5	0	0	0	0	5
1931-40	13	7	10	3	1	34	16	1	1	1	0	19
1941-50	31	20	16	17	0	84	34	2	5	0	0	41
1951-60	44	26	30	17	4	121	99	69	8	2	0	178
1961-70	44	22	28	11	0	105	133	23	4	1	0	161
1971-80	42	12	25	9	1	89	96	11	6	0	1	114
1981-88	22	8	18	8	0	56	48	4	4	2	1	59
Total	200	99	133	70	6	508	431	110	28	6	2	577
Total %	39.4	19.5	26.2	13.8	1.2	100.0	74.7	19.1	4.9	1.0	0.3	100.0

- (1) “In Xiang”: the places of both bride and groom’s residences were located within the same Xiang (town);
- (2) “In county”: the places of both residences were located within the same county but across Xiang boundary;
- (3) “In prefec.”: the places of both residences were located within the same prefecture but across county boundary;
- (4) “In TAR”: the places of both residences were located within the TAR but across prefecture boundary;
- (5) “Across R”: the places of both residences were located within China but across provincial boundary.

The large volume of migration due to historical social changes has impacted spouse selection and marriage patterns. In the 1950s, rural marriages crossing Xiang border were 69 (38.8% of the total in that decade), much more than other periods. It might reflect the population migration due to the political situation and land reform in rural areas (Table 10). In contrast, there had no obvious changes of marriage distance patterns in the old urban area of Lhasa over time. The marriages crossing at least

⁹ Other channels include: (a) job transfer of government employees, (b) family reunion (for separated couples to move and live together or old parents to move and live with adult children), (c) job distribution of college graduates and demobilized military officers, and (d) government resettlement projects (students sent to countryside during the “Cultural Revolution”, demobilized soldiers in military corps, migration projects for farmers who suffered from natural disasters).

county border were around 39.3% (1940s), 42.1% (1950s), 37.1% (1960s), 39.3 (1970s), and 46.4% (1980s), kept at a general high percentage in all decades.

VII. Tibetan-Han Inter-marriages

Tibetans consisted of 95.5% of the total population of the TAR in 1990, while Hans consisted of 3.7% and other ethnic groups 0.8%. Han is the second largest group in population size in the TAR. Because most of the Han in the TAR came after 1952 and a large proportion of them are cadres, professional, workers and their dependents, the Han population has some characters. The Han-Tibetan relationship is the most important indicator in studying ethnic relations in the TAR.

According to theories of western sociology of ethnicity, intermarriage is the most important variable/indicator measuring ethnic relations. Only under situation in which two groups can communicate in languages, have frequent social contact, accept the norms and value systems of each other, are generally equal in law and power distribution, have very limited prejudice and discrimination, and have generally good relations between communities, may intermarriages happen at a large scale (Gordon, 1964:78). Therefore, special attention was given to intermarriage in our 1988 survey.

Historically, there were more Han-Tibetan intermarriages in Tibetan-inhabited areas near Han regions compared with the areas of the present TAR. During the late Qing dynasty, the government implemented agricultural development in these areas accompanying the policy of “changing heritage Tusi into appointed officers” in local administration. Many Han farmers moved into these areas, and some of them married local Tibetan women.

Li Anzhai compared the household size of intermarriage families with other families in Ganzi area (Today’s Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan). “For Tibetan households, the average size was 2.54 persons per household. The average size was 4.88 persons for Han-Tibetan intermarried household and 6.5 persons for Han households. It is clear that Tibetans have smaller families and Han have larger families while intermarried families are in the middle. This comparison has some meanings in cultural contact and changes” (Li Anzhai, 1946:49). “Based on statistical records of Liu Zanting in 1941, the Han-Tibetan intermarried households were about 45,000 in Ganzi area” (Xu Ming, 1989:290). The literature suggests that Han-Tibetan intermarriages were popular in Ganzi areas during that period.

A British doctor who lived in Lhasa for four months in 1811 described that “there was one officer and a small military camp of the Qing government in every town. There was a post set up by the Qing administration for a certain distance along the post road from Lhasa to other places. Many Qing soldiers married Tibetan women and had children” (Taller, 1992:451). Other studies also mentioned that because the Qing government “failed to replace the garrison soldiers every three years as the regulations required. So the soldiers intermarried with Tibetan women, produced families who ate up their scanty pay” (Fletcher, 1978:102). It seems that intermarriages for soldiers were popular in Tibet at that time.

In addition to soldiers, there were about 2,000-3,000 Han merchants, handicraftsmen, and farmers living in Lhasa and other towns in Tibet in the late Qing dynasty. It is quite possible that some of them intermarried locally. Though we cannot get detailed data, their number should be significant. Huang Musong went to Lhasa in 1934 to attend the memorial ceremony for the death of the 13th Dalai Lama. During his negotiations with Kashag government, one of his requests was “all half Chinese residents in Tibet should be under the sole jurisdiction of the Chinese officer at Lhasa”. But this request was refused by Kashag government (Goldstein, 1989: 237, 240). The two serious arguments between the Mission of Kuomintang government and Kashag government in August and October of 1942 were caused by the jurisdiction of the persons of intermarriages (“half-Chinese”) (Goldstein, 1989:383-384). All those records show that Han-Tibetan intermarriages were common in Tibet during the Qing dynasty and the period after the 1911 revolution.

Although there were some descriptions of intermarriages in history, the information of Han-Tibetan intermarriages has been very limited since 1952. The 1990 census reported the statistical data of “united households of Han and ethnic minorities” by county in the TAR. Since the ethnic groups besides Tibetan and Han only consist of 0.8% of the total population, we can assume that “united households of Han and ethnic minorities” were “Han-Tibetan households” in most cases.

There were 2,639 “united households of Han and ethnic minorities” and they had 10,951 members in the TAR in 1990. About 37.7% of them lived in Urban District of Lhasa, other 34.6% lived in 6 towns of prefecture capitals, and 7.5% lived in counties of Chamdo Prefecture (excluding Chamdo County Town as the capita of prefecture). These three parts together made of 80% of the total “united households” (Census Office of the TAR, 1992a: 188-189). The characteristics of Han population distribution and Han-Tibetan relations can be learned from the rural-urban and geographic distribution of these “united households”.

The intermarriage rate is an important index of measuring ethnic relations. There were 383,839 “minority households” (Tibetan households, households of other ethnic minorities, and intermarried households between other minorities were not separated in this category), 15,963 “Han households”, and 2,639 “united households” in the TAR in 1990. If we assume that all “minority households” were Tibetan households and only one married couple in each household¹⁰, the intermarried were 16.5% among Han and only 0.7% among Tibetans (minorities). The low intermarriage rate of Tibetans is largely due to the small Han and other ethnic minority populations in the TAR. Compared with Inner Mongolia, there were about 15% of intermarried Mongolians in the 1982 census report. Males and female consisted of about half and half among total intermarriages (Song Naigong, 1987:372). Han population consisted of 85% of the total population in Inner Mongolia in 1982, which increased the possibility for Mongolians and Han to contact each other in daily life.

¹⁰ If there were more than one couple in the household and one of them were intermarried, this household was classified as “united household”. Therefore, our assumption is a rough estimate. According to the 1990 census reports, 72% of the “united households” (1,900 households) had a size between 2 and 4 persons, another 11.7% (309 households) had a size of 5 persons. The “united households” with 5 or more consisted of 16.3% of the total (Census Office of TAR, 1992a: 180). We may assume that the households with a size between 2 and 5 were “one-couple households” since 3 or more children per couple were very common in the TAR among Tibetans. Therefore, “one couple per one household” is the most common cases.

Among interviewed households in old urban Lhasa during our 1988 survey, there were 24 Han-Tibetan intermarriage cases (4.3% of the total): 14 of them were Tibetan husband and Han wife, 10 were Han husband and Tibetan wife. In comparison, there were 10 intermarriages in interviewed households in rural areas: 3 were Tibetan husband and Han wife, 7 were Han husband and Tibetan wife.

Gender is very important in intermarriage studies. Some groups do not oppose their men marrying women of other groups, but strongly oppose their women marrying out. In the first case, the intermarried family would follow the religion and customs of husband and the children become the members of father's group. The second case is usually seen as the "population loss" of their own group. In ancient wars, the victors plundered the women and possessed them; the residual of this idea remains in some ethnic groups.

When a more advanced group coexists with a relatively undeveloped group, the members of the group with some disadvantages usually are hesitant about intermarriage. They worry about the interest of their own group (loss of population); some young men feel that by opposing out-group marriage for females of their group, they may have more choice in their spouse selection and the marriages within group will be secured (Goode, 1982:76). Groups with a huge population size generally are less concerned about their women marrying outside the group.

From the information obtained from the 1988 survey, it seems that there were more "Tibetan (male)- Han (female)" intermarriages in urban Lhasa, but more "Han (male)- Tibetan (female)" intermarriages in rural areas. Table 11 introduced the dates of these intermarriages. The first intermarriage case among interviewed households occurred in the 1920s, increased in the 1940s (5 cases), then continually increased in the following decades (6 cases in the 1950s, 10 cases in the 1960s, 7 cases in the 1970s) but sharply reduced in the 1980s (2 cases). Although the total cases were relatively small, the distribution still roughly reflects the social changes and Han-Tibetan relations in the TAR over time.

Among the intermarried couples, a large proportion of them were both illiterate (41.7% in urban Lhasa and 60% in rural areas) (Table 12). The second largest group was both with primary school education (29.2% in urban Lhasa). The third group was that husband had primary school education while wife illiterate (total 6 cases). The general description is that spouses have similar educational background or that husband with a little higher education in intermarriages. One special case in Lhasa was quite surprising: an illiterate Tibetan male married a Han wife with a college education. The husband was a Tibetan cadre who used to be a serf. He participated in some short-term training programs but those did not count as school education.

Table 11. Han-Tibetan Intermarriages in 1988 Survey

Year of Marriage	Lhasa					County*		Total
	Tibetan-Han		Han-Tibetan			T-H	H-T	
	married	Divorced	Married	divorced	widowed	married	married	
- 1920	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1921-1930	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
1931-1940	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
1941-1950	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	5

1951-1960	3	0	1	0	0	0	2	6
1961-1970	2	1	1	1	0	3	2	10
1971-1980	4	0	1	1	0	0	1	7
1980-1988	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Total	12	2	5	2	3	3	7	34

* Intermarried couples in counties have no case of divorce or widowed.

Comparison between families of both sides for intermarriages (Table 12) shows similar patterns as Tibetan marriages discussed above. Intermarriages of similar economic background (20 cases) consisted of 58.8% of the total 34 cases. Among the remaining 14 cases, 8 belonged to the pattern of groom's family being better off than bride's family, and 6 cases belong to the reverse pattern.

Table 12. Education and Wealth Comparison at Wedding for Intermarriages

Educational background of intermarried couple at wedding (Husband – wife)	Lhasa		Counties		Total
	T-H	H-T	T-H	H-T	
Illiterate – illiterate	7	3	2	4	16
Primary school – illiterate	1	3	1	1	6
Primary school - primary school	4	3	0	0	7
Junior middle school- primary school	1	0	0	1	2
Junior middle school – junior middle sch	0	0	0	1	1
Illiterate – college	1	0	0	0	1
Professional High sch – primary school	0	1	0	0	1
Total	14	10	3	7	34
Comparison of wealth of both families					
Groom's family was better than bride's	3	3	1	1	8
Bride's family was better than groom's	2	3	1	0	6
Both families were quite similar	9	4	1	6	20
Total	14	10	3	7	34

Of total 24 intermarriages in urban Lhasa, 7 couples belong to the pattern that both spouses were workers at the time of the wedding, other 4 couples had the same occupation for both spouses (service worker, cadre, and handicrafts). The rest couples are distributed in other occupation without obvious regulation (Table 13). In contrast, all 10 cases of intermarriages in rural areas were peasant couples.

Table 13. Occupational Comparison of Intermarriages at Wedding

Occupations of intermarried couple at wedding (Husband-wife)	Lhasa		Counties	
	T-H	H-T	T-H	H-T
State-owned ent. worker – state-owned ent. worker *	5	2	0	0
Professional – state-owned ent. worker	1	0	0	0
Cadre - state-owned ent. worker	0	1	0	0
Service labor - service labor	1	1	0	0
Collective ent. employee - state-owned ent. worker	1	0	0	0
Craftsman – craftswomen	0	1	0	0
Unemployed – unemployed	0	1	0	0
Cadre - collective ent. employee	0	1	0	0
Cadre - cadre	0	1	0	0
Peasant - peasant	0	0	3	7
Service labor – state-owned ent. worker	1	0	0	0
State-owned ent. worker – collective ent. employee	0	1	0	0
State-owned ent. worker - unemployed	1	0	0	0

State-owned ent. worker - craftswomen	1	0	0	0
Peasant - craftswomen	1	0	0	0
Other - other	1	0	0	0
Service labor – other	1	0	0	0
Craftsman – unemployed	0	1	0	0
Total	14	10	3	7

* State-owned enterprise worker.

VIII. The First Marriage for Household Heads with Multi-marriages

Among all interviewed household heads, 115 married more than once. The data of their first marriages may provide additional information to our study. Compared with their present marriages, the majority of their first marriages were monogamous (78.3% in urban Lhasa and 71.7% in rural areas)(Table 14). However, the percentage of monogamy is lower than present marriages (99.5% in urban Lhasa and 91.3% in rural areas). That might indicate the trend of increasing of monogamy under the official marriage propaganda favoring monogamy. Other studies revealed a similar trend in pastoral areas. According to the statistics of Shuang-Hu administrative Office in the northern TAR, “among total new households there were 37 marriages (112 individuals) belonging to either polyandry or polygamy during 1978-1980, reduced to only 5 marriages (15 individuals) during 1980-1983”. “There were 3 marriages were either polyandry or polygamy in Buqu Xiang of Amdo County, the latest one happened 20 years ago” (Gelek, 1993:201). It seems that monogamous marriage has become the dominating type among both rural and urban Tibetans, and their percentage is increasing.

But this general trend does not necessarily exclude the possibility that there might be a certain number of other types of marriages in some areas, and these types of marriages might increase there. “The reports of Women’s League of the TAR revealed that among 50 newly married couples in Ba-ga Xiang of Dang-xiong County during 1982-1984, 10% belong to either polyandry or polygamy” (Zhang Tianlu, 1989:26). These marriage types were common in both urban and rural areas in Tibet for centuries as Tibetan Buddhism. They were not encouraged by the government after the 1959 land reform, and their numbers declined as the number of monks in the 1960s and 1970s. The decrease was due to the political and cultural environment during that time. Since the new “reform” policy began in the 1980s, the restrictions were loosened in all aspects. The number of monks obviously increased from 800 in 1970 to 41,800 in 1994 (Lin Junhua, 1995:17). The household responsibility system in rural areas promoted the need for labor re-organization while the traditional customs are also revived, which may have resulted in an increase of polyandry or polygamy in some areas.

There were 7 Han-Tibetan intermarriages among the first marriages, consisted of 6.1% of the total first marriages (Table 3), higher than the percentage of present marriages (3.1%). The difference may reflect the trend of decreasing intermarriage in recent years.

Table 14. The First Marriage of Multi-married Tibetan Household Heads

Type of the first marriage	Lhasa		Counties	
	# of marriages	%	# of marriages	%
Monogamy	54	78.3	33	71.7
Polygamy	3	4.3	10	21.7
Polyandry	1	1.4	1	2.2

Unknown	11	15.9	2	4.4
Total	69	100.0	46	100.0
Reason for ending of first marriage	Lhasa		Counties	
Divorce	26	37.7	21	45.7
Widowed	36	50.7	24	52.2
Unknown	8	11.6	1	2.2
Total	69	100.0	46	100.0

The 1988 survey asked the respondents for the reason for ending of the first marriage. Widowing was the highest reason for ending the first marriage (50-52%) (Table 14). Divorce was the second most important reason (38-46%). This is close to the census data in Table 2. The percentage of widowing was 3-4 times higher than the percentage for divorce in Table 2 of our 1988 survey. This was mainly due to higher age of respondents on average. For those who married more than once, the age at their ending of first marriage should be younger and the reasons for ending the first marriage therefore should be close to the general patterns recorded by the census.

IX. Divorce in the TAR

The voluntary separation of married couples might take four models: separation, divorce, forsaking, and marriage invalid, and there are different legal definitions in different countries for these models (Goode, 1982:209). In the nations with more developed legal systems, the legal statuses of each model are clearer and the legal procedures of transition between the models are more complicated.

Because there had been no restrictive marriage registration systems for a very long time in Tibet, divorce was relatively a simple issue in most cases. “There were no procedures required for divorce, and also no need for witnesses or written documents. ...Women can remarry; remarriages of men and women were treated the same as the first marriage” (Lu Liandi, 1986:202). Easy procedure and no discrimination against divorced women would increase the possibility of divorce when people’s marriage life faces some problems. In general, the divorce of the poor and nomads would be easier and simpler than that of the rich and aristocracy.

In the Tibetan tribes in Golok areas (Qinghai), “divorce was considered quite normal and there was no written legal procedures. But divorces were required the judgement of tribe chiefs. ...A certain amount of money and items should be submitted to the chief before the divorce. The chief would mediate the problem between the couple, if he failed, the divorce becomes the final. Upon divorce, all household properties would be divided equally for all adult members of the household, children get half of the adult” (Xing Haining, 1994:128). In some areas, “even the unborn baby could get half of the household properties as adult members” (Chen Qingying, 1995:437). In Golok areas, “if the man and the women belong to different tribes, their marriage should be permitted by their parents as well as the chiefs of both tribes” (Xing Haining, 1994:125). It is clear that tribal chiefs enjoyed a high authority in their people’s life from the cases of marriage and divorce. Except in Golok areas, “there was no need to go through tribal chiefs for divorce in most areas, the chiefs would

be invited for judgement only when argument happened, the gift as a reward to chiefs was usually a sheep or a cow” (Chen Qingying, 1995:438).

There were different arrangements in property distribution and compensation upon divorce in different Tibetan regions. In Tibetan areas of Song-pan (western Sichuan), when a woman requested a divorce but her husband disagreed, then she left the household. If this case was discovered they needed to pay a fine. “The fine would be four cows in Ruorgai area, daughter would be with the mother and boys with father, the only son would go to monastery and become a monk”. In some other areas in western Sichuan, The person who requires divorce should pay his/her spouse the “money to cover shame” as compensation. It was 15-16 Liang silver (1 Liang = 31.25 gram) in Xiao-Jinchuan area, and 30-100 Liang silver in Zhuokeji area. The heavy fine made people hesitate to claim divorce (Chen Qingying, 1995:438-439).

Some studies introduced the “lip to lip marriage” among the poor Tibetans. Because they had no property to pay betrothal gifts or dowry, they come to live together without any formal procedures. In northern Tibet, “there were 68 cases of this kind of marriage in Aba tribe, 64 of them were poor serf-herdsmen, ...among 64 marriages among Dui-qiong and Nang-sheng class in Nang-se-lin Xika of Shannan area, 31 belonged to the ‘lip-to-lip marriage’”(Zhang Quanwu, 1986:98). There was also no procedure when this kind of marriages disintegrated, and divorce rates were generally high. “There were 486 residents with marriages in 212 households in Aba Tribe of Heihe Zong before land reform, 57 of them divorced at least once, someone even divorced twice or three times. There was no formal procedure for divorce, sometimes one of the couple simply left, sometimes they negotiate then separated if mediating failed” (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 227).

The investigation in Qiong-jie Zong of Shannan area reported the marriage rituals of ordinary Tre-ba. “The marriage rituals of aristocracy are more complicated than that of Tre-ba, the marriages of poor Tre-ba and serfs are much simpler. The marriages of Nang-shen are so simple without any rituals. If the both sides agreed, reported to their owner, then they moved to live together. They could get divorce if they could not get along but the cases of divorce were limited. Boys will be with father and girls with mother when they decided to divorce, family properties would be divided into two parts, a part for the one who leaves was smaller than the other part” (CCTS, 1992:164)¹¹.

Based on the discussion above, the first character of Tibetan marriages is the simple procedure of marriage, and even no procedure among the poor. The second character is the simple procedure for divorce and low stability of marriages. However, we must emphasize that the marriages among aristocracy were very different from the poor serfs and herdsmen. though their number was very small¹². They had very strong restrictions on marriage for class background, very complicated procedures and rituals of marriage, “Ru-zhui” (groom marrying the bride’s family and taking her family’s name), and “Zhuan-hun” (switching marriage relations with different spouses). Their

¹¹ For detailed information about the property distribution, who keeps the children and the methods for children’s supporting expenses, please refer to *Survey Reports of Social and Historical Studies in Tibet* Volumes 3 and 5 (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 50, 228; 1989c: 115, 324).

¹² The lay aristocracy consisted of about 150-200 families in Tibet. “About 30 higher-status families, known as Depon Mitra, and about 120 to 170 lower or ‘common’ aristocracy families” (Goldstein, 1989:6). Other studies classified Tibetan nobles into three groups: 6 “Yaxi” families (families of Dalai Lamas), 5 senior noble families (“Depon”), and about 200 common noble families (those owning land are called “Geba”)(Petech, 1973:18).

marriages were also much more stable because they were closely related to continuity of families and estates as well as other properties (Nakane, 1992).

Recent studies suggest rising trend of divorce rates in both agricultural and pastoral areas. Divorce case increased from 2 in 1967 to 20 in 1983, then to 53 in 1985 in Shigatse County (Zhang Quanwu, 1986:117). Divorce rates also increased in urban areas in the 1980s. According to the information provided by the Bureau of Civil Affairs of Lhasa Urban District in 1988, the numbers of residents applying for divorce increased two times in 1987 compared with the situation in 1981. The divorce rate increased from 5% to 10% during the period and those transferred to local court were not included (Table 15). Therefore, the growth of divorce in the 1980s is the third character of Tibetan marriages. Table 15 also shows that the number of remarriage in 1987 is obviously lower than that in 1986 (from 53% of divorce cases in 1986 to 13% of divorces in 1987). This may reflect the people's opinions about marriage.

Table 15. Marriage Registration in Lhasa Urban District (1981-1987)

Year	Total Population	First marriage		Divorce					Re-sume	Re-marry
		Number*	Marr.rate**	Requested	Mediated	To court	Divorced	Div. rate***		
1987	107277	2322	10.8	178	60	10	108	5.0	6	22
1982	105897	2234	10.5	186	40	22	124	6.0	6	24
1983	104794	2326	11.1	228	68	18	142	7.0	20	146
1984	104269	1660	8.0	270	110	34	126	6.2	14	74
1985	107712	1832	8.5	158	32	12	114	5.6	14	150
1986	107725	2220	10.3	358	30	36	192	9.3	16	102
1987	117679	2220	9.4	340	100	32	208	10.0	20	26

* "Number of first marriage": number of persons who get married for the first time;

** "Marriage rate": number of marriages (couples) per 1,000 population;

*** "Divorce rate": number of divorces (couples) per 1,000 married couples.

During our interviews in Lhasa in 1988, we visited the court of Lhasa Urban District for information on the ethnic structure in the divorce cases and other criminal cases. The ethnic composition of divorce cases taken by that court is presented in Table 16. Because we did not find the files of 1986, the comparison has to be carried between other available years. We can see that divorces of intermarried couples have been increasing regardless the gender-ethnic composition. The court accepted 208 divorce cases during May, 1984 – December, 1985; 12 of them were intermarried couples. The court accepted 206 divorce cases during January, 1987 – September, 1988; 24 of them were intermarried couples. The percentage of intermarried couples applying for divorce doubled in a short period of time. Because a large proportion of Han population lived in Lhasa, Han-Tibetan intermarriages were more common in Lhasa, the statistics of Lhasa Urban District may largely represent the situation of intermarriages and divorces in Lhasa areas.

Table 16. Divorce Cases in Lhasa Urban District Court

Receiving period	Total divorce case	T-T*	T-H	H-T	H-H	Others
May 1984 - Dec. 1984	95	37	3	1	51	3
Jan. 1985 – Dec. 1985	113	51	3	5	53	1
Jan. 1987- Sept. 1988	206	88	10	14	90	4

* "T-T" means Tibetan husband and Tibetan wife, "T-H" means Tibetan husband and Han wife; "H-T" means Han husband and Tibetan wife; "H-H" means both husband and wife were Han.

As reasons of divorces among Tibetan peasants before 1959 land reform, some studies gave summaries: (1) distance emerged after wedding, (2) unstable income caused quarrels, and (3) tired of spouse and start to chase new lovers (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 227). These are common reasons for divorce. Other studies discussed factors affecting rising divorce rates in rural areas: (1) no registration for marriage in the past, (2) some youth oppose their “parents decided marriage” by applying for divorce, (3) revival of “class ideology” resulted in crisis of marriages which did not “match each other” by traditional opinion, (4) intervening of religious power (assessment of marriages by monks), (5) getting rich and tired of old spouse, (6) intervening of the “third party”, (7) misunderstanding of “free love” (Zhang Quanwu, 1986:120). These factors include some revived traditional views (religious intervening, parents’ decision in marriage), and also some “modern ideas” following western lifestyles (“free love”). This reflects that Tibetan society has been experiencing a rapid transition process in which all kinds of cultures and social norms interact. For the reasons explaining the divorce phenomena in Tibet, specific research needs to be conducted. Meanwhile, divorce must be analyzed and understood under the macro-environment of social changes and economic development in Tibetan society.

X. Conclusion

Tibetans who live on the highest plateau probably constitute the ethnic group which has been highly isolated from other parts of the world for centuries. Its unique traditions, culture and forms of social organizations (including marriage and family) are largely due to its geographic characteristics. For example, polyandry and other patterns of marriages are still popular in Tibet, and other Himalayan areas around Tibet but can seldom be found in other parts of the world.

Based on the above discussions, especially the analyses of the 1988 survey data, the basic characters and changes of marriages among urban and rural Tibetan residents can be generalized as follows.

1. The marriage types in Tibet are diverse. Besides polyandry which people have been interested in, there are other types of marriages such as polygamy, two husbands and two wives, “Wai-shi” and other patterns. There are also several patterns of polyandry.

2. There are great regional variations in marriage patterns in Tibet; polyandry is more popular in pastoral areas compared with agricultural areas. The regional differences in marriage patterns reflect difference of natural resources, productive types, and social and economic organizations among different areas.

3. The 1988 survey suggested that marriage stability was lower among Lhasa residents compared with that of rural residents. This is largely due to higher geographic mobility and unstable occupation and income for some urban residents.

4. The marriage registration has not been common in the TAR, over 50% of interviewed married respondents did not register for their marriage.

5. The marriages decided by parents decreased since the 1950s. In general, the percentage of self-decided marriages is higher in urban areas than that in rural areas. A noteworthy phenomenon is the increase of parents decided marriages in Lhasa in recent years.

6. In selecting a spouse, there is clear trend for someone with a “similar background” in education, occupation and family wealth in both urban and rural areas. In other words, the majority of Tibetans married someone with same or similar educational achievement, occupation and family background.

7. The marriage distance (geographic distance between bride’s and groom’s residences before marriage) was short in rural areas. Three fourth of marriages occurred within Xiang border. In contrast, 41% of Urban Lhasa residents married their spouses outside Lhasa. This reflects the difference between urban and rural residents in geographic mobility.

8. The 1990 census suggests that 16.5% of married Han residents in the TAR married to ethnic minorities (mostly Tibetans). About 37.7% of these intermarried couples lived in Lhasa, another 34.6% lived in 6 towns of prefecture capital. This is parallel to the distribution of Han population. Among the married Tibetans, only 0.7% married Han. The main reason is due to the small size of the Han population in the TAR. Han-Tibetan intermarriages mainly occurred in the 1960s and 1970s.

9. There is a rising trend of divorce in Lhasa in the 1980s while the remarriage rate decreased. This phenomenon reflects changes of Tibetan marriages from another facet.

Tibet has its unique geographic characters and special natural resource distribution patterns. Because of its natural conditions and relative isolation from outside world, special social systems and marriage patterns have formed in Tibet during its long history. These marriages cannot be classified simply by the categories of other societies. Even similar forms may have quite different cultural content. The rapid social changes in the past several decades must have had some impact on these traditional marriage patterns. The great regional variations and changes over time make the Tibetan marriage a colorful field for academic research. But the studies in this field have been very limited due to lack of historical records and field surveys. The 1988 sampling survey carried out by Peking University provided some basic data for quantitative analysis. Based on these analyses as well as other research literature, this paper discussed several issues regarding Tibetan marriages. Because of the sample size and geographic coverage, the analyses here are still at a very primary stage. We sincerely hope that the discussions in this paper will provide some useful insights to other researchers in their future studies in this field.

Reference:

- Aziz, B. N. 1978, *Tibetan Frontier Families*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Bell, Charles, 1928, *The People of Tibet*. Oxford: the Clarendon Press.
- Bian-zheng-gong-lun (Review of Frontier Administration), Volume 1*, 1948, Beijing: Chinese Books.(in Chinese)
- Cai Wenmei, Liu Yi, and Sun Rongjun, 1992, “Characters of Marriages and Families in Tibetan Population”, Sun Jingxin, ed. *Tibetan Population in Current China*. Beijing: Chinese Press of Tibetan Studies, pp. 167-179. (in Chinese)

- Census Office of the TAR, 1983a-e, *The Third Census Data of the Tibet Autonomous Region*, Volume 1-5, Lhasa: People's Press of Tibet. (in Chinese)
- Census Office of the TAR, 1992a-d, *The 1990 Census Data of the Tibet Autonomous Region*, Volume 1-4, Lhasa: People's Press of Tibet. (in Chinese)
- Chen Qingying, 1995, *Studies of Tibetan Tribe Systems*, Beijing: Chinese Press of Tibetan Studies. (in Chinese)
- Chinese Center for Tibetan Studies (CCTS), et al., ed., 1992, *Social and Historical Survey Data in Jiqiao, Shannan and Qiongjie, Naidong, Tibet*, Beijing: Chinese Press of Tibetan Studies. (in Chinese)
- Combe, G. A. 1926, *A Tibetan on Tibet*, London: Fisher Unwin.
- Danzeng and Zhang Xiangming, eds., 1991a, 1991b, *Tibet in Current China* (I), (II), Beijing: Press of Current China. (in Chinese)
- Engles, F. 1884, *The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State*, (English version), London: Laurence and Wishalt.
- Fletcher, J. 1978, "Ch'ing Inner Asia, C.1800", J.K. Fairbank, ed. *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 10, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 35-106.
- Gelek and et al., 1993, *Nomads in Northern Tibet: Social and Historical Survey in Naqu Prefecture, Tibet*. Beijing: Chinese Press of Tibetan Studies.(in Chinese)
- Goldstein, M. C. 1971, "Stratification, Polyandry, and Family Structure in Central Tibet", *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Volume 27, pp.64-74.(in Chinese)
- Goldstein, M. C. 1989, *A History of Modern Tibet (1913-1951)*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Goode, W. J. 1982, *The Family* (second edition), New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Gordon, M. 1964, *Assimilation in American Life*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Herter, M. 1981, *Families in Transition: Cross-cultural Perspectives*, New York: Free Press.
- Hong Dichen, 1936. *History and Geography of Tibet*, Nanjing: Zhongzheng Press. (in Chinese)
- Levine, N. E. 1988, *The Dynamics of Polyandry*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Levine, N. E. 1994, "The Demise of Marriage in Purang, Tibet 1959-1990", Per Kvaerne, ed. *Tibetan Studies* Volume 1, Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, pp. 468-480.
- Li Anzhai, 1946, "History and Population of Tibetans in Dege", *Bianzhengonglun*, Volume 5, No. 2. (in Chinese)
- Li Zhichun, et al. 1984, *The Research Materials of Grassland Tibetans*, Chengdu: Institute of Ethnic Minorities at Southwestern College of Minority Nationalities. (in Chinese)
- Li Zhuqing, 1990, *Development and Strategies of Tibetan Economy*, Beijing: Ethnic Press of China. (in Chinese)
- Lin Junhua, 1995, "Studies of Tibetan Buddhism in New Period of Socialism", *Tibetan Studies*, 1995 (2): 17-22. (in Chinese)
- Liu Ruei, ed., 1987, *China's Population: Tibet Volume*. Beijing: Chinese Press of Finance and Economy. (in Chinese)
- Lu Liandi, 1986, "Tibetans", in Yan Ruxian, ed. *Marriages and Families of Ethnic Minorities in China*, Beijing: Chinese Women Press. (in Chinese)
- Ma Rong and Pan Naigu, 1988. "Demographic Changes in Tibetan- inhabited Areas". *Beijing Review* Vol. 31 No. 14 (April 4-10): 21-24.
- Ma Rong, 1989, "Main Reasons and Conditions for Migration: Migration Studies in Chifeng", *Population Science in China*, 1989 (2): 46-55. (in Chinese)

- Miller, B. D. 1987, "Status of Women in Tibet", *Translations of Tibetan Studies in the West*, Volume 3, Lhasa: Academy of Social Sciences of Tibet, pp.328-344. (in Chinese)
- Nakane Chie, 1992, "Nobles in Tibet", *Translated Papers of Tibetan Studies abroad*, Volume 9, Lhasa: People's Press, pp. 336-388. (in Chinese)
- Ou Chaoquan, 1988, "On Polyandry in Tibet", *Tibetan Studies*, 1988 (2): 78-88. (in Chinese)
- Parmar, Y. S. 1975, *Polyandry in the Himalayas*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Petech, L. 1980, "The Mongol Census in Tibet", M. Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi, eds. *Tibetan Studies*, New Dehli: Vikas Publishing House, pp. 233-238.
- Peter, Prince of Greece and Denmark, 1963, *A Study of Polyandry*, The Hague: Mouton.
- Richardson, H. E. 1962, *A Short History of Tibet*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rockhill, W. W. 1891, *The Land of the Lamas*, London: Longmans Green.
- Song, Naigong, ed. 1987, *China's Population: Inner Mongolia*. Beijing: Press of Finance and Economy of China. (in Chinese)
- Stein, R. A. 1962, *La Civilisation Tibétaine*. (Chinese translation, 1982, Lhasa: Academy of Social Sciences of Tibet).
- Taller, M. 1992, "History of Western Finding of Tibet", *Translations of Tibetan Studies in the West*, Volume 9, Lhasa: Academy of Social Sciences of Tibet, pp.389-467. (in Chinese)
- Tibet Social and Historical Survey Series Editing Groups (TSHSSEG), 1987a, 1987b, 1987c, *Historical Survey of Tibetan Society*, Volumes 1, 2, and 3, Lhasa: People's Press of Tibet. (in Chinese)
- Tibet Social and Historical Survey Series Editing Groups (TSHSSEG), 1988a, 1988b, and 1988c, *Historical Survey of Tibetan Society*, Volumes 4, 5, and 6, Lhasa: People's Press of Tibet. (in Chinese)
- Wang Daben, Chen Hua and Suolangrenqing, 1993, "Tibetan Women's Marriages and Childbearing in Tibet", Zhang Tianlu, ed., *Population Studies of Ethnic Minority Communities in China*, Beijing: Population Press of China, pp.40-49. (in Chinese)
- Wu Congzhong, ed. 1991, *Collected Papers of Studies of Feudal Serfdom System in Tibet*, Beijing: Chinese Press of Tibetan Studies. (in Chinese)
- Wu Jianhua, Dong Rongqing and Yang Shuzhang, 1992, "Analysis of Population in the Tibet Autonomous Region", Sun Jingxin, ed. 1992, *Tibetan Population in Current China*. Beijing: Chinese Press of Tibetan Studies. (in Chinese)
- Wu Wen, 1984, "Tibetan Marriages and Families in Muli", *Population Studies*, 1984 (4): 40-46. . (in Chinese)
- Xing Haining, 1994, *Tibetan Society in Guoluo, Beijing*: Chinese Press of Tibetan Studies. . (in Chinese)
- Xu Ming, 1989, "Tibetan Population Study in Ganzi (1729-1953)", *Series of Tibetan Studies*, Volume 1, pp. 279-291. . (in Chinese)
- Yan Ruxian, ed. 1986, *Marriages and Families of Ethnic Minorities in China*, Beijing: Chinese Women Press. (in Chinese)
- Zhang Quanwu, 1986, "The Analysis of Rising Divorce Rate in Rural Areas in Tibet", *Tibetan Studies*, 1986 (4): 110-120. (in Chinese)