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LOCATING MARRIAGEABLE COMMUNITIES: CROSS-BORDER MATCHMAKING BETWEEN JAPAN AND NORTHEAST CHINA

BY

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Locating Marriageable Communities: Cross-Border Matchmaking between Japan and Northeast China

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Based on twenty-month multisited ethnography, this dissertation examines contemporary cross-border matchmaking practices between Japan and northeast China. I theorize marriage migration in terms of negotiations of marriageability in the context of regional histories and local marital values. The marriages researched here were arranged during matchmaking tours to northeast China. These matches were contracted shortly after both partners consented. I ask how Japanese men and Chinese women—virtual strangers lacking even a common language with which to communicate—come to see one another as marriageable and, moreover, how matchings between the former colonizers and colonized of Manchuria have come to be viewed as legitimate unions. In order to answer these questions, I seek to reconfigure our understandings of regional interactions and theorize the dynamics of (1) how colonial legacies play a role in contemporary transnational phenomenon, (2) how particular local marital norms and values, such as notions of endogamy, exogamy, or patrilocality inform transnational processes, and (3) how the construction of marriage is made possible by flexible cultural imaginaries and/or normative marital expectations in societies.

Existing work on transnational intimate relations has highlighted gendered imaginings of difference, whereby desire is born of the perception of future spouses as exotic, sensual, traditional, or modern. I argue, instead, that for those involved in the processes of marriage migration between China and Japan, it is the tactical deployment of socially and historically created conceptions of *proximity* that render their partners marriageable. Current transnational links between Japan and northeast China were originally forged by Japanese colonization of Manchuria and subsequent flows of individuals including repatriation of war orphans and labor migration. Actors on both sides today draw upon these links with conceptions of historical familiarity, racial or cultural similarity, and pseudo kinship terms to legitimate the flows of brides. Moreover, by examining the limits of marriageability in cross-border matchmaking, I also aim to show how such limits reveal marriage normativities. To study these seemingly "uncommon" ways in which marriage is created is to also simultaneously investigate how conceptions of "common" or "regular" marriages are constructed.

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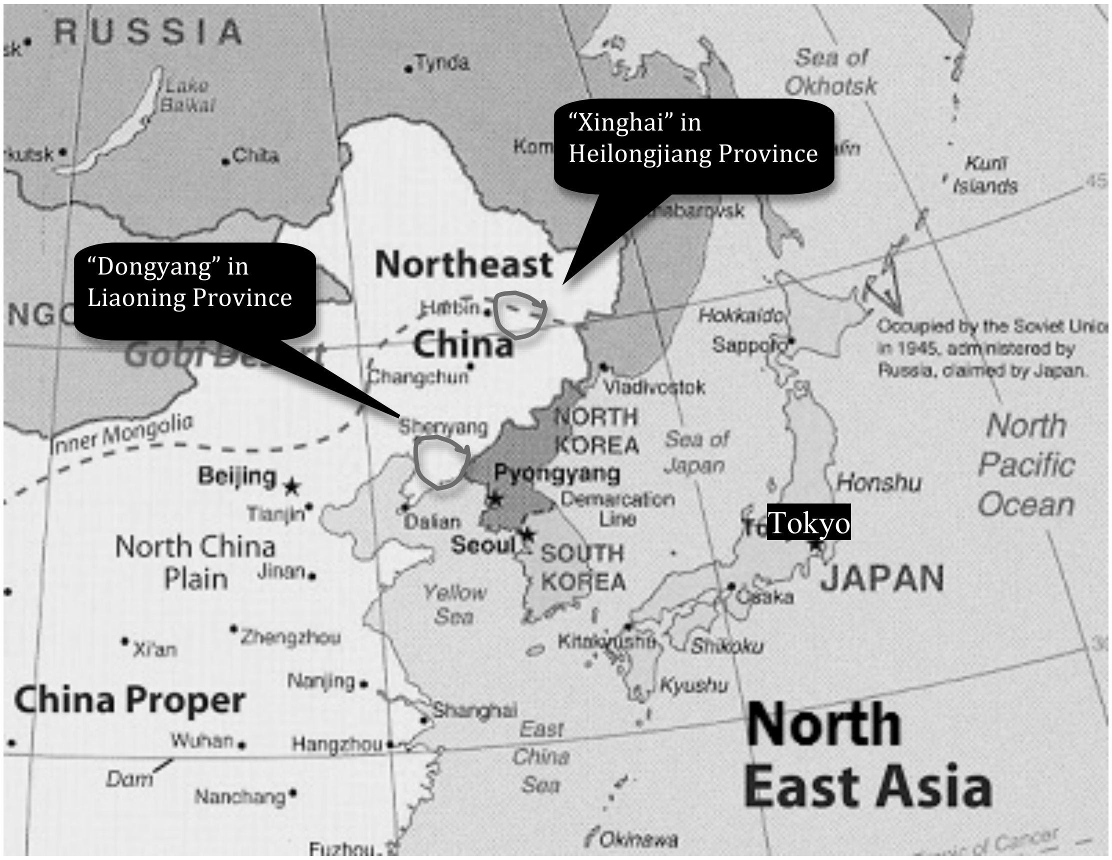
Notes on Language and Translations

In order to protect the confidentiality of my informants, the smaller towns I conducted my fieldwork in China are named using pseudonyms: Dongyang and Xinghai. For larger, well-known cities, such as Tokyo, Dalian, and Harbin I use real names. All the names of informants and marriage agencies are pseudonyms.

The dollar amounts used in this dissertation were calculated on the basis of the approximate exchange rate of that year and month.

All translations from Japanese and Chinese are my own. All Japanese terms are denoted with the prefix "*Ja"* and Chinese terms with "*Ch*."



"Xinghai" in Heilongjiang Province

"Dongyang" in Liaoning Province

Tokyo

RUSSIA
Lake Baikal
Tynda
Chita
Sea of Okhotsk
Kuril Islands
Northeast China
Harbin
Changchun
Shenyang
Gobi Desert
Inner Mongolia
Hokkaido
Sapporo
Occupied by the Soviet Union in 1945, administered by Russia, claimed by Japan.
Vladivostok
NORTH KOREA
Sea of Japan
Pyongyang
Demarcation Line
Beijing
Tianjin
Dalian
Seoul
SOUTH KOREA
Honshu
JAPAN
North Pacific Ocean
North China Plain
Jinan
Yellow Sea
Osaka
Xi'an
Zhengzhou
Kitakyushu
Shikoku
Kyushu
China Proper
Nanjing
Shanghai
Wuhan
Hangzhou
East China Sea
Dam
Nanchang
Fuzhou
Okinawa
North East Asia

MAP 1 Map of Japan and Northeast China

Introduction

The proper basis for marriage is mutual misunderstanding—Oscar Wilde

"Welcome to China!" Using the few Japanese words they knew, the local staff members greeted the incoming client from Japan. It was late July in 2007, a warm summer day, and the client, Mr. Matsuda, was a Japanese man on a matchmaking tour from Tokyo who had just arrived in Dongyang with a marriage broker. The trip had not been short, requiring a two-hour flight and a four-hour car drive from the nearest international airport. The hotel where the local staff members welcomed their new client had been the best hotel in Dongyang in the 1990s. In the past several years, however, a number of newer and more modern hotels had appeared that outstripped it. The hotel was still renowned, but the design of its building and interior looked a little outdated. Nevertheless, the broker had continued using this same hotel, the one he had used since he had started in the brokerage business in 1995. After greetings and introductions with the local staff members and translators in the hotel lobby, Mr. Matsuda quickly proceeded to check in. The broker told him, "Please go to your room, change your clothing, and then come to Suite 819 in twenty minutes." Meanwhile, we, the local staff members and myself, went straight to Suite 819, where the staff prepared personal profiles and maps of Japan and Japanese cities. These maps were to show potential Chinese brides when explaining to them where in Japan Mr. Matsuda lived. The local broker went down to the hotel lobby to meet the potential Chinese brides. The sky outside gradually dimmed as we entered the early evening.

About twenty minutes later, Mr. Matsuda knocked on the door. He had changed from casual chino pants into a navy suit. He was in his mid-forties, worked at a well-known Japanese electronics company, and had never been married. He was probably by Japanese standards "average" looking and at 166-8cm or so, a little shorter than average. The staff members told me that although he had dated a Japanese woman in the past, he was so indecisive that could not make up his mind to marry her. When he came in, he looked a little intimidated.

A local translator asked, "Are you nervous Mr. Matsuda?"

"Yes, a little, this is my first time doing this," he answered.

A Japanese staff member told him, "Please don't worry about anything, we will translate everything and if you have any questions, please let us know."

Then, the local broker came back to the room with three Chinese women. The three of them were wearing modest make up, colorful summer dresses, and looked anxious, but curious. The local staff member asked them to sit on the couch. The translator introduced Mr. Matsuda to the women. Then, the broker asked one of them to stay and the other two to wait outside. Up until recently, matchmaking meetings had been held with groups of up to ten Chinese women for one Japanese man. When the Japanese man asked a question, all the Chinese candidates answered the question in turn. However, as Japanese male clientele came from more diverse backgrounds, some expressed that they felt uncomfortable meeting women all in one group. Recently, the broker had changed the matchmaking style to one-on-one meetings.

The translator said, "Mr. Matsuda, here is Ms. Gao's profile. Do you want to ask any questions?"

He looked at the translator and timidly asked, "Well…what should I ask? I am so nervous." She translated this to Ms. Gao.

Ms. Gao responded, "I am also nervous." When the staff member translated this back to Mr. Matsuda, they all laughed and somehow it broke the ice. Ms. Gao was in her early twenties, slim, had a small face, long straight hair, and large eyes. The broker commented in Japanese to him, "She is really pretty (*Ja: kirei*)," and he nodded.

Matsuda asked, "Do you know anything about Japan?"

She said, "I know there are blue trains."

He asked, "Are your parents alright with marriage to a Japanese man?"

"Yes, they consent," she replied.

"I like golfing and skiing, do you play golf and ski?" Matsuda asked.

"No," she quickly replied.

"What do you do when you have time off? I usually go to the movies, sing Karaoke … do you like Karaoke?"

"So-so," she responded.

Matsuda continued, "Are you studying Japanese now?"

"Not yet," she responded.

He then inquired into her favorite cuisine, songs, and asked if she had any questions for him. She said, "No."

In twenty minutes, the first meeting was over. A staff member asked Ms. Gao to wait outside. Then, the second woman entered the room. She was with her parents. Mr. Matsuda greeted her parents, "Thank you very much for coming."

Ms. Yang and her parents sat on the couch. The broker introduced him to the three of them, saying "Mr. Matsuda lives in Gunma prefecture."

Her father asked, “How far is it from Tokyo?”

Mr. Matsuda answered, “approximately two hours by train.” Although his answer was translated, the broker added, “Well, it is about one hour, very close to Tokyo.”

Ms. Yang this time asked, “Do you live by yourself now?”

“Yes,” Mr. Matsuda replied.

Her father asked, “How is your mother doing?”

“She is doing well and still very healthy.”

Ms. Yang asked, “What are your hobbies?”

“I like traveling,” Mr. Matsuda replied.

“Have you been to Shanghai or Hong Kong?”

“No, I haven’t. This is my first visit to China.”

Yang’s father explained, “I have three daughters and she is my second daughter. She has not married because she was waiting to meet you! I am already retired and have no financial problems, so don’t worry about us. Her mother is still working at a watch factory.”

Mr. Matsuda nervously smiled, and asked Ms. Yang, “Would it be possible in the future to live with my parents, if necessary?”

“How old are they? How is their health?” Yang asked.

“Right now, they are doing well. They are seventy-five years old.”

Yang replied, “Maybe not right after I relocate to Japan, but in the future it might be possible to live together.”

Matsuda added, “Right now, since it is just myself, I live in a one-bedroom apartment, but if I marry, I would probably buy a house for my family.”

Yang's father suddenly asked, "Do you like China?"

Matsuda responded, "Yes, I think China is so spacious and nice, and looks like Hokkaido."

After another twenty minutes, the broker stopped the conversation and asked Ms. Yang and her parents to wait outside. The third woman came in and sat on the couch. Apparently Mr. Matsuda had already spoken with her on the Internet ("an Internet matchmaking meeting," a service provided by the same agency). He greeted her, saying, "We talked earlier on the Internet."

Ms. Zhang was in her late twenties and from Dongyang's neighboring town. She had long curly hair and was wearing a summer dress. Since Matsuda was not tall, she was almost the same or a little shorter than him. Since visiting Dongyang on the morning of the matchmaking meeting was too much of a hassle, she came to Dongyang a day early. The broker had asked me to share a hotel room with her the night before. We soon found out that we were the same age and almost the same height. We chatted about many different topics, including our favorite Chinese foods, fashion, and so on. Before going to bed, she told me, "I think, after all, marriage is not about romance. It is about having a stable (*Ch: anding*) and peaceful (*Ch: pingan*) life."

Ms. Zhang had already seen Mr. Matsuda's profile, including the pictures of his house and family, before the meeting. She was ready to agree to marriage before he proposed. Ms. Zhang seemed to be the one the broker was strongly promoting to Mr. Matsuda. During the matchmaking meeting, the broker repeatedly claimed, "She is the best girl." The meeting began and their conversation was about topics similar to those discussed with other women, such as hobbies, Karaoke, cooking, traveling, and so on.

Mr. Matsuda also asked if she liked children. She said yes, and expressed that she definitely wanted to have children if she married.

When Ms. Zhang left, Mr. Matsuda, the translators, the brokers, and I were exhausted. At the same time, Mr. Matsuda tried to loosen up. Nonetheless, we could not take a break. Mr. Matsuda had to make a decision. Making the decision to marry within 20 minutes or so was standard procedure on these matchmaking tours.

The broker asked him, “What shall we do? The last girl looked the best, didn't she?”

“Yeah, I think so,” Matsuda answered.

“So, is it Ms. Zhang? Is that your final decision?” The broker looked into Matsuda’s face. However, Matsuda looked still indecisive. The broker asked, “do you want to see her again before making a decision?”

Matsuda still looked unable to make up his mind.

The broker urged, “Well, if you came all the way to Dongyang, you’ve got to make a decision.” Interestingly, the broker seemed to know what Matsuda was debating. The broker asked, “You are debating between Ms. Gao and Ms. Zhang, aren’t you?” The second candidate, Ms. Yang, had been eliminated. The broker flipped Ms. Yang’s profile over. The broker told him, “Ms. Gao had very attractive, large eyes. But Ms. Zhang is more domestic (*Ja: kateiteki*) and probably good for marriage.” While Mr. Matsuda was trying to decide, the local broker came in and apologetically conveyed that Ms. Gao was not willing (*Ch: ta bu tongyi*). That moment established the engagement between Mr. Matsuda and Ms. Zhang.

During the “engagement” dinner that night, although sitting next to each other at a large circular table of ten people, Mr. Matsuda and Ms. Zhang did not talk to each other, in no small part because they could not communicate. But Ms. Zhang poured beers into Mr. Matsuda's glass a number of times, and he thanked her each time. As the night wore on with many dishes, drinks, and multiple toasts, the broker repeatedly urged the couple to hold hands and put their arms around each others' shoulders. At first, the couple looked hesitant to do so. But when the broker took Mr. Matsuda's hand and put it in Ms. Zhang's hand, they both shyly smiled. They followed the broker's request, bordering on an order, and a photographer took pictures so as not to miss the moment of "intimacy."

The following day, a day before Mr. Matsuda left for Japan, they went on a date (with the translator, photographer, and myself in tow). We visited some sightseeing spots. I overheard Mr. Matsuda talking to the translator, "If it had been possible, I would have wanted to marry a Japanese woman." Mr. Matsuda left in the early morning of the following day. He would come back to Dongyang a month later to hold a wedding ceremony with Ms. Zhang in China. Ms. Zhang started learning Japanese language. She left for Japan 6 months later in February 2008. The couple had a child in 2009 and purchased a house in 2010.

***

This dissertation examines the experiences and trajectories of contemporary cross-border marriages between Japan and northeast China. It is an ethnography of the making of marital relations across borders. In particular, I analyze how individuals who are differently situated in a transnational circuit enact cross-border marriages and negotiate marriageability at local and transnational scales. In the course of my fieldwork, I saw almost total strangers without a common language attempt to navigate marriageability and come to see each other as “appropriate” partners. During the search processes, what repeatedly struck me was the ways in which such marriageable others are created. Instead of desiring the other based on notions of difference, as described in many works on transnational intimate relationships, I witnessed that Japanese-Chinese matchmaking practices create “proximate others” based on perceived similarity and familiarity. Such particular notions of marriageable others are especially striking when considering the colonial history and persistent political tensions between Japan and China. How do Japanese men and Chinese women—virtual strangers lacking even a common language with which to communicate—come to see one another as marriageable and, moreover, how have matchings between the former colonizers and colonized of Manchuria come to be viewed as legitimate unions?[1] I found that the cross-border conjugal relations I discuss here need to be analyzed within the context of a particular colonial history of Manchuria in northeast China and the local values and norms in which such colonial residue is experienced. An analysis of such a unique context goes beyond gendered flows forged by globalization and points to alternative ways in which transnational marital relations are imagined and created. It thus also demonstrates how particular local marital norms and values, such as notions of endogamy, exogamy, or patrilocality play out on a transnational scale.

To provide some background: Since the 1990s, the transnational marriage agencies (*Ja: kokusai kekkon shōkaijō*) that specifically introduce Chinese women to Japanese men have increased in number in Japan. Such agencies are easily accessible online. Indeed, many male clients I met in the course of my research found their marriage agencies on the Internet. Different from the findings of works that focus on marriages between non-Japanese women and Japanese men from the countryside (Shukuya 1988, Kuwayama 1995, Faier 2009), the agencies that I studied during 2007-2011 primarily provided matchmaking services to white-collar Japanese men in urban areas. Many of these men had unsuccessfully attempted to find a Japanese bride through domestic marriage agencies. A good portion of these men also stated to me that at the age of forty or fifty, the average age for transnational marriages, it was almost impossible for them to find a “suitable” bride locally. Adding to this impossibility was the fact that many of them, despite being in their forties, still wanted to find a bride who was in her twenties, or at very latest early thirties.[2] Although Japanese husbands are typically older than their wives, such large age differences are not common in intra-Japanese marriages. Brokerage agencies are commercial business. Brokerage costs vary, but they usually range from ¥1 million to ¥3 million (approximately US $12,000 to US $36,000), and include a several-day matchmaking (*omiai*) tour to China, a wedding, and other paperwork assistance (figure 1).[3] Although there are marriage agencies in Japan that introduce women from other countries, including the Philippines, Thailand, Russia, or Vietnam, agencies introducing Chinese women constitute the majority of the

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[1] In a different context, Jean E. Jackson (1983) observed marital practices called “language group exogamy” among the Tukanoans of the Central Northwest Amazon. Community members identified their father’s language as their own language and were requried to marry out of their language group.

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[2] During interviews with Japanese men, they often indicated that a “suitable bride” possessed reproductive ability. Especially for men seeking their first marriages--but also including those seeking a second marriage--they expected their wives to have children. Accordingly, women in their forties or fifties were not “suitable” as reproductive brides.

[3] Many agencies also offer “after-care services” with and without extra fees. Although such services may show the commercialized nature of the brokerage services and the commoditization of brides, many clients, including Chinese brides, claimed that they needed assistance for their marital lives. Chia-Wen Lu (2005) argues that broker-customer relationships can also turn into friendships.

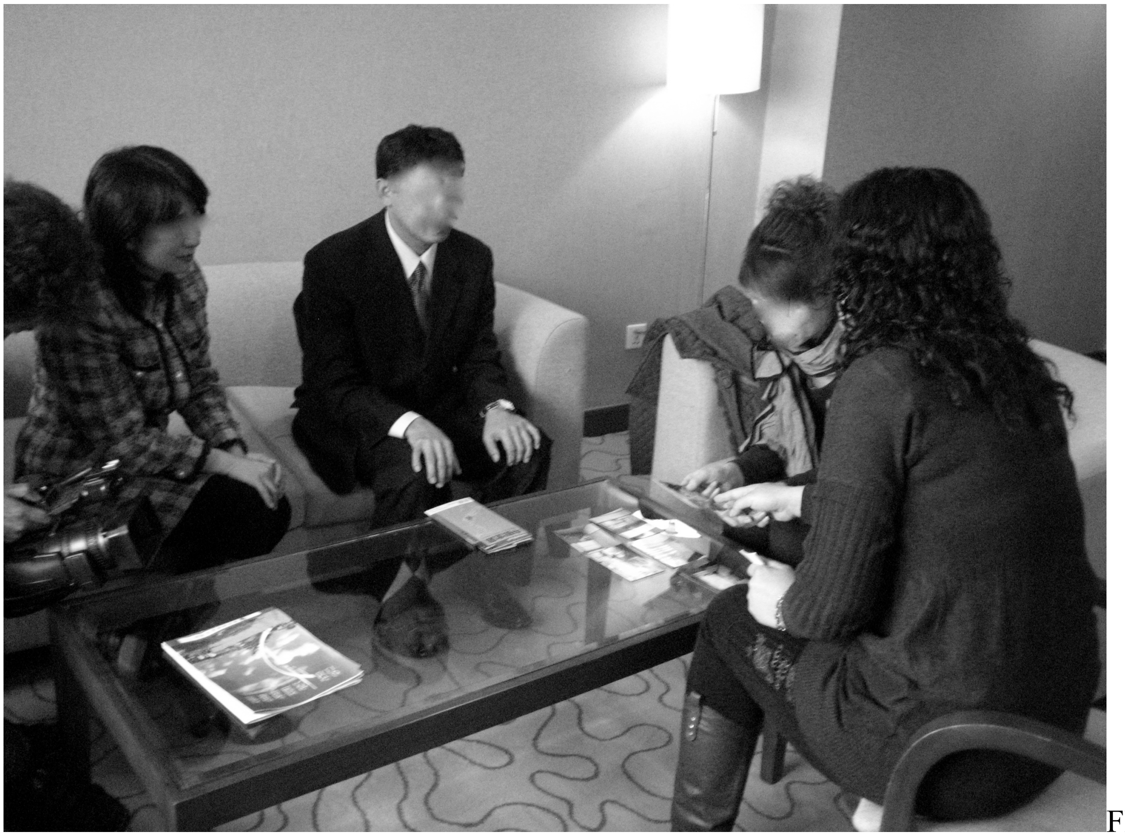

FIGURE 1 Matchmaking tour in Dongyang with a local staff member, a translator, and a photographer.

transnational marriage industry today.[4]

In northeast China, two towns, which I will call "Dongyang" (in Liaoning Province) and "Xinghai" (in Heilongjiang Province), were major bride-sending communities. Importantly, contemporary flows of people between these areas and Japan are only one part of a larger history of migratory flows. This history includes the settlement of the area by Japanese colonists (1931-1945), the repatriation of Japanese citizens after the war (1945-present), the return migration in later decades of Japanese war orphans (the late 1970s-1980s), and then the subsequent migration to Japan of the war orphans' children (the late 1980s) or, in many cases, those who had assumed such an identity (1990s). In particular, in Xinghai, locals claimed that one out of four in the town currently have immediate family members or other relatives living in Japan.

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[4] In 2011, international marriages constituted 4.3% of the total number of marriages in Japan. The marriages between Japanese men and Chinese women, in turn, constituted 44.4% of marriages between Japanese men and non-Japanese women. Those with Filipino women constituted only 22.8% (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare).

The backgrounds of the Chinese women from these areas who sought Japanese husbands vary, and women ranged in age from being in their early twenties to their fifties. The women in two towns did display slightly different tendencies toward marriages with Japanese men. However, in both towns, women's motivations for cross-border marriage could not be explained in isolation from local values concerning marriage, including values which emphasized marrying up, off, and in order to secure a future. My ethnographic data also shows that matchmaking practices involved brokerage payments from the women to Chinese brokers. Fees ranged from 20,000 RMB to 130,000 RMB ($3,000 to $20,000). The women usually paid down payments when they married, and the remaining fees when spousal visas were issued.

Studies of migration raise questions, such as what moves people, who can (or cannot) cross borders, and what makes crossing borders possible. Whereas others analyze globalization, time/space compression, or increasingly interconnected yet uneven capitalist worlds (Harvey 1990, Sassen 1999, Mintz 1995), my dissertation aims to advance theories of transnational migration by revealing the little-explored links intertwined within these border crossings, issues of marriageability, and deeper regional histories.

It is no coincidence that the majority of Chinese brides today come from northeast China. Located in former "Manchuria" (1931-1945), multiple people I spoke with described, although in different ways, the relationship between Japan and northeast China as historically unique. Many framed the current transnational flows of brides as connected to the Japanese colonial past. While maintaining a view of Japan as a former colonizer, numerous locals in northeast China, including the prospective brides, nevertheless depicted Japan as a "familiar" (*Ch: qinqie*) place, at times regardless of how thin their connections with it were. That said, women I interacted with frequently had several friends or relatives living in Japan. For many, Japan was not totally a foreign place; they knew many "good" stories from their friends and relatives.

The contemporary practices of crossing borders for the sake of marriage provide an important site where the transgression of state and national borders coincides with the simultaneous maintenance and reinforcement of normative and ideological boundaries. In order to theorize such processes, the notion of *marriageability* plays a crucial role. I use the term marriageability in two senses—(1) becoming an individual worthy and capable of marriage and (2) rendering others conceivable as a potential marriage partner. The title of this dissertation, *Locating Marriageable Communities*, aims to capture the idea that marriageability is negotiable and can be reworked and stretched, but at the same time also remains restricted within multiple values, norms, and ideologies. Locating marriageability involves not only looking at the individuals who engage in these cross-border marriages, but also entails examining the symbolic construction of boundaries (Cohen 1985, Barth 1969) and imagined comradeship and commonality among members of communities (Anderson 1983). Again, while marriageability is flexible, it has its limitations. That is, depending on the cultural or social context not everyone can be "a suitable marriage partner."

This dissertation has three major goals. The first goal is to theorize the ways in which a colonial legacy is manifested in contemporary transnational processes. In particular, I show how local (re)interpretations of colonialism give meaning to individual flows between the formerly colonized and the colonizer. The second goal is to how demonstrate conceptions of proximity, similarity, and familiarity as important sites of analysis where power relations are subtly negotiated. The last goal is to reclaim marriage as an important site of analysis where individuals negotiate community boundaries even across national borders. In particular, analyzing local marital norms and values helps us understand how they inform transnational processes. This final goal also has a flipside. Bringing marriage back into the analysis also works to reveal the concept's implicit normativity. To acknowledge the multilayered inequalities within cross-border marriages does not mean that there are no disparities within so-called "regular" marriages. Rather, the perception that borders are being crossed may lead to discrepancies standing out in the former, such that in contrast "normal" marital relations are seen as self-evidently natural, healthy, or uncomplicated. Instead of presupposing that "normal" marriage is a given unburdened by inequality and discrepancy, the flipside of my final goal is that it brings into focus the dialectic constitution of "normal" unions and "non-normal" unions such as cross-border matches. In the remaining pages of this introduction, I lay out each of these three goals in greater depth and then conclude by discussing my methods, positionality, and the composition of the dissertation.

Transnational Linkages, Colonial Legacies, Mobility

A first goal of this dissertation is to theorize the ways in which transnational linkages are shaped by deeper histories and manifested in local contexts. In particular, my aim is to reexamine flows of individuals between Japan and northeast China with special attention to the context of colonial history and its legacies. Theorists of globalization observe that global flows of people or things take place in increasingly interconnected worlds and under conditions of time-space compression (Harvey 1989, Sassen 1999). Arjun Appadurai's notion of five scapes (*ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, and *ideascapes*) has been used to characterize the fluid, irregular shape of the world today. Amongst such fluid global cultural processes, Appadurai stresses one important factor: "the imagination as a social practice" (1996, 49). Fantasies and realities function on a larger global scale.

Drawing upon this notion of scapes, Nicole Constable suggests that global imagination also forms "marriage-scapes that are shaped and limited by existing and emerging cultural, social, historical, and political-economic factors" (2005, 4). While marriage-scapes are fluid, as Appadurai would suggest, they are also gendered, such that women from "poorer" countries marry men from "wealthier" countries. Although global inequalities contribute to making such transnational interactions possible (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Parreñas 2001; Constable 2009), I further illuminate how the existence of global inequalities alone is inadequate to understand the flows of people between Japan and northeast China. I argue that the relevant imaginings (in this case precisely the imaginings that make marriageable others) are made possible not simply due to increasingly interconnected global worlds, but also due to the residues of a deeper regional colonial history.

Currently, Chinese brides come primarily from northeast China.[5] This is the site of the former Japanese puppet state of "Manchuria," established in 1931 as part of the Japanese imperial project. As noted above, this legacy has been the basis for multiple flows of people between the two areas, including the migration of Japanese nationals to Manchuria before 1945, their repatriation from Manchuria to Japan after 1945, and the return migrations of Japanese war orphans, their subsequent generations, and even their imposters after the late 1980s.[6]

It is not a coincidence that many Chinese brides currently come from towns where numerous Japanese war orphans were originally left behind. Such unique colonial, postcolonial, and transnational linkages have provided the basis for certain narratives that make sense of the flow of brides to Japan. On the one hand, Japanese participants explain marriage migration by claiming that the Chinese women feel a degree of familiarity with Japan due to historical connections and the "contributions" of Japanese settlers to their communities. Such narratives deny both the darker side of Japanese colonialism and the possibility of Chinese women having "ulterior" motives for marriage. On the other hand, in China, marital migration to Japan is described as a product of "blood ties" between Japan and the communities, created by the graciousness of the Chinese who saved Japanese war orphans and incorporated them into their families.

Instead of simply viewing colonial history and subsequent events as a

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[5] Other studies show dissimilar transnational destinations for Chinese women. For instance, women in Beijing or Shanghai marry men from the U.S. (Constable 2003), women in Guangdong Province marry men from Hong Kong (Newendorp 2008; Friedman 2010), and Chosŏnjok (ethnic Korean) women in northeast China marry men in South Korea (Freeman 2011).

[6] For instance, Mariko Tamanoi (2009) critically demonstrates how memory of Manchuria is experienced and enacted by different actors in Japan and China (also Watt 2010).

"background" against which current transitional linkages were established, I demonstrate how such a history is actively and continuously interpreted and reinterpreted in making sense of contemporary flows of people. In doing so, I also draw attention not only to national relations and histories, but also to more local ones. In analyzing correspondence marriages between Filipina or Chinese women and U.S. men (2003), Nicole Constable has argued that the historical, political economy is embodied in the production of desire at an intimate level. In particular, she claims that historical power relations between nation-states imply a certain imagination of others that shapes particular desires (cf. Brennan 2004). Constable's argument provides a useful framework; nonetheless, her discussion is limited to the large-scale historical perspective of relations between states, one which overlooks local differences within countries. As my ethnographic data shows, both the forms and implications of desires for border crossing are inextricable from the distinctively local. Thus, by addressing the specific local history in which the participants are embedded, this dissertation aims to add a more complex picture of the logic of desire, incorporating the local particularities that a discussion of large-scale national relationships cannot capture. Localizing cross-border marriages does not mean to deny the global inequalities that generate gendered migration. But rather, the aim is to reveal how particular local historical memories are selectively deployed to "naturalize" unequal transactions.

The Politics of Proximity: Neither "Same" nor "Enemy"

The second goal of this dissertation is to broaden the anthropological discussion of the politics of difference by inquiring into its seeming counterparts: proximity, familiarly, and similarity. In the course of my fieldwork in Japan and northeast China, what struck me were the repeated statements I heard from marriage brokers, Japanese men, and Chinese women that worked not to distance Japan and China, but depict them as more proximate. Such statements included references to cultural familiarity, racial similarity, geographical proximity, and historical relatedness. These seemingly positive, or even generous, framings were employed to render the matching between Japanese men and Chinese women more natural, appropriate, and even legitimate. While Japan and northeast China are indeed geographically close, such physical distance does not solely determine the feeling of proximity. For instance, Heilongjiang Province is much closer to Russia than Japan. Nonetheless, I have yet to meet locals who claim feelings of proximity to Russians. Thus, it is not a geographically given distance, but rather a distance that is felt and created in shifting contexts.

Such positive framings are particularly striking considering historical and persistent political tensions between Japan and China. These constructed differences between Japan and China have a long history. For instance, Stefan Tanaka (1993) observes that in order to create the modern Japanese nation-state—a project beginning in the late 19th Century—the conceptual separation of Japan from other Asian nation-states, in particular from China, played an essential role. Discussing the historical framework of *toyoshi*, Tanaka argues, "It established modern Japan's equivalence—as the most advanced nation of Asia—with Europe, and also the distinction from and cultural, intellectual, and structural superiority over China" (Tanaka 1993, 12). Koichi Iwabuchi similarly argues that while the creation of Japan's national identity has been embedded in its comparison with the West, modern Japanese national identity has "always been imagined in an asymmetrical totalizing triad between “Asia,” “the West,” and “Japan” (2002, 7). Iwabuchi claims that “While ‘the West’ played the role of the modern Other to be emulated, ‘Asia’ was cast as the image of Japan’s past, a negative portrait which illustrates the extent to which Japan has been successfully modernized according to the Western standard” (2002, 7-8). Thus, the Japanese discursive construction of “Asia” has been based on “commonality and difference” (2002, 8). To put it precisely, terms such as “similar but superior” or “in but above Asia” signify the construction of a Japanese national identity.

Even today, while enduring political tensions have been triggered by various events, the sources of such struggles, among others, are frequently linked to Japanese colonialism and Japanese wartime responsibility. Such recent political tensions include those that erupted in 2001 when former Prime minister Koizumi officially visited Yasukuni Shrine, a religious site where WWII war criminals are enshrined. At the time, neighboring counties, in particular, China and South Korea, vehemently criticized his conduct as displaying a lack of remorse for Japanese imperialism. There have also been numerous anti-Japanese protests in China, including those in 2005 and 2010, the latter triggered by a collision between a Chinese fishing boat and a Japanese patrol boats near the disputed and unpopulated Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea.

The most recent protests, also provoked by the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute, occurred just last year. Specifically, in April, the right-wing mayor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintaro, proposed that the city of Tokyo should purchase the islands. This led the Japanese government to act pre-emptively to “nationalize” the islands before Ishihara purchased them. As a result, tensions further intensified between Japan and China, resulting in anti-

Japanese protests that were the largest since the resumption of diplomatic ties in 1972. In more than 100 cities in China, anti-Japanese protesters marched on September 18, 2012 (anniversary of the "September 18 Incident" in 1931, or "the day of humiliation" in China).[7] These protesters attacked Japanese restaurants and supermarkets, Japanese companies, Japanese cars, and anything "Japanese." The Japanese government reported that the damages caused by the protests totaled more than 10 billion yen (approx. 100 million US$).[8] The protestors involved repeatedly linked the territorial dispute to Japanese wartime responsibility and invoked Japan's imperial past.

While this dissertation is not about the political disputes between Japan and China, it is remarkable to find that the residues of colonialism at work within the contemporary context in two such opposite extremes: furious protests and the feeling of "proximity." While large anti-Japanese protests frequently occurred in the South (for instance, protests did not happen in Dalian in 2012), the locals I met in northeast China also expressed antagonism toward Japanese colonialism in the past. Thus, what I found was that the feelings of proximity were not generated by denying the past; rather, the past was itself narrated into such discourses of feeling. In this dissertation I seek to further answer this question of how exactly these colonial legacies played out in producing marital relations.

An analysis of the notions of proximity embedded in the contemporary linkages between Japan and northeast China also provides an alternative picture by challenging two common views of Japan and China: the first is a notion of "Asia" that would locate

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[7] On September 18 in 1931, Japanese forces attacked the barracks of Chinese troops in Shengyang. This day is symbolized as the start of Japan's invasion of northeast China.

[8] Asahi. 11. 14. 2012

Japan and China in the “same” category; the second a conception of the two countries as everlasting “enemies.” The cross-border marriages I document challenge existing work which has highlighted the ways in which transnational intimate relations are created based on the idea of different others, be they exotic, erotic, traditional, or modern. In such existing work, what makes others desirable is the differences they are perceived to possess, which the local women seem to be lacking (cf. Brennan 2004). These differences are often also invoked as mapping onto a larger West-East dichotomy.

Granted, such work has already been challenged by those who point to the invocation of past familial or national ties in analyzing intra-regional cross-border marriages. For example, Nicole Newendorp observes that marriages between Hong Kong men and women from Mainland China are described as a “reunion” of “Chinese” families (2008, 10-11). Such notions of “reunion” are also observed in marriages between Korean men and Chosŏnjok (ethnic Korean) women in China (Freeman 2011). Likewise, Shu-mei Shih (1998) demonstrates that the idea of “Greater China” plays a role in making the imaginary fusion among Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Within such an imaginary, the strategic deployment of the terms “national” and “transnational” among these three areas reveals the ambiguity of their relationships. For example, Shih states that feminists in Taiwan and Hong Kong “simply tolerate and sometimes strategically evoke the ‘national’ when dealing with issues regarding mainland women” (1998, 290). Thus, these feminists may consciously use the terms “mainland sisters” or “mainland cousins” when describing their relationships with women in the People’s Republic of China (1998, 289). These studies critically show that for intra-regional marriage migration, it is not only difference that is valued in making marital relations, but also the shared sameness that the people in separate geographical or even political boundaries are perceived to have as a product of the past.

Nonetheless, the strategic deployment of "sameness," either through conceptions of shared ethnicity, language, history, or past cultural heritage does not quite work for the Japanese-Chinese marriages. The Japanese husbands and Chinese wives do not have a shared common language. Their marriage is not about "reunion" of anything. Therefore, in order to naturalize or legitimate the Japanese-Chinese unions, a further tactic is necessary. Indeed, it was not the notion of "sameness" I witnessed invoked in these marriages, but rather "proximity" that created a vague site of negotiation. In such an ambiguous site, this dissertation demonstrates how social actors in different sites negotiate marriageability and local readings of regional history. This notion of proximity simultaneously challenges the conception of Japanese-Chinese marital relations as between exotic others, intra-regional "same Asian" partners, or even intractable national enemies.

Marriageability, Community Boundaries

The last and central goal of this dissertation is to bring marriage back into the analysis of cross-border unions. That is, cross-border marriages are not simply about marriage migration, but also about the construction of marriage. Instead of seeing marriage simply as a tool or means of migration, facilitating global flows of women, I argue that marriage still plays a role in marking and imagining, often with effort, the boundaries of people and communities. In other words, marriage is an important conceptual arena within which various boundaries, norms, and ideologies are negotiated and imagined. I suggest that marriageability is a key framework for navigating such boundaries. This idea is not new. Anthropological studies of marriage have already supplied various concepts concerning marriage that entail community boundaries and border crossings. For instance, the concept of patrilocality denotes the idea that women are required to marry out of their own community and to relocate themselves to their husband's community (Fortes 1970; Lowie 1950). The notion of hypergamy describes women's marrying up into a socially and economically higher family. Anthropologists who invoke these concepts have long recognized that marriage can work to cross community, geographic, social, and economic boundaries.

Furthermore, the terms "endogamy" and "exogamy" as discussed by alliance theorists also speak to complex practices concerning boundaries and borders. By definition, exogamy denotes marriage outside a certain category or group, while endogamy describes marriage within a certain group (Stone 1997). Groups, by nature, entail borders. Louis Dumont also makes precise use of these categories and states that the range of permissible marriage is determined by an outer limit (the unit of endogamy) and an inner limit (the unit of exogamy) (Dumont 1983, 39, 2006). Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) further explicates endogamy and exogamy, observing, "Any society is both exogamous and endogamous" (1969, 45-46). For instance, he explains, the Australian aborigines practice clan exogamy, but tribe endogamy. What Lévi-Strauss calls "true endogamy" is "merely the refusal to recognize the possibility of marriage beyond the limits of the human community" (46). The Eskimoes of Norton Sound exclusively portray themselves as "men" and do not recognize their neighboring people as "men" such as themselves. Such inability to perceive others as men importantly shapes their notion of marriageability. He states, "In all these cases, it is merely a question of knowing how far to extend the logical connotation of the idea of community, which is itself dependent upon the effective solidarity of the group" (1969, 46).

My aim here is not to excavate these terminologies, but rather to show that marriage traditionally involves complex practices implicating the negotiation of borders. Earlier anthropologists described these terms as fixed "marriage rules" and "social systems" that somehow everyone in the community knew, shared and practiced.[9] What is novel in rethinking such notions in contemporary contexts is that marriage is not a set of fixed rules, but rather a key site where individuals attempt to stretch and navigate community boundaries with labor, creativity, and imagination. I therefore seek to ask by what criteria marrying across national borders, or more precisely marrying a Japanese man or a Chinese woman, is conceived of as being within the limit of marriageability. Later, I will also ask when such partners are perceived to be within the limit, what boundaries of the limits are simultaneously negotiated and reinforced.

In answering this question, it is important to note that studies of kinship have regained scholarly attention by rethinking kinship not as given, but as a contested site of biology-culture, nature-nurture, and given-choice dynamics (Schneider 1968, Yngvesson 2005, Volkman 2005, Kim 2007, Akesson 2001, Rapp 1994, Ragone 1994, Hayden 2009, Weston 1997, Rapp and Ginsburg 2011).[10] Kath Weston (1997), for instance, observes that lesbians and gay men claim an alternative form of family, “families we choose,” such that families are not simply produced based on biological ties, but rather based on choice and creation. Rapp and Ginsburg (2011) argue that when families with children with disabilities realize that their experiences do not map precisely onto pre-existing models of American domestic life, they are required to reimagine new kinship narratives. Such new kinship imaginings work at multiple levels and include the remapping of domestic cycles, parental expectations, and understandings of the future life for children to accommodate the differences they display. As such, new kinship studies highlight the ways in which kinship is negotiated, reworked, and imagined within existing and emerging cultural norms and values.

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[9] The work of Russian Anthropologist Shternberg, who studied Gilyak kinship in the late 1800s, shows that his analysis of Gilyak marriage rules was based on his simplified castings of Gilyak groups. "Gilyak marriage rules were evidently not only difficult for Gilyak themselves to follow, Gilyaks may never have followed them as religiously as Shternberg avowed" (Grant 1999, lvi).

[10] New kinship studies include transnational adoptions, reproductive technologies, gay-lesbian kinship, and children with disabilities.

However, creating marital relations requires another set of discussions. Unlike kinship, marriage does not involve “natural” or “biological” ties. Marriage is, in the first place, a union of two strangers. That said, one major body of scholarship on marriage tends to focus on it as an existing site where various inequalities are reproduced (Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Collier and Rosaldo 1981; Lamphere 2001).[11] Such analyses focus on pre-existing marital relationships, and therefore treat marriage as an already created (post-matrimony) arena. For this strain of scholarship, the idea that individuals would be in a martial relation is, to some extent, taken for granted. On the other hand, the studies that do focus on the creation of marital relationships tend to focus on an individual’s degree of agency in choosing a partner, whether in "arranged marriages" or "love marriages" (Illouz 1997; Hirsch and Wardlow 2006, 8; Collier 1997; Hirsch 2007; Ahearn 2001; Wardlow 2006). While these studies provide valuable insights, in these portrayals, the practice of marrying someone (or precisely an opposite sex) is again taken for granted. In other words, a marriage partner is seen as either chosen by oneself, by one's family, or by other social and cultural factors (in practice these distinctions are hardly drawn).

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[11] For instance, according to Collier and Yanagisako, “at the heart of kinship theory lies an analytic dichotomy between ‘domestic’ and ‘political-jural domains” (1987, 4). This dichotomy assumes that a domestic sphere is “dedicated to sexuality and childrearing, associated primarily with women, and a ‘public’ sphere of legal rules and legitimate authority, associated primarily with men” (Collier and Yanagisako 1987, 4,; Yanagisako 1979). They argue that “this assumption of two domains—one fulfilling the biological requirements of sexuality and care of helpless infants, the other responsive to historical changes in economic, political and ideological systems—has been very durable” (1987, 4).

But where do we locate the unmarried and those who seek but cannot find a marriage partner within studies of marriage? Must studies of marriage always presuppose married or would-be married subjects?[12] Finding a partner and creating marital relations are themselves not always easy things. It often involves effort, work, investment, and sometimes compromise. Therefore, instead of viewing marriage simply as a site where various inequalities are reproduced or agency is exercised, I question how such a site is made possible (or impossible) in the first place. Analyzing marriageability rather than married lives works to include the unmarried within studies of marriage. I investigate how the construction of marriage is made feasible for those perceived to be at the limits of marriageability by relying on, stretching, or possibly transgressing cultural norms of various boundaries.

Here, the perspective that the scholars of new kinship studies offer can be expanded to analyze marriage. Accordingly, I ask when one realizes one's life does not precisely match one's cultural values, or what is taken for granted, such as finding a suitable marriage partner by a certain age, what kind of imaginings make it possible for individuals to seek and imagine an alternative? I argue that a suitable marriage partner is not simply chosen, but also has to be made and imagined with existing and appropriated cultural, social, historical, and political-economic elements. In other words, marriageable others are the products of labor, imagining, investment, and compromise. This is not limited to cross-border marriages. That is, marital norms are not only stretched in cross-border marriages, but also and always confirmed and/or negotiated in *any* marriage. Domestic marriages, even so-called "love marriages" entail emotional labor. "Is this the right person?" "Can I be happy with him/her?" "Am I making a right decision?" "Do I know this person completely?" "How much compromise should I make?" "Can marriage change my life?" Even finding a partner in a domestic context entails imagination, negotiation and stretching of various boundaries, norms and values. The questions in the context of cross-border marriages, therefore, are both how these relations reveal existing norms and to what extent these marital norms are stretched and new imaginings emerge.

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[12] The politics of gay and lesbian marriages provide critical insights here. Michael Warner (1999) for instance claims that "Marriage sacrifices some couples at the expense of others. It is selective legitimacy" (1999, 82). As long as the meaning of marriage relies upon the state, Warner states, the state will continue to regulate the sexual lives of the unmarried.

Marriage and Crossing Borders

Consequently, my analysis of Japanese-Chinese marriages--with a particular focus on the very meaning and value of marriage--also aims to reveal local norms concerning marriage. It may seem paradoxical that the practices of transnational matchmaking would render local norms and values concerning marriage particularly visible, but the attempts, struggles, compromises, and hopes implicated in these practices do precisely expose local norms and values as they are navigated at the borders.

In particular, I revisit the norm of patrilocality, and examine the limits and flexibility of this concept. Linda Stone states that patrilineal societies are usually also patrilocal (2000, 67). Thus, it is women who must leave their natal homes, enter their husband's family, and carry on their husband's lineage. The premise of patrilocality is that women marry out. Palriwala and Uberoi (2005) observe that in much of South and East Asia marriage means a shift for women, including shifts in place, home, relationships, and the authorities to whom they submit. Due to such changes being unique to women, Rubie Watson has claimed that "In recent years patrilocal residence has been singled out as one of the major reasons for women's continuing oppression in post revolution China" (1991, 351; also cited by Schein 2005). On the other hand, recent scholars reconceptualize such women's mobility not simply as oppression, but also as a strategy and an advantage for upward mobility (Schein 2005; Chao 2005; Fan 2008; Liu 1997). Such upward mobility via marriage is unique to women since men's status does not change by marriage.

Exploring the role of a local norm of patrilocality and women's mobility with marriage provides alternative, or additional ways in which we can analyze cross-border marriages. Instead of solely focusing on globalization or global brokerage networks that move women, I also ask how locally embedded notions of patrilocality produce multiple meanings for women's mobility. It is, of course, impossible to separate global forces from local contexts. My intention is not to choose one over the other, but rather, to suggest the formative role of local norms in rendering certain transnational practices feasible.

Furthermore, the term "cross-border marriages" is used to suggest that the borders people cross in these marriages are not limited to geographic (often state) borders, but also include national, racial, class, ethnic, and cultural borders (Schein 2005; Lu and Yang 2010, 25; Lu 2005, 277). This also suggests that those in receiving communities are crossing certain borders. However, those who move and geographically relocate themselves tend to draw more academic attention because of the vulnerable gendered, racial, and linguistic positions they may occupy in a new community. Yet, if studies of border crossing also include negotiations of border crossings, it is also important to examine those who try hard not to cross certain borders and the reasons why. As my ethnographic data shows, men in receiving communities also had to negotiate various forms of boundaries, meanings, and norms in order to make sense of their own practices of border crossing.

Marriage Normativity, the Limits of Marriageability and Common Sense

Finally, by examining the limits of marriageability in cross-border matchmaking, I also aim to show how such limits reveal marriage normativities. That is, to study these seemingly "uncommon" ways in which marriage is created is to also simultaneously investigate how conceptions of "common" or "regular" marriages are constructed. When participants worked hard to make their marital relations appear as natural and legitimate or other members of society criticized or showed suspicion of these marital relations, this simultaneously reinforced the social ideals of what a "regular marriage" should look like. We can see here how the idea of non-normal or abnormal marriages is dialectically constituted by the ideal conception of "normal," "natural," or "regular" marriages (Goffman 1969). In this section, I elaborate this twofold objective of my final goal.

Discussing the limits of marriageability, Elizabeth Povinelli's analysis of the limits of liberal recognition in Australia provides a useful parallel (1998, 1999, 2002). In examining state and public discourses on genital mutilations within Australian multiculturalism, Povinelli observes that such practices were seen as intolerable and beyond a common-sense limit of nationalism (1998, 577). She later further elaborates her use of a limit. She shows two different ways in which we perceive the concept of limit. The first way is to see a limit “which lies beyond or outside any particular idea, practice, or social group” (1999, 633-634). The second way to conceptualize a limit is that “every limit is the explanation, name, or phenomenon produced by the contradictions and anxieties of any given discursive field” (634). In other words, in the first meaning the limit designates what lies outside rather stable practices or ideologies, while the second use of a limit reveals how practices or ideologies themselves are produced and reinforced by the notion of the limit. Povinelli uses the concept of limit with the second meaning. The boundaries between tolerance and intolerance are not originally out there, but rather generated by anxieties about the boundaries.

Drawing upon this conception of limit, I ask how we can conceptualize the limits of marriageability. How are such limits constructed and how are tolerable and intolerable marriages generated by cross-border marriages? My aim is not only to examine cross-border marriages, but also reveal how ideas or ideals of normal and regular marriages are fortified. By juxtaposing cross-border marriages and “regular” marriages, I do not mean to highlight how unique or deviant these cross-border marriages are. Nor, do I mean to investigate how and at what point individuals made a decision to engage in cross-border marriages instead of regular marriages. These questions assume the boundaries between cross-border and regular marriages are stable and clear. Moreover, they also suppose that the practices of cross-border marriages lie beyond or outside of the limit of common sense "regular" marriages. Although I will be attentive to multiple scales of inequalities within cross-border marriages, this in no way means that there are no inequalities within and about so-called "regular" marriages. Rather, what I mean by the flip side of analyzing cross-border marriages is that it is not that existing regular marriages create the common sense limit, but rather that the limit continually produces and reproduces what normal marriages should look like.

It is important to note that normal and abnormal are not equally evaluated. "Normal" marriages are rarely examined in the same manner as cross-border marriages are scrutinized for their validity. I draw another analogy from Elizabeth Povinelli's *The Cunning of Recognition* (2002). She examines how Australian multiculturalism and indigenous traditions rely on different ways to demonstrate their legitimacy. While the contexts are different, her exploration of the unequal governance applied to of certain lives offers a crucial parallel. According to her analysis, common sense within mainstream Australian society is seen as self-evident--whether its ideas or practices are "common" is never asked. On the other hand, seemingly "uncommon" practices belonging to indigenous actors are required to adhere to an almost impossible ideal form of authenticity in order to be accepted. In a similar manner, "normal" marriages and "non-normal" marriages are not evaluated based on the same criteria. While "normal" marriages are seen as self-evidently legitimate without examining what exactly it is that is authentic about such relations, "non-normal unions," including those of cross-border couples, are constantly asked to demonstrate their legitimacy. In the processes, inequalities, differences, and incongruities become further visible.

It is important not to forget that inequalities exist not only within marital relations but also within marriage itself. Whereas marriage is normatively expected in almost all individual life cycles, only certain relations are seen as legitimate marriages. In Japan, China, and elsewhere—possibly more or less so in other places—almost everyone is situated in a marriage-track. Regardless of one's interest in marriage, they are expected sooner or later to marry an appropriate partner. Not marrying is seen as a choice requiring explanation or the result of a personal failing. The question "Are you married?" is common in China. While such a question has become slightly more taboo in Japan, it remains quite common for older relatives to ask when their grandchildren or nephews and nieces will marry. After marrying the next question will be when they will have children. Thus, "regular" marriage here is a heterosexual union who produces children.

Those who are not married by the certain age or engage in a different form of relation are seen as failing to meet a social requirement. Matthew Kohrman (2002) describes how he observed a local in China declare "Whaa! He's lame, who would want to marry him?" about a man who has difficulty walking (2000, 890). While excluding him from the local marriage market, such a statement does not exempt him from judgments based on understandings of the marriage track. Such a man occupies a marginal place and possibly will never marry, but he is not freed from the normative evaluating gaze of marital expectations. If a man is able-bodied, like many of those who engaged in cross-border marriages, such expectations and marginalization are more so. The marriage track is also time-sensitive—there are age-related expectations as well.[13]

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[13] Recently in China, the term "*sheng nu*" (leftover women) has emerged in the media to describe unmarried women over the age of 27 (e.g. New York Times, 10.11.2013). These "leftover women" are usually professional and educated women who also have high expectations for their marriage partners (To 2013).

Children are future marriage partners in waiting, while those who pass a certain age are seen as behind.

Claiming that a marriage track exists does not mean that everyone equally desires to marry. Some may have no interest in it and some may wish for different forms of intimate relationships. Nonetheless, while no reasons are asked why someone would want to marry "normally," explanations or excuses are required for not marrying or marriages that are "not normal." While disparities exist within "regular" marital relations as well as the institution of marriage itself, differences and inequalities became further visible in cross-border marriages.

Multisited Ethnography with Local Groundedness

I first got in touch with marriage brokers and participants in these matchmaking practices in the summer of 2007. After calling and emailing a number of transnational marriage agencies in the Tokyo metropolitan area, China Bride was one of the few agencies that welcomed me to their office. During my preliminary research (May-August 2008), I was able to accompany matchmaking tours to Dongyang, China. In the following summer, I revisited the same marriage agency in Tokyo and promised that I would come back to Tokyo sooner or later to do my long-term fieldwork. A half-year later, I settled in Tokyo. During my twenty-month fieldwork (March 2009-November 2011), I went back and forth within and between Japan and northeast China a number of times, sometimes with brokers and clientele on matchmaking tours and other times by myself. I also made a return trip for follow-up research to Japan and China in summer of 2011 (May-July 2010) to revisit those I met during my previous fieldwork.

As compared with conventional ethnography characterized by spending a long period of time in one place, my multisited fieldwork was composed of multiple shorter periods of research in several sites. My research was primarily conducted in three sites (Tokyo, Dongyang, and Xinghai). It is crucial to note that multisited ethnography does not simply consist of gathering data in the same fashion at multiple sites. During my research, the methods I employed to gather data had to be tailored to the ecologies of the different sites. For instance, even though I was following the same phenomenon—cross-border matchmaking—the ways in which I conducted participant observation changed across locations and the forms of data I gathered varied significantly. For instance, in Tokyo—a massive urban space—my fieldwork was conducted mainly at institutional sites, such as agencies or seminars. I had little hope of running into participants simply on the street. In contrast, in Xinghai, due to it being a smaller sized town, my spontaneous encounters with locals constituted an important means to gather data. Because of that I felt from time to time that it was as if I was looking at different phenomena that were only tied together by the same name. Even within China, the phenomenon of cross-border matchmaking did not constitute a unified practice. Importantly, this helped me understand that cross-border matchmaking was not a homogeneous practice, but instead a rather muddled, contradictory, and multifaceted assemblage.

My long-term fieldwork started in Tokyo where a transnational marriage agency, China Bride, generously gave me permission to be present as much as I wanted. They also allowed me to look at male and female profiles. During the first phase of my fieldwork (March-mid July 2009), I visited China Bride on a regular basis, 4-5 days per week. Since the weekends were the time many male clientele visited the agency, I was also there on the weekends. During the weekdays, when the office was not crowded, I was able to chat with the staff members. As I visited them almost every day, the staff members gradually stopped offering me a cup of tea, and instead told me to just open the refrigerator and help myself. The broker and staff members also started sharing stories upon stories about their male clientele with me since I also had come to know many of the male clientele with whom they were dealing. I was able to find many Japanese male interviewees at China Bride.

I was actually not the first one to visit China Bride to research cross-border marriages. Other college and graduate students in Japan, journalists, and reporters had visited them for interviews. Nonetheless, I was the first one to visit on a daily basis over the course of several months and to stay for several hours each visit. It was also China Bride that invited me to accompany a matchmaking tour to Dongyang in the summer of 2007. With the broker, I visited Dongyang and there I met the local staff members. I kept in contact with the local staff when I visited Dongyang for long-term research in July 2009. They also prepared my accommodation, a room that was part of a Japanese language school. There, I had daily interactions with Chinese brides. Hanging out with Chinese brides was much more casual and intimate than my interactions with Japanese men. During the language class, we often digressed and chatted about food, clothing, and of course, Japan. After class, we went eating and shopping together. Although I also closely interacted with the local staff members, in the view of the Chinese brides I was not a person from the agency (*Ch: bu shi gongsi de ren*).

While I was in Dongyang, I closely followed the matchmaking, waiting, and relocation processes. Nonetheless, I faced difficulties continuing my research in

Dongyang in the late fall. Up until 2009, there was at least one matchmaking tour and sometimes two per month. During the peak years (2002-2005 in Dongyang, 2005-2007 in Xinghai), group-wedding ceremonies also took place because there were too many marriages going on at the same time. However, things gradually changed after the fall of 2009. By October 2009, there were only two brides studying Japanese at China Brides. When one bride remained and no matchmaking tours were planned in the near future, the local staff members started to think about closing the school. During that time, I also decided to look into another major bride-sending community, Xinghai in Heilongjiang Province.

The town of Xinghai was not unknown to me. While researching transnational marriage agencies online in order to find an initial fieldsite, I had quickly recognized that Xinghai was a central town in this industry. Tanaka, the broker at China Brides, also knew of Xinghai and often told me that it was a place notorious for black markets and runaway brides. So while I had been able to find a supportive broker who operated a business in Dongyang, such that Dongyang became my first fieldsite, in the mid-fall of 2009, I felt like I was at the starting point again to explore a new fieldsite in China, and thus moved on to Xinghai.

My fieldwork in Xinghai can be described as more “conventional.” When I was conducting my fieldwork in Japan, I was “at home.” I sensed, although not always correctly, where to start, who to ask, what to ask, what not to ask, where to stop, and so on. When I was in Dongyang, my established network and rapport, developed since 2007, made it easier to start my fieldwork. Starting my fieldwork in Xinghai was a sudden decision and I did not know anyone at that time. My first visit to Xinghai was with a

Japanese broker from what I call First Love, on a wedding tour. When I first e-mailed him about my project and desire to do some research in Xinghai, he later told me, he was not really willing to help. Indeed, he wanted to just ignore my e-mails. However, my studying in "NJ" triggered his memories of studying abroad in New Jersey when he was young. He decided to invite me to visit Xinghai on a wedding tour and visit his agency office. We never know what might trigger potential informants' interest. However, due to the competitive nature of brokerage work in Xinghai, he kindly implied that my regular visits to the brokerage office were not welcome. But at least I gained a sense of the town and made several acquaintances in Xinghai.

After making a short trip to Harbin to meet several scholars working on the area, my second visit to Xinghai was just before the New Year with Mr. Chen, a director of the Chinese adoptive parents association from Harbin. His parents adopted a war orphan after the war and due to his job he said that he knew a number of people there. We traveled three hours by bus before arriving in Xinghai. After leaving my luggage at a hotel, the first thing that we needed to do was to visit the local government official to gain "permission" for my research. Since Mr. Chen told me that he knew the official responsible, I was rather optimistic at that time. We walked into a newly built government building and we entered one of the offices. The government official was a man in his early forties. He asked me to sit down and explain what I was doing here. I tried to politely explain my interest in researching marriage migration from Xinghai. His attitude while I was talking gave me a bad feeling about our conversation. He was simultaneously chatting with someone else online the entire time. After I finished talking, there was a pause. He told me, "I will explain the history of Xinghai. You do not have to talk to the locals at all." I tried to come up with some other reasons to persuade him that I need to talk to the local residents in person. I said, "I also want to learn how women think about this issue…" He quickly responded, "history is history, there is no women's perspective or whatever."

We left the office. Mr. Chen was sympathetic and said that we talked to the wrong person. He suggested that tomorrow we would meet another official, one who might be friendlier. The officer we just met was not only hostile toward my research but also my stay. He asked me when and how long exactly I was staying in Xinghai. When I was staying at my mother's friends' house during the New Year, he even called her to make sure I was really there. That official's attitude made me wonder whether or not marriage migration was an unwelcome topic for outsiders, or if he simply was trying to display his power. Much later when I told this story to other locals who knew him personally, I was told that it likely was a little bit of both.

The next day, we met another official who I soon found out was actually the chief director of the foreign affairs section. The official we had met the day before was the deputy director. He came with two other men, which later I found out his friends, to lunch with us. As compared with the tense atmosphere just a day prior, our lunch was pleasant and cheerful. The chief director, who was not originally from Xinghai, was a reserved person. We just ate, drank while sharing a number of toasts, and listened to the stories of the director's friends' who had gone to work in Japan several years before. At the end of lunch, Mr. Chen quickly explained my intentions for research to the director. The director told me, "Xinghai would be a good place for you to do research." Since this official was head of the foreign affairs section, as the director put it, if he said it was ok, that meant it was ok. Although I was not introduced to any brides right away, somehow my research in Xinghai was “officially” approved. While Mr. Chen went back to Harbin before the New Year holiday, I stayed there until June 2010. In Xinghai I was able to meet numerous brides, attend a Japanese school as a volunteer teacher, live in an apartment with one Chinese bride-in-waiting, and share in many meals with local residents and officials. After returning to Japan from Xinghai, I visited couples, brides, and “runaway” brides in a number of different cities. I would visit Xinghai two more times, in September 2010 and June 2011.

In following the processes through which these marriages were created, at one point I tried to simultaneously follow the perspectives of both potential grooms and brides. Utilizing the Internet, I interviewed Japanese men who had come to China for matchmaking meetings and asked about their views and experiences. At the same time, while in China, I also heard stories from local staff members regarding prospective couples. However, I realized that knowing “too much” could also put me in a difficult position. For instance, while I was chatting with a Chinese woman who just attended a matchmaking meeting, she expressed her hopes about going to Japan and having a new life there. Nonetheless, at that time, I already knew that the man was not going to marry her and was going to terminate their courtship. Just listening to those conversations while knowing her hopes would be dashed made me feel uncomfortable, if not even immoral, for collecting too much information. Accordingly, I decided that when I was with women, I would only seek to understand their experiences from their perspective; and when I was with men, I would only try to understand their perspective. Eventually, this method made me interact with them more closely; we were frustrated together, worried together, and surprised together.

The Internet and email were important communication tools for my research as well as for the matchmaking practices themselves. The use of technology, in particular the Internet, was an inevitable part of the brokerage business. For instance, most of the male customers first found their marriage agencies online. They read up on the matchmaking processes, examined the price lists, and looked at the other available services before they actually visited the agency. Chinese women's pictures and profiles were also available online. Moreover, before visiting China in person, male clientele usually had an "Internet matchmaking meeting" (or sometime called a "*TV omiai*" in Japan, or "*Shipin*" in China) via Skype. Translators assisted with communication both in Tokyo and Dongyang. The Internet matchmaking meetings were a means by which to explore the possibility of a potential match. Prior to the actual visit, the brokers tried to set up a virtual matching in order to avoid women refusing proposals, which would mean that men had paid for a visit to China for "nothing." Whenever I was at the agency either in Tokyo or Dongyang, I observed such Internet matchmaking meetings. I was able to observe these Internet meetings both from the male (in Tokyo) and the female (in Dongyang) sides.

For my research, I tried to be in touch with informants by email whenever possible. I regularly emailed both male and female participants (I used QQ for Chinese brides) and asked how they were doing.[14] I did not participate in BBS sites or Interest forums like Constable did (2003). Whereas Constable had used the Internet as a starting tool to meet people, I used the Internet to keep in touch with people I had already met in person. Although I used our email conversations in some chapters, the majority of my analysis was based on face-to-face interactions, including participant observation and interviews.

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[14] QQ is a Chinese online social networking service, like facebook.

Before, and in earlier stages of my fieldwork, I was often surprised and puzzled about why people marry someone they do not know within such a short period of time. I kept questioning myself regarding what is special about “these people.” Nonetheless, within several months, as I observed a number of marriages, I became accustomed to the process. A half-year later, while I was observing a matchmaking tour in China, a Japanese man met four Chinese women and could not make a decision. He asked to engage in a long-distance courtship before making a decision. After he left for Japan without deciding on a bride, a local Japanese staff member and I were chatting at a café. The staff member said, “I cannot believe that he could not make a decision and wants to have a period of courtship (*Ja: renai*). He was a very strange person.” I added, “He was not usual was he? I wonder what he is going to do.” She said, “There is not courtship or whatever in this kind of marriage. They have to make a decision. I don’t know what he was thinking about.” We sipped a cup of latte, and thought, “Well, maybe it is normal that people want to have some time to get to know each other before marrying!” We agreed. We also agreed that when working in (or researching) this industry, what is “usual” and “unusual” became jumbled up. In this way I became familiar with these seemingly “unfamiliar” practices.

Ethnographer of “not yet becoming”

“Japanese women became too strong. Ms. Yamaura, please don’t become like them.” – A Japanese client

“You haven’t married, you haven’t graduated, you don’t go home, you are really a wild

child (ye haizi)." – A local in Xinghai

In the course of my fieldwork, I was surprised to realize how much I access I could get. Not only was I present at the agencies and followed matchmaking tours, but also many brokers, participants, and locals shared their perspectives with me, perspectives that they would not tell journalists or newspaper reporters. As brokers realized I "knew" how the transnational brokerage process worked, they were more willing to talk about it, revealing their strategies. In China, many locals described me as a girl who came to China alone (*Ch: nvhaier ziji laide*). Many locals in China were concerned that I was lonely or not eating well, and often treated me to dinner. When my Chinese roommate/bride saw my hand-washed underwear hanging in the bathroom, she brought me new underwear, saying, "Your underwear was too old! You need new ones." In Japan, I was treated as a "student" (*Ja: gakusei-san*) who went all the way to the United States to study hard, who was really serious (*Ja: majime*) and sincere (*Ja: seijitsu*). Probably due to my relatively reserved attitude in asking questions, I did not encounter anyone who completely rejected my research or my presence. My presence in the lounge area in China Bride did not disrupt the atmosphere; many visitors thought I was a Chinese woman there for a matchmaking meeting. Some realized that I was Japanese after complimenting my fluency in Japanese.

If many of my informants were waiting to become something—married persons, complete adults, or transnational subjects—I was also viewed as having a "not yet becoming" status: not yet married, not yet graduated, not yet employed, and not yet settled down. Possibly, my social status of "not yet becoming" made it easier for me to access people. It was an advantage because I was able to accompany many matchmaking tours, and no one complained about my presence or questions. The only time that I irritated one of the male Japanese informants was when I told him, “I do know the history of Russo-Japanese war.” I was a little frustrated by his assumption that I was so ignorant of any history and I talked back. He aggressively asked me detailed questions about the Russo-Japanese war. At this point, I decided to play a “young female” role and politely asked, “I don’t know, please teach me…” For better or worse, this young, not-fully grown status, which overlapped with my position in a gendered hierarchy, gave me both easier access and the occasional frustration.

Overview of Dissertation

The following chapters move back and forth between Japan and northeast China. Chapter 1 addresses historical analysis (not simply “historical background”) and examines how the notions of familiarity and proximity are deployed to mobilize contemporary cross-border marriages between Japan and northeast China. By focusing on different historical narratives of the transnational links between Japan and northeast China, I show that the notions of familiarity and quasi-kinship were at the center of contemporary cross-border marriages.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the ways in which cross-border marriages are perceived and created in Japan. Chapter 2 provides an explanation of how marriage still matters in contemporary Japanese society and how the category of “unmarriageable” persons is created, stigmatized, but also negotiated in the context of Japanese-Chinese transnational matchmaking. Chapter 3 builds on Chapter 2 and further analyzes how male participants in Japan attempt to de-stigmatize cross-border marriages by producing “similar” partners.

It analyzes their efforts to legitimate transnational pairings by strategically recasting them as "almost" endogamous marriages.

In Chapters 4 and 5, in each chapter I move to northeast China and then return to Japan. In Chapter 4, we visit Dongyang (Liaoning Province) and examine how marriage with Japanese men became an option for the women in Dongyang and how local marital values and norms shape such mobility. I analyze their paradoxical negotiation between local norms and transnational alternatives. This chapter demonstrates that women's physical departure from the local by engaging in cross-border marriages constitutes one way to conform to the local marital norms. It is the local importance of marriage and flexible notions of endogamy/exogamy that made marrying across borders possible.

Chapter 5 explores different ways in which women enacted marriage and migration in Xinghai, Heilongjiang Province, China. As compared with Dongyang (Chapter 4), the matchmaking processes in Xinghai involved more financial transactions and the aspiration for mobility. The idea of "going to Japan" was already embedded within the local community as a way to make a better life. I show how marriage here became a strategy and gendered site of investment for mobility. In the process, whereas women became subjects in migration, their subjectivity was unstable and uncontrollable due to the dependent nature of mobility they engage in—marriage.

In Chapter 6, while I move between Japan and northeast China, my informants are stuck in between. By examining suspended and declined cases, this chapter analyzes how relations become sites of regulation. I demonstrate the ways in which cross-border marriages were under suspicion and participants had to perform more "ideal" and "normatively acceptable" relationships than couples in Japan.

Chapter 1

From Manchuria to Marriage

After a three-hour drive by car from Harbin, we were finally getting close to the town of Xinghai. The November scenery was already dark grey; the land had been harvested a couple of months before and was now waiting for the long, freezing winter of northeast China. I was squeezed into a minivan with a Japanese marriage broker, Kimura, two local Chinese staff members, and a Chinese woman who had just married a Japanese man in Harbin. Xinghai, a town of nearly a quarter million, is the place where First Love, a transnational marriage agency, operates its brokerage business. We got off the virtually empty toll-way and approached Xinghai. I gradually was able to make out local residents going about their business amongst a mix of old-style flat houses, small family owned stores, recently erected buildings and dusty construction sites. Kimura turned to me and exclaimed, "Welcome to the Mecca of Japanese-Chinese cross-border marriages! The specialty (*Ja: tokusanbutsu*) of this town is Chinese brides and the main industry (*Ja: sangyo*) is brokerage work."

Chinese brides in Japan today primarily come from northeast China. In line with the broker's portrayal of it as the "Mecca" (*Ja: mekka*) of Chinese brides, Xinghai indeed constituted one of the major bride sending communities to Japan. During my stay in Tokyo and Dongyang, I repeatedly heard a similar refrain, that of the feelings of familiarity and closeness residents of northeast China feel toward Japan. In the words of one Japanese broker, "people in Dongyang have feelings of familiarity (*Ja: shinkinkan*) toward Japan." However, when I moved to Xinghai, such exhortation found further elaboration as the legacy of Manchuria and Japanese colonialism conspicuously came into view. For instance, a local resident Xinghai told me, "People in Xinghai has familiar feelings (*Ch: qinqie de ganjue*) toward Japan," or as another local put it, "Xinghai and Japan has historically unique intimate (*Ch: miqie*) relations with Japan." In many cases, they additionally articulated their narratives using the notion of "blood ties" (*Ch: xueyuan guanxi*) between Japan and Xinghai. Given the ongoing political tensions and hostilities between Japan and China, it was remarkable that informants described such intimate feelings between the very place that was colonized and its former colonizers, and that this in turn was seen as the basis for contemporary cross-border marriage.

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This chapter examines how different historical narratives are deployed to make contemporary transnational intimate relations comprehensible, and how such narratives play a role in remapping colonial memories, national subjectivity, and notions of marriageability. While there were surface similarities in the discourses of familiarity and closeness employed by Japanese and local Chinese informants, I came to learn that they were the product of very different assertions of historical subjectivity and strategies to legitimate marriage migration. The cross-border marriage industry between Japan and northeast China is not solely a product of gendered economic inequalities, but also is rooted in relationships and even imaginings generated by specific historical contingencies and interpretations. In this chapter, I illuminate the ways in which multiple actors mobilize historical narratives to legitimate such transnational practices.

Specifically, I focus on different narratives utilized by Japanese and Chinese brokers and other locals. On the one hand, many Japanese informants deployed a positive conception of historical relatedness as forged by colonialism to efface Japan's war culpability, stressing Chinese people's familiarity (*Ja: shinkin kan*) or friendliness (*Ja: yukōuteki*) towards Japan. On the other hand, the locals in Dongyang and Xinghai narrated feelings of familiarity (*Ch: qinqie*), proximity (*Ch: jin*), and intimacy (*Ch: miqie*) toward Japan. Nonetheless, even within China, the different ways in which Xinghai experienced and enacted the past generated slightly dissimilar accounts of the current cross-border marriages from Dongyang. In particular, many locals in Xinghai tactically narrated claims of "blood ties" (*Ch: xueyuan guanxi*) and in doing so interpreted marriage migration as a "natural" product of "following blood ties."

The aim of this chapter is not simply to give an account of the historical background of Japanese-Chinese cross-border marriages, but rather to investigate the ways in which current cross-border marriages are rendered comprehensible in light of history. My ultimate goal is to demonstrate that the notion of familiarity embedded and enacted within the Japanese-Chinese marriages is enfolded in multiple layers of historical, political, economic, and cultural connotations. Revealing such relations shows how seemingly positive claims, such as those of familiarity or intimacy, are also produced within power dynamics of both the past and the present. Moreover, as my ethnographic data shows, different forms and implications of desires for border crossing are articulated with local particularities. Thus, by addressing the specific local history in which the participants are embedded, this chapter aims to add a more complex picture of the logic of desire that incorporates the local differences a discussion of large-scale national relationships cannot capture.

From Manchuria to Bride Sending Communities

Manchuria (*Ja: manshūkoku/Ch: manzhouguo*) was often one of the key terms invoked by brokers in Japan and China when they began their explanations of contemporary cross-border marriages. When I would ask brokers why the Chinese brides primarily come from northeast China, "Manchuria" was one of the main answers; as many put it, "Northeast China used to be Manchuria." Yet, such a statement entailed different connotations for different people. Even within northeast China, the locals in Dongyang (Liaoning province) and Xinghai (Heilongjiang province) attached different meanings to the term "Manchuria." In this chapter I explore the ways in which current marriages contracted between Japan and China related to the history of colonization, and in particular Manchuria.

Following the Russo-Japan War (1904-1905) and the colonization of other parts of Asia (Okinawa in 1879, Taiwan in 1895, and Korea 1910), the Japanese state established the puppet state of Manchuria in 1932. In addition to seeking to create a "utopian" country in Manchuria (Duara 2003; Matsusaka 2003; Watt 2010; Young 1998), a goal which was never practically implemented, the Japanese state deployed an image of Manchuria as a huge, fertile expanse in an effort to recruit Japanese nationals to settle there.[15] By the early 1930s, about 240,000 Japanese nationals had moved to cities in southern Manchuria (Tamanoi 2009, 15); by August 1945, 6.9 million Japanese nationals were living outside of the main Japanese islands and 2,214,000 Japanese nationals (1,550,000 civilian and 664,000 army) resided in Manchuria (Watt 2010, 2, 39).

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[15] This migration project was specifically targeted at certain parts of Japan suffering from an economic recession due to the rapid decline of silk values and a shortage of land due to overpopulation (Ide 2008).

Migration to urban areas was intended for industrialization, including building of the Manchurian railway. While Dongyang was not a large town, such as Dalian, Shenyang, or Changchun, the migrants to Dongyang were primarily involved in business and industry or were military and government officials. On the other hand, many of those who migrated to the northern part of Manchuria were middle-scale farmers. They were "encouraged" to migrate to Manchuria as "man/mou pioneer groups" (*Ja: man mou kaitakudan*) so they could obtain their own land (Nakajima 1990; Ide 2008).[16] These farmers later explained that they had heard or assumed that the Japanese state purchased the land from local Chinese people (Hayashi 1983, 10-11), although the local people had actually had their land expropriated by the Japanese colonial authorities. Such different perceptions would subsequently contribute to the dissimilar memories and narratives of Japanese colonialism in Manchuria.

Japanese farmers in Manchuria often emigrated as family units or would-be family units.[17] However, in early August 1945, young and able-bodied males were recalled to join the armed forces. When the Soviet Union entered the war on August 8 and advanced on northern Manchuria on August 9, the Japanese nationals who remained were mostly women, children, and the elderly. When Japan's defeat became certain in August, military troops and their family members were the first groups to secure transportation to cities, where they found ways of returning to Japan.

The August 15, 1945, surrender of Japan elicited a massive reverse migration.

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[16] "Kaitaku" in Japanese is translated as "cultivation." Thus, because they were engaged in "cultivation," these migrants were rarely described by the Japanese government officials as "colonizers."

[17] Some Japanese women were recruited as brides for husbands in Manchuria they had not even previously met (Izutsu 2004).

Repatriation stories vary drastically depending on where the people used to reside in Manchuria. As Soviet troops advanced on the northern borders of Manchuria, the remaining Japanese settlers attempted to reach train stations in the hope of returning to Japan. However, due to the chaos resulting from the Japanese surrender, the Soviet Union's advancement, and the intentional destruction of the transportation system by the Japanese army, many were not able to find their way back to Japan. Those who were unable to return to Japan and remained in China, a large number of whom at the time were children, were called *Ja: zanryukoji/Ch: ribenyigu*, or "the Japanese orphans left behind."[18]

Although war orphans existed in all three of the northeastern provinces (Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang) of China, the majority of these orphans were stranded in the northernmost province of Heilongjiang due to its geographical proximity to the Soviet Union, the urgency of escaping from the Soviet troops, and their inability to reach the trains that would allow them to eventually reach the coastal areas. For those who resided in the southern or middle regions of Manchuria, their repatriation stories were somewhat less arduous. Dongyang was one of the coastal neighboring towns. While there were some war orphans in Dongyang, their number was much fewer than that of those stranded in Heilongjiang province.

According to existing memoirs and local narratives, there was a bureau headquarters located in Xinghai for Japanese troops with food stocks. Thus, many believed that they could at least receive help and food from the troops there. When they arrived, however, the entire deployment was already gone, and the refugees were stranded.[19] Approximately 5000-8000 Japanese nationals arrived in Xinghai (Nakajima 1990). About 2000 to 2500 of these people survived hunger, freezing winters, and typhoid fever by being incorporated into Chinese families or marrying locals (Hayashi 1983). Here the interpretation of these events –whether the Chinese citizens were adopting and helping or buying and selling war orphans - varies depending on perspective.[20]

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[18] According to the Japanese government, a "war orphan" (*zanryu koji*) is defined as a Japanese national who was under 12 years old when left behind in China. Those who were over 13 years old are defined as "left behind women" (*zanryu fujin*). However, in public discourses, the term "orphans" (*zanryu koji*) was often employed for both of the above categories. Ide (2004: 6) criticizes the usage of the term "orphans" not only because the orphans were already middle aged, but also because many of them actually had parents in Japan.

From 1946 until 1948, 1,046,620 Japanese returned to Japan, and from 1953-1958, an additional 302,506 returned with the help of the Japanese and Chinese Red Cross organizations (Ide 2008).[21] However, in 1958, due to the lack of diplomatic ties between Japan and the PRC, all communication and connections were severed. This began to change after diplomatic ties between Japan and the PRC were established in 1972. In 1981, the Japanese government began providing support for groups of war orphans to visit Japan to identify relatives. Those who were able to prove their roots and find blood relatives regained Japanese citizenship.[22] Almost 40 years after the Japanese defeat, the majority of these orphans gradually returned to Japan with their families.[23] The Japanese government has allowed the orphans' spouses, children and grandchildren to reside in Japan. The orphans' visits to Japan at the time were widely broadcast on Japanese television, which reveled in presenting the dramatic and emotional scenes of orphans and their blood relatives being reunited after almost forty years of separation. These war orphans, even if they were already middle-aged, were treated as victims not only of Japanese imperialism but also of a postwar government that ignored their existence for thirty-five years. Nonetheless, after their return to Japan, the orphans still faced numerous difficulties due to a lack of language skills and insufficient government support.[24]

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[19] Empty houses in Xinghai were used as camps for those who arrived. Thus, those who became war orphans in Xinghai were not those who initially migrated to Xinghai. They had settled areas in the further north. Many Japanese nationals who had resided in Xinghai left before those from northern areas arrived.

[20] For instance, Nakajima (1990) shows that many war orphans themselves described themselves as “being sold” by and to Chinese people (Nakajima 1990: 31).

[21] Those who were repatriated to Japan were called “*hikiage sha*” (repatriates), and they also faced many difficulties in Japan due to their status of “returning from Manchuria” (see Watt 2010; Tamanoi 2009).

[22] The letters of certification issued by the Chinese government were not always accepted by the Japanese government when giving Japanese citizenship to war orphans. They first visited Japan with visitor visas and needed to locate relatives who were willing to sponsor their return to Japan.

Remapping and Reconstructing Memories

The constitution and reconstitution of knowledge about the past is importantly linked to changes in global and national contexts (Fujitani, White & Yoneyama 2001). On the one hand, many local informants in China expressed to me that the war was a thing of the past (*Ch: guoqu de shi*). However, on the other hand, the current movement of people between Japan and northeast China, in particular in the form of marriage, still works to evoke colonial and postcolonial memories in a multiplicity of ways. The narrative of what happened in the past between Japan and northeast China is deeply intertwined with how participants make sense of contemporary cross-border marriages and vice versa.

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[23] The state's support for the visits of orphans' group continues to this day; however, in 2010, there were no newly identified orphans in China. That said, I met several self-identified second-generation war orphans in Xinghai in 2010; however, the Japanese government has not accepted their status as war orphans.

[24] Those who were left behind in China when they were small children did not know the Japanese language. For example, see Ide 2004, 2008; Hayashi 1983; Okubo 2006; Noguchi 2005

I argue that the contemporary transnational matchmaking practices are additional, yet unexpected, “sites of memory” (Pierre Nora 1989) where “a sense of historical continuity persists” (1989, 7). They are unexpected sites of memory because the practice of seeking a marriage partner across national borders is not a site where the reconstruction of memory has traditionally been thought to occur. However, in these “sites of memory,” different actors--not just the male and female participants in matchmaking practices but also non-participant local residents in both Japan and China--attempt to reconstruct knowledge of the linkage between past events and present phenomenon. The site of memory, here, is not solely a geographical site but a transnational practice. In other words, it is the contemporary transnational movement of people through which certain memories are renarrated, reworked, and legitimated.

The reconstruction of memory also involves issues of identity and morality. As Paul Ricoeur (2004, 81) argues, the mobilization of memory operates in the service of the demand of identity. Knowing what happened in the past is connected to knowing who we are. John Edison (2000, 579) also argues that the field site may be regarded as a site of memory, which suggests “a public arena in which actors cultivate forms of historical understanding, which are in turn, expected to provide these actors and their audiences with means for orienting themselves to others, to their surroundings, and to themselves.” Hence, specific understandings of the past and historical narratives also provide frameworks to make sense of and reaffirm one’s identity and further orient how we act in a certain context (see also Morris-Suzuki 2005, 24; Wertsch 2000, 518; Antze and

Lambek 1996, xii; Halbwachs 1992, 47). As Geoffrey M. White (2000, 496) argues, stories about the past are devices for "self-fashioning." White further claims that narratives—repeating and renarrating well-known past events—are discursive practices to render past events comprehensible and persuasive. He states, "In producing, enacting, circulating (or simply consuming) stories of the past, social actors, create and objectify the realities in which they live" (White 2000, 497). Therefore, cultural memories are not simply a reflection of the past but, rather, "social actions" (White 2006) and "cultural tools" (Wertsch 2002) for groups of people to conceive their unity and peculiarity through common images. Moreover, memories are formative and normative (Assman 1995, 132). Memories serve as the moral stories of certain communities. Thus, I also suggest that contemporary cross-border matchmaking practices are not an isolated phenomenon among their participants, but they also play a role in how communities remake and rearticulate their national subjectivity, colonial memories, and norms of marriage.

In what follows, I seek to analyze the (re)formative and normative historical narratives provided by multiple actors to demonstrate the ways in which the participants in the cross-border marriage industry have attempted to conceive and even moralize their (and others') desire to cross national borders. I look at three specific facets. First, I examine how the contemporary transnational marriage industry is understood within a specific historical colonial and postcolonial context and ask how different rememberings are implicated in current narratives. Second, I investigate how contemporary cross-border marriages, conversely, are deployed for recoding and remaking colonial and postcolonial memories on both sides to reclaim their own historical and national subjectivity. Third, I explore the ways in which particular local narratives are appropriated to make sense of and legitimate a certain from border crossing.

“Humane” Colonialism and Transnational Links

“We will provide you with the women from my hometown (*Ja: kokyō*).” This was a catchphrase that one broker used for his agency, China Bride. Curiously enough, the broker was a Japanese national—he was born in Manchuria and grew up there until Japanese surrender in 1945. During interviews and casual conversations, he repeatedly mentioned, “Dongyang is my first hometown, and Tokyo is my second.” He often nostalgically shared his memories of Manchuria. For him as a child at that time, Manchuria was a great place with spacious land, beautiful nature, and the privilege of unrestricted playgrounds (as compared with Chinese nationals in Dongyang). Although he also remembered the experiences of repatriation and hardship after relocating to Japan, he treasured his childhood memories of Manchuria. Because of that, he claimed that he still loved Dongyang and people of Dongyang. It was because of his nostalgic memories that returned to Dongyang during Japan’s boom years to seek business opportunities. He also visited the house in which he used to live. One of the current local staff members was the resident of “his” old house. He also expressed that he wanted to fulfill the Chinese women’s dreams of going to Japan and experience the good life (*Ja: yutaka na*) in Japan. He had brokered 252 marriages between Japanese men and Chinese women from Dongyang since 1995, in addition to 168 marriages between Japanese men and Chinese women living in Japan.

As far as I know he was the only broker who was actually born in Manchuria.

Other brokers also deployed the narrative of "familiarity" to Japan, as another broker put it, "Dongyang historically has familiarity with Japan." However, in the eyes of the male clientele, Tanaka's personal connection to Dongyang, which was forged by colonialism, made him have more authority when it came to introducing women from Dongyang. China Bride was the largest brokerage agency in Dongyang. Although he did not speak Chinese, his claim that he was born in Dongyang made his brokerage work look more reliable. His possessions included not only a hometown, but also the women from the town. According to him, his brokerage work helped the women of Dongyang, their families, and even economy of the community.

The idea that there existed a continuous giving by Japanese colonialism was further elaborated in Xinghai. It was the broker from First Love, Kimura, who first told me the history of Xinghai and described the intricate connections that extended from the history of Japanese war orphans to the current cross-border marriage industry. According to him, the marriage brokerage business works so well in Xinghai precisely because of its unique local history during the colonial and postcolonial eras.[25] He explained,

> During the Manchurian era, many Japanese farmers contributed to communities here by cultivating farms and building bridges, railroads, and buildings. Although some hold the image that Japan invaded China, in terms of Manchuria, the main objective was cultivation (*kaitaku*); there were few killings and robberies. So, as compared to other areas, such as Nanjing, that have really strong anti-Japanese sentiments, there are many pro-Japanese people here.

In describing the colonization of Manchuria as relatively "humane," he differentiated the experience of the colonial subjects in Manchuria from those in other parts of China. By linking contemporary marriage migration with the history of war orphans, the broker's narrative further validated residents' friendliness to and aspirations for being close to Japan. He told me, "In Xinghai, there were many war orphans. The fact that the war orphans exist shows that Chinese people were not that hostile to Japanese people. If they had really hated the Japanese, they would have killed all Japanese children who were left behind." The narrative, however, does not end there. He also described how the war orphans who returned to Xinghai after leaving for Japan in the 1980s had spread rumors about life in Japan. When they visited their Chinese relatives in Xinghai, they told everyone how wonderful and clean Japan was. From Japan they also brought with them lots of money. This is the reason, Kimura said, many women in Xinghai now want to marry a Japanese man and go to Japan, and he is "helping" such Chinese women in realizing their aspirations.

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[25] After victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan acquired land rights on the Liaoning Peninsula, which became a foothold for Japan's invasion into northeast China. After the Manchurian Incident in 1931, Japan occupied Manchuria (1932-1945) and installed a puppet government.

Such a narratives was not unique among Japanese informants who knew Xinghai. In January 2010, I visited the Japan-Xinghai Friendship Association in Tokyo.[26] Although the aim of the association was to commemorate the orphans who had perished in Xinghai and build friendship between Xinghai and Japan, the director was also aware of the phenomenon of brokered transnational marriages. The director told me that, although he was not an expert on transnational marriages, he knew that many people in Xinghai were friendly to Japan, or pro-Japan (*Ja: shin nichi*). Then he went on to say,

> Actually, Japanese people in northern Manchuria were just ordinary farmers and did not harm the communities there. Some of them had a good relationship with the local people and Chinese people did not have strong feelings of hostility toward them, so Chinese people raised the Japanese children left behind. Their

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[26] The association was established in 1993 and sends a group of Japanese tourists to Xinghai every year to visit the war orphans monument memorializing 4000-5000 orphans who died and were buried there.

> affection and towards Japan is also the reason that many people from Xinghai want to come to Japan today.

During the interview with the director, he also explained to me the historical background against which the current marriage industry operates. He said,

> The establishment of the monument for the Japanese war orphans was indeed proposed by one of the war orphans residing in Xinghai. In 1963, the famine crisis also affected Xinghai and one of the female war orphans tried to cultivate unpopulated areas and found numerous corpses of war orphans who died of hunger and disease. She told the local government that she wished to build a tomb for these perished orphans. Her request was officially permitted by the PRC central government, in particular by Zhou Enlai. Zhou Enlai also claimed that the Japanese pioneer groups were victims of Japan's imperialism, separating them from the Japanese military government.

Although the director showed appreciation and respect for what he described as Chinese people's kindness, he also said that many war orphans were actually "sold" to Chinese people as workers, and many orphans had a really difficult time in China. However, he still recognized China's "friendship spirit" (*Ja: yuuai seishin*) for Japan. The director told me, "My friends in northeast China also have feelings of familiarity (*Ja: shinkin kan*) with Japan. It is also possibly because one out of four people in Xinghai have relatives in Japan."

Overseas Chinese in Japan are contributing greatly to the economy in Xinghai and thus, he said, the local government also actively supports interaction with Japan. Then, the director mentioned the illegal migration that relied upon counterfeit orphan status. He said, "yet, now it has become difficult to obtain counterfeit orphans status in China, and thus, marriage is seen as another option to come to Japan."

The legacy of Japanese colonialism looms large in the accounts provided by the broker and the director. They repeatedly asserted that current transnational links between northeast China and Japan descended from the vestiges of the failed Japanese imperial project. Running throughout their accounts was the claim that this project, or at the very least, the conduct of Japanese settlers associated with it, was "humane." Moreover, it was the humane treatment of local colonial subjects during the colonial era that subsequently enabled Japanese war orphans to survive in Xinghai. Put differently, it was the benevolence of Japanese settlers that was the original wellspring of the friendliness and familiarity asserted to exist between the northeast China, in particular, Xinghai and Japan today. That said, informants also viewed the willingness and even eagerness of Chinese to go to Japan as indicative of Japan's superiority and advancement into modernity to the status of a "better place"—a narrative itself reminiscent of the discourse of superiority used to justify and legitimize the original colonial project.

This discourse demonstrates how the processes of selective narration generate the perception that the ordinary Japanese who migrated to Manchuria (some of them who subsequently also became "victim orphans") were not "colonizers" but, rather, "friendly providers" to northeast China. Lisa Yoneyama (1999, 11) has discussed how the memories of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were shaped by the perception that ordinary Japanese people were the passive victims of historical conditions, which she called "phantasmatic innocence." In addition to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, memories of the ground battle in Okinawa, the bombing of major Japanese cities, and the repatriation of Japanese nationals from northeast China after the Soviet advance all contribute to the notion that the military leaders and elites were responsible for the tragedy, while ordinary Japanese civilians were the "[victims] of the war and the nation's colonial policies" (Yoneyama 1999, 11). This phantasm of Japanese civilian innocence also denies ordinary civilians’ autonomy and responsibility.

The fact that those who were left behind in China were primarily women and children further plays into this perception of phantasmal innocence. Within popular Japanese discourse, Japanese orphans in Manchuria are portrayed as lacking autonomy or agency. They are seen as victims not only of the failed Japanese colonial project but also of historical turbulence and the postwar Japanese government. Those who express sympathy with the war orphans, including the Friendship Association, can be critical of the Japanese state. However, although some incidents perpetrated by the Japanese military, such as the rape of Nanjing, were the target of criticism even by the Japanese marriage brokers, the brokers and director did not describe the pioneer groups in the northern part of Manchuria as “colonizers.” The establishment of Manchuria and the sending of pioneer groups, which created the very reason that Japanese nationals resided in Manchuria, were not the targets of criticism by informants or were simply ignored. Instead, the behavior of pioneer groups was resignified as “giving” to Xinghai, both then and now.[27]

Moralizing the Other’s Desire

The transnational links created by Japanese colonialism provide an arena for multiple interpretations for desires. Many Japanese men who visited China on matchmaking tours were concerned about the women’s motivations and occasionally asked me why some Chinese women are willing to marry Japanese men. Some of them were worried that the Chinese women would marry them only for money or a visa. The question of what makes Japanese men appealing and desirable for Chinese women was one of the questions that some Japanese men themselves wanted to know the answer to. This puts Japanese marriage brokers in the position of explaining women's motivations to their male clientele. In particular, when the Japanese men were concerned about possibly hostile feelings toward Japan (*Ja: han nichi kanjo*) among Chinese, the brokers typically responded by saying that people in the northeast China are friendly to Japan. For example, the way in which Kimura explained the historical connection between Xinghai and Japan to me on my first trip to Xinghai in the same way he explains it to his male customers. Kimura told his customers that, "after war orphans went back to Japan, they spread the stories among their left behind relatives that 'Japan is a good place,' and more and more women came to desire to go to and live in Japan." According to Kimura, women's desire to marry Japanese men is historically constructed upon and embodied by the "real experiences" (*Ja: jittaiken*) of other locals.

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[27] Anthropological work on exchange (Mauss 1954) observes that giving always entails receiving and giving back. Exchange is basis of society and creates the link between givers and receivers. This logic is applicable here. However, when the meanings of giving are different for two parties, their expectations for receiving would also differ. For instance, actors in Japan and in China both thought their actions were “giving,” and thus they both thought the other owed them.

Although many Japanese men who visited Dongyang or Xinghai on matchmaking tours were aware of the history of Manchuria, few knew about the particular history of Xinghai concerning the war orphans. Hence, their views and knowledge were shaped through the lens provided by their marriage brokers. Kimura told me that he usually explained to his male customers that it is not that these Chinese women want to marry and go to Japan to escape from poverty but, rather, that the women have familiar and positive feelings toward Japan due to this historical connection. The notion of familiarity with Japan and historical relatedness provides a legitimate reason—separate from material desire—for the men to make sense of the women's motivations.

Consequently, this particular historical narrative not only rearticulated Japanese colonialism in Manchuria, positing local positive feelings toward Japan and Japanese "contributions" to northeast China, it also provided legitimating and morally acceptable grounds for Chinese women wanting to marry Japanese men. A historical narrative, here, informed a "moral story" not only of Japanese settlers, but also of Chinese women in the present context. Different actors are interested in such narratives for different reasons. For the brokers, such narratives promoted their business, while for the male clientele, they elucidated the moral economy of the Chinese women. The narratives explicated Chinese women's seeming yielding to them not as "marriage of convenience," but a result of their positive familiar feelings toward Japan.

To a lesser extent, similar narratives existed in Dongyang. According to one local official who was often invited for wedding ceremonies between Japanese men and Chinese women as a representative of the city, cross-border marriages in Dongyang started in 1990. Since the mid-1990s, the locals gradually gained opportunities to go to Japan for work. Those who went to Japan started establishing connections, which eventually lead to brokerage networks. Since 1996 (a year after China Bride was established), marriages with Japanese men had drastically increased. The official continued, "The locals had found out that the Japan is much advanced and living standard is much higher than Dongyang."

Yet, he also provided additional reasons for why many local women were willing to marry a Japanese man, stating "They are the same Asians and have yellow skin. Since they are alike, they also have similar lifestyles and customs (*Ch: shenghuo xiguan*). The Westerners have different lifestyles. Japan is also geographically close. This also explains that more women in the north go to Japan than those from the south." He added, "Some people still have bad images of Japan due to history. Yet, history is the things the happened in the past. I think few people in Dongyang have bad images of Japan now."

It was much later that the broker in Dongyang, Tanaka confessed to there also being more pragmatic reasons for his choosing Dongyang. During my fieldwork, fewer and fewer women registered in Dongyang and other agencies had shifted their recruitment from Dongyang to other areas, such as Xinghai. Yet, the broker continued to insist that he would only introduce women from Dongyang. I reconfirmed with him that he recruited the women only from Dongyang because it was his hometown. He smiled wryly and said, "Well, I often say that. But the brokerage work in China is illegal. So you have to have connections with the local officials in order to avoid troubles. Since I am originally from Dongyang, the local officials are more flexible with me. I cannot do brokerage work in places like Xinghai because I don't have any connections."

Saving the "Enemy's Children": Reclaiming Historical Subjectivity

I moved to Xinghai again in February 2010 for a longer stay. During my five-month stay and two additional trips (September 2010 and July 2011) to Xinghai, I was able to learn more about the relationship of Xinghai to Japan from a local perspective. When I just arrived in Xinghai and started asking the local people about Japanese-Chinese marriages, I was surprised by the local people's eagerness to tell me about the history of the war orphans as well as by their slight hesitation to talk about the marriage business. When I described my research topic to local residents, almost everyone suggested that I study the history of Xinghai in order to understand contemporary marriage migration. While some people sought to discourage me from the study of transnational marriages by saying that they are a sensitive (*Ch: mingan*) issue, they all suggested I study the history of the war orphans in Xinghai (also see Introduction).

It was in Xinghai that I encountered the discourse of blood ties (*Ch: xueyuan guanxi)*. For instance, a local resident who owned a Japanese school and sent many students and brides to Japan claimed, "Xinghai has familiar (*Ch: qinqie*) feelings toward Japan." He further explained that both the basis of this relationship and the motivations of people who want to go to Japan were based on blood ties between Japan and Xinghai. He said, "Japan and Xinghai have blood ties (*Ch: xueyuan guanxi)*; almost all the families here in Xinghai have relatives in Japan. This is why many people from Xinghai go to Japan today; otherwise, people wouldn't go."

Importantly, the locals did not see blood ties as the natural product of a benevolent colonial relationship in the past between Japan and Manchuria. One night, I was having dinner with a local couple in their early thirties. The wife identified herself as a third generation descendant of a war orphan; however, the Japanese government did not officially accept her grandmother's documentation as proof of her status as a war orphan. Nonetheless, she was still hoping to receive official permission to go to Japan with her Chinese husband. During the dinner, she explained, "The relationship between Japan and Xinghai is really unique (*Ch: teshu*). My grandmother is Japanese, and there is a blood tie between the communities." Yet, as time went on with beer and food, her husband started referring to the horrifying behavior of the Japanese against the Chinese during the war, such as the Nanjing massacre and Unit 731.[28] He claimed, "can you believe that human begins were called "*maruta*" (log) and used for brutal experiments?" He was also critical about the recent textbook controversy and Japanese prime ministers visiting the *Yasukuni* Shrine.[29] Nonetheless, he argued, Chinese people saved the enemies' children for humanitarian purposes, even though it was difficult to feed themselves at that time. As he put it, "Chinese people are the only people in world history who saved the children of the enemy." To him, the war orphans memorial also symbolized Chinese people's generous attitude toward the "enemy." He claimed, "Who in the world would make a monument for the enemy except Chinese?" According to him, the Chinese locals incorporated the war orphans into their families as children or as wives, and as a result, they created blood ties with Japan.[30]

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[28] During the Nanjing Massacre, somewhere between 40,000 and 350,000 Chinese civilians were killed by Japanese soldiers within a period of six weeks. Between 20,000 to 80,000 women were

The significant point for the local narrative was that the Chinese people "voluntarily" rescued war orphans because of their humanitarian spirit (*Ch: rendao zhuyi*). Indeed, I repeatedly encountered informants who described Japan as having invaded northern China and saw Japanese as having plundered their land. Thus, it was their humanitarian labor that created subsequent blood ties with Japan. In other words, it was not because of the nature of Japanese colonialism that friendship and familiarity existed between the two peoples, but in spite of it. It was kindness on the Chinese side

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raped by Japanese soldiers (Fogel 2000; Chang 1997; Yoshida 2006). Unit 731 was a Japanese military research unit built near Harbin which conducted biological and chemical warfare experiments. Such research also included the use of Chinese and Russian captives for human experiments. 3,000 to 12,000 people are believed to have been murdered by Unit 732 (Williams, Peter, and David Wallace 1989; Gold 2004).

[29] Yasukuni is a Shinto shrine which claims to honor the spirits of Japanese war dead. Japanese prime ministers' visits to Yasukuni Shrine have provoked diplomatic disputes between Japan and other Asian countries over Japanese war responsibility.

[30] All able bodied Japanese men were recalled to join the army in early August 1945.

occurring after colonialism that forged today's transnational blood ties.

By reclaiming subjecthood in this historical context, Chinese locals refused to simply be passive recipients of Japan's imperialism. Although only very few adoptive parents (*Ch: yang fumu*) who incorporated orphans into their families are still alive today, the locals saw themselves as active historical agents responsible for the building the bridge between Japan and China.

Blood Ties Go Transnational: From "Brutal Enemies" to "Blood Relatives"

If blood ties were established when the orphans were incorporated into Chinese families, they did not immediately have transnational implications. Adoptive parents and war orphans themselves often concealed their Japanese identity, and grew up as Chinese. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), revealing one's Japanese identity could be risky for one would be suspected to be a spy (Ide 2008). Close to a decade after the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972 the possibility for the orphans to return to Japan remained uncertain. It was only in early 1980s when the orphans who were able to identify their blood relatives in Japan started returning to Japan. After the PRC announced its policy of opening up, people in Xinghai also gradually experienced the transformation, starting in the early 1990s. The narrative presented by several locals over dinner showed an interesting picture of the transformations that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

According to local informants, in the 1970s and the 1980s, those who married Japanese first- or second-generation orphans had not even thought about the possibility of going to Japan. They told me that those who married Japanese female orphans were usually poor farmers who could not afford to marry a Chinese bride. One local provided an interesting comparison: "marrying a Japanese woman at that time was like marrying a Vietnamese woman today."[31] Moreover, with few exceptions, the local people had little knowledge of Japan at that time, even as some with orphan status began to depart in 1981. One local stated, "We had only heard that there were televisions in Japan." Another local added, "It was also because people did not think that making money is a good thing at that time; everyone was the same."

The first generation of war orphans started retuning to Japan in the 1980s; the second generation also began departing for Japan in the 1990s. It was at this time that those who went to Japan really began reporting back that the differences between Japan and Xinghai were huge. During the early 1990s, those who had departed were described as the "real" descendants of orphans, and they were not necessarily motivated by the goal of earning money in Japan. However, through personal connections people gradually became aware that the daily income in Japan was far higher than even the monthly income in Xinghai. The differences appeared enormous. Starting in the mid 1990s, after most of the "real" second generation orphans had left to Japan, "fake" second generationers also started emigrating to Japan as well.

It was on my third visit to Xinghai in July 2011 when I learned more about the existence of "fake" (*Ch: jia*) war orphans. The issue of fake orphans was not a welcome topic in Xinghai, especially in front of visitors. During a dinner with several local informants whom I had met a number of times since my first visit, I asked them to explain more about how people have migrated to Japan since the 1980s. One of them identified himself as a "fake" orphan who went to Japan in 1995 using a counterfeit household status. After spending three and a half years in Japan with his Chinese wife and two children, he decided to come back to Xinghai. Since he did not have any plans to go back to Japan, it was easier for him to talk about his "fake" status.

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[31] During my fieldwork in Xinghai, going to Vietnam to find a Vietnamese wife was an emerging phenomenon. As locals explained, in order to have a Chinese bride, a Chinese man has to prepare 200,000RMB, yet to have a Vietnamese bride, he would only need 50,000RMB.

Wang, this "former" fake second generationer, told me that from 1996 to 1998 the majority of those who went to Japan were fake. According to the local residents at the dinner, during the 1980s and 1990s, it was easy to manually change one's household status (*Ch: hukou*) from being Chinese to being a Japanese offspring. If they went to the police station (*Ch: pai chu suo*) and paid about 50,000 RMB, the officers changed their status right away. If people had friends at the police station, it could be cheaper, but they had to buy gifts when they returned to Xinghai. However, whether real or fake, when they returned to Xinghai, they all came bearing impressive amounts of gifts and money.

However, this era came to an end when Japanese local governments started uncovering fraudulent orphan families, some of whom were deported and are now back in Xinghai. Since then, it has gradually become more difficult to counterfeit one's status, and with the introduction of a new computer-based *hukou* system, it is almost impossible to change a person's status manually. Consequently, marriage migration through brokers is now seen as the easiest way to go to Japan today.

I asked when people started to talk about blood ties between Xinghai and Japan. One local person said, "In the 1980s, when some war orphans started going back to Japan, no one actually wanted to go to Japan at that time. Among the second generation orphans, usually only single, unmarried people went to Japan." Apparently, going to

Japan was not necessarily welcomed, and the discourse of blood ties was not common. Nevertheless, as more people went to Japan, more locals ended up having relatives in Japan. When encountering friends or relatives coming back from Japan, the idea of blood ties came to be deployed to demonstrate closeness to Japan and mitigate hostile feelings. As one local put it, "Well, because almost everyone has relatives living in Japan, it is not nice to criticize Japan in front of them. So we talk about blood ties to stress familiarity between Xinghai and Japan."

Therefore, although "blood ties" were established in 1945 between war orphans and the locals in Xinghai, these blood ties themselves did not have any real significance at the time. War orphans were raised as "Chinese," or in cases when the locals knew their Japanese identity, they were mocked them as "*xiao riben guizi*" (small Japanese devils) (Okubo 2006: 18). However, through migration the image of Japan as an "enemy" or "unfamiliar" has gradually transformed into one described as "familiar," a "better place" and, further, as a place where "blood-related relatives" live.

Eric Hobsbawm (1983) has suggested that what we perceive as a "historical past" is often recent in origin and sometimes invented. For instance, "invented tradition" denotes a set of practices that implies continuity with a suitable past. It is also a process of the formalization and ritualization of tradition by imposing repetition. Invented tradition is not always completely fictitious. Hobsbawm (1983, 5) argued that "adaptation" is also a part of inventing tradition, which "took place for old uses in new conditions and by using old models for new purposes." Thus, modified historical continuity and revised meanings of old historical materials might be formalized for new purposes. Although the notion of blood ties is not completely socially invented—many locals do indeed have blood-related relatives in Japan—the existing deployment of the concept is contingent and came to manifest itself in the community on the basis of a changing context.

For Money or Blood?

While the notion of blood ties was crucial to local understandings of contemporary marriage migration, not all of the local community viewed these marriages positively. Some local individuals even criticized those who married Japanese men by saying that "they are marrying for money and don't understand emotion (Ch: *bu dong ganqing*)." When I was invited to dinner in the first week of my stay in Xinghai, one individual even responded to my question by saying, "That can be described in one word: money" (*Ch: jiu shi yige zi: qian*).

The idea that Chinese women marry Japanese men for money was widespread in the community, and some women openly talked about it. I met Tang Xiaoli at a Japanese language school in March 2010. Xiaoli was in her late twenties, divorced from her Chinese husband, and had a 7-year-old son. She married a Japanese man in December 2009 and was attending a language school while waiting for a spousal visa. She seemed to be really excited about going to Japan and asked me what kinds of jobs would be available for her. Knowing that she was going to a town in the countryside and considering her limited language skills, along with the effects of the Japanese economic recession, I was not optimistic about her chances of finding a job. However, she had heard many stories from her friends, her relatives, and their friends that "people can earn 10,000 yen per day in Japan." Xiaoli left Xinghai in April 2010, called me from Japan, and expressed her frustration with not having been able to find a job yet.

So on the one hand, these marriages often were criticized as being motivated by money. Some Chinese women have contributed to these images and, like Xiaoli, openly discussed the benefits of marrying Japanese men. Women also in Dongyang often asked me how much they could make working in Japan. Some local men joked that, since many young and pretty Chinese women were marrying Japanese men, the poor Chinese men had to go to Vietnam to find brides. But on the other hand, marriage migration seemed to be, to some extent, accepted within the discourse of familiarity, and in particular, that of blood ties in Xinghai. Those who were not fond of marriage migration also employed the notion of blood ties to stress the unique connection between Xinghai and Japan, partially explaining why women are willing to marry Japanese men. Depending on the context, money or familiarity and blood becomes the rationale to justify migration patterns.

Accordingly, marriage migration to Japan was partially described and legitimized by the idea of marrying into a familiar and “blood-related” community. Marrying into a blood-related community was perceived as different from marrying into an unfamiliar community. Moreover, in this context, blood ties became not only indicative of individual genealogies between war orphans who returned to Japan and their relatives remaining in Xinghai, but also a genealogy and transnational link between the communities. As Janet Carsten (2011) argues, blood, like other fluid substances, has symbolic potential, containing a “transformative effect on the nature of the person and that person’s relations with others” (2011, 25). The narrative of blood ties in Xinghai indicated a perceived symbolic linkage between spheres as well as persons. Those who had never been to Japan or who do not have any relatives in Japan somehow were seen as "related" to Japan by means of blood ties. Marrying into a related place was conceived as a "natural" phenomenon, while marrying a Japanese man was simultaneously seen as a strategy to gain transnational and social mobility.

This was evident in the explanation Ning, a former government official, provided me when discussing marriages not only between Japanese men and Chinese women but also between second- and third-generation Chinese living in Japan and Chinese residents in Xinghai. He blurred the notion of blood ties by noting that it was not clear whether it was "Japanese blood" or "Chinese blood" that created the link between the two communities. By saying that "it is more appropriate for Chinese people to find a Chinese marriage partner," he indicated that the "thickness" of "Chinese blood" in the second and third generations would make them "Chinese" rather than "Japanese." Thus, it was more suitable and natural for people with "Chinese blood" to marry people with "Chinese blood." Blood ties were perceived as an essential quality that connects communities, people, and kin.

Ning's claims that Chinese should marry Chinese might appear to contradict the idea of Japanese-Chinese marriages as based on blood ties. Ning did mention that marrying Japanese men is not an ideal means to migrate to Japan. Nevertheless, he also in the same conversation employed the metaphor of blood ties for Japanese-Chinese marriages and accepted that blood ties link communities. In other words, although the obvious marital motivation of money is condemned and mocked, marrying into a community with blood ties is legitimated and naturalized. Chinese women marrying Japanese men occupy an ambiguous position where discourses of blood and money are competing and contested. Interestingly, the local residents, including brides, rarely described Japanese-Chinese marriages as based simply on the choices of two individuals. The women's motivations were described as money, blood, or an ambiguous mixture of both.

Blood ties were viewed as a legitimate source for mobility, while the mobility gained by marrying a Japanese man was partially scorned by other local people. Hence, blood and money were classified differently as a source for mobility; they also had unequal legitimacy. Although the locals told me that the reasons of money and blood suggested two different rationales for the movement of people, following "blood ties" to Japan was not independent from the notion of money either. As the locals explained, the late wave of migration in the 1990s and the migration of fake orphans to Japan was apparently based on financial interests—namely, earning money in Japan. But again, the notion of blood ties, or the idea of relatedness based on the idea of kinship, produced a naturalized legitimacy, even if kinship relations also were a means to access resources.[32]

Same Bed, Different Dreams

On the surface were seemingly similar terms, yet behind them were divergent meanings mobilized as part of very different strategies to legitimate the phenomenon of

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[32] Brackette F.Williams (1994) argues, "It is interpenetration of social ideologies of power and classification that allows us to make cultural sense of myths of origins and shared substance" (1994: 203). In her analysis of how power differentials are naturalized and legitimated, Williams argues that the identification of persons as kin entails mechanisms to socialize nature and thus naturalize the classification systems. Her analysis also shows that kin and relatedness are produced based on mutual interests and desires for relationships (205). Therefore, kinship is created based on mutual interests for social actions: "To move people to resources and resources to people" (205). I believe that to this idea it is important to add Janet Carsten's notion of relatedness (year), which is rather inclusionary. Williams argues that "the motivation to create kin directs the selection of criteria above and beyond shared physical substance as well as what meaning-in-action is given to 'facts' of shared physical substance" (205).

Japanese-Chinese cross-border marriages. In this memory site, historical subjectivity and colonial memories were reconstructed and, simultaneously, marital norms and desires for certain “border crossings” were negotiated and reworked at multiple sites and scales. In making sense of the current marriage migration phenomenon, historical narratives do not simply reflect a certain understanding of local history and historical contingency. They are selective, creative, and shifting. Furthermore, in the process of historicizing Japanese-Chinese marriages, the participants in these matchmaking practices also engaged in the negotiation and rearticulation of marital norms. By deploying particular notions of blood ties and familiarity, Japanese-Chinese marriages are rendered more legitimate and “natural,” concealing manifold power relations.

This chapter has also aimed to further complicate the logic of desire. In particular, going beyond the discussion of “difference” or “exotic others” that generate imaginings and transnational desires (Kelsky 2001; Constable 2009; Suzuki 2005), this chapter demonstrates how the deployment of “familiarity” offers an alternative reading of transnational intimate relations. The analysis of transnational marriages within East Asian contexts complicates discussion of the West-East dynamics where the fantasy for the West (or the East) plays a major role in reproducing power inequalities. This illustrates the ways in which multiple layered notions of familiarity, shaped by a colonial legacy in East Asia, were at work in rendering transnational intimate relations possible.

Chapter 2

The Making and Unmaking of "Unmarriageable Persons" in Japan

The transnational marriage agency, China Bride, is located at the center of Tokyo. Visiting China Bride on a daily basis became my routine during the first several months of my research in Japan. After spending thirty minutes on a not so crowded early afternoon subway, I usually arrived in China Bride around two. China Bride was only a 10-minute walk from the station. On the way, I always tried to be attentive to pedestrians so that if I knew someone from the agency, I could greet them. China Bride operated its brokerage work out of the sixth floor in a small building. Their suite was not big, but it had space enough to contain one main office with a lounge area, two small rooms, and one room for the chief broker. During the first several weeks, my visits had a more official tone; whenever I arrived, the chief broker invited me into his office for interviews. Yet, after several interviews with him, he suggested that I also interview other female staff members who assisted with most of the brokerage services. So, after a while I started sitting in the lounge area while casually talking to the female staff members. Gradually, my presence in the lounge became a natural feature of the agency. It was there that I also had numerous interactions with male clientele.

Talking to a male client for the first time, however, made me nervous. What if they demonstrated hostility toward my research? Would they see me as an aggressive, U.S. educated feminist who would criticize their buying "mail-order brides"? I somehow assumed that people who would come to the transnational agency might not be the friendliest people one would encounter. When the broker and staff members introduced me to their clientele, I tried to be as polite, pleasant, and friendly as possible.

I first met Mr. Kato in March 2009. It was on a day when I was interviewing the chief broker, Tanaka, in his office. During the interview, I heard the sound of cheerful voices coming from the lounge, the place where customers usually look at Chinese women's profiles and talk to the staff members. While I assumed that a male customer was talking with the staff members, the tone of conversation was so jovial it made me curious about his personality. Tanaka and I walked out of the office, and Tanaka introduced me to this outgoing customer. I introduced myself as a graduate student studying cross-border marriages and sat next to Kato on the couch. Before I could ask him any questions, Kato started telling me that when he was a college student in Tokyo, in his student circle (activity club) there was a student from Taiwan. It was since then that he had been interested in "Chinese-type" (*Ja: chuka kei)* women.

Kato, who was in his late thirties, had been a member of China Bride for a month; this was his third visit. Again, before I could ask him anything, he told me he was not necessarily interested in foreign women. Rather, he stressed, "I am looking for the best woman regardless of nationality. So this does not mean that I do not have any opportunities to meet Japanese women. I am visiting Tokyo this weekend from central Japan, where I am originally from. Before I came to China Bride today, I also met a Japanese woman my friend introduced to me." He noticed that I was taking notes, and he said he might not constitute a good sample for my research, because he was not the stereotypical man who would come to this agency. He then reiterated that he wanted to look for the best woman, regardless of her nationality.

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Who is a “good sample” for my research? Who is the stereotypical man that Kato, and possibly I, were imagining? Indeed, was it my preconceptions about “those who would marry a Chinese bride” that made me nervous about talking to them? What kind images were associated with “those who would seek a Chinese bride,” and how are such images related to notions marriageability? This chapter examines the ways in which marriage operates as an apparatus to create and shape certain forms of personhood in late capitalist/neoliberal Japan. This chapter aims to locate the phenomenon of cross-border marriages not only within the global context, but also within the local contexts that shape it in Japan. This chapter will seek to show how cross-border marriages and those participated in them experienced and were conceived of in Japanese society.

Existing work often incorporates into its analyses the local factors that create and shape the demand for marriage partners, often called “pull factors.” Frequently cited pull factors include a shortage of brides and a marriage squeeze, based on an imbalanced sex ratio, along with transformations in gender relations and expected gender roles (cf. Kim 2010; Thai 2008). According to such analyses, those men who are socially and economically “disadvantaged” are those who face difficulties finding a wife locally (Lu and Yang 2010; Tseng 2010, 33). “Disadvantages” can also include men’s age or “disadvantageous personal traits” (Lu and Yang 2010, 23). This notion of “disadvantage” is often used to explain certain men’s “unmarriageability” and thus their inability to find a local wife. It also formed part of the image that was prevalent in Japanese society.

During my fieldwork, when I introduced and explained my project to those who were not involved with transnational matchmaking practices, they often responded to me by saying that “those unmarriageable persons (*Ja: kekkon dekinai hito*) who could not find a Japanese bride go to China, don't they?" The perception was already attached to those who could not find a local wife, or a co-national marriage partner, that they not only were marked by some form of "disadvantage," but also that they were a certain type of person, namely an "unmarriageable person."

However, these "disadvantages" were often taken for granted, and it was rarely discussed how these are produced. One aim of this chapter is--instead of supposing "disadvantages" or "unmarriageability" as taken-for-granted social categories or as certain elements or qualities of a person--to ask how such a categories are produced and articulated through the practices associated with marriage. Under what conditions do persons become "unmarriageable," what determines this position, and how do those who are labeled "unmarriageable" comprehend this category? Moreover, how is the socially constructed category of "unmarriageable persons" relevant to the phenomenon of the brokered cross-border marriages? It is important to note that being unmarried is not perceived as the neutral condition of the person. Like many other societies, such as South Korean society (Kendall 1996),[33] Japanese society does not view being unmarried at a certain age as simply being "unmarried," but rather as being "unmarriageable." This is also based on the social assumption that a normal and healthy person can marry a suitable person by a certain age, so marriage is inevitably included in the normal life cycle of any person. Moreover, personhood is made complete through life events such as marriage and childbirth. This also suggests that failing to fulfill the normative pattern of life would prevent an individual from attaining full personhood (Fontaine 1985, 131).

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[33] Kendall, for instance, argues that in Korea and most likely elsewhere, "Even without the visual marker of a married man's or women's coiffure, marriage still implies membership in an adult universe" (1996, 7). Thus, unmarried men are not "men" but simply "boys" who do not posses full membership in society.

When I started my research, I was also trying to figure out what made these men "not normal" or "undesirable," thus "unmarriageable" in the domestic marriage market. I conducted a demographic survey of male clientele at one transnational agency. Surprisingly, the majority of the clients there were not the socially and economically disadvantaged people one might expect. The majority were white-collar businessmen (53%), followed by self-employed men (14.3%), public servants (10%), corporate executives (6.8%), specialists (5.3%), schoolteachers (3.7%), and retired men (1%), with other also being a category (4.5%). The men lived in Tokyo (26.5%), Chiba (24.2%), Kanagawa (21.9%), Saitama (8.3%), Nagoya (4.5%), Nagano (3.7%), Shizuoka (2.2%), Tochigi (2.2%), Gunma (1.5%), Niigata (1.5%), Ibaragi (1.5%), and other prefectures (6.8%).[34] According to this data, those who resided in urban areas constituted over 80% of the clientele. Although I conducted official demographic surveys at one agency, I also gathered information about Japanese men who employed transnational matchmaking services from three other agencies during my interviews. At those other agencies, there were few full-time farmers. Indeed, it was not uncommon to hear the names of globally well-known companies.

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[34] I conducted a demographic survey based on the members' profiles. Only the staff members and agency members can access these profiles, but China Bride kindly allowed me to use the data for my research. The profiles included 149 Japanese men, 203 Chinese women who reside in Japan, and 377 Chinese women who reside in China. The questions for men included the year of becoming a member of China Bride, age, height, weight, education, marital history, occupation, annual income, family background (first son, etc.), residence, housing information (renting or owning), father's age, father's occupation, mother's age, mother's occupation, children's ages (if applicable), brothers and sisters and their ages, whether living with parents, the possibility of living with parents and the desired qualities for the potential bride. For Chinese women, the questions included the year of becoming a member of China Bride, age, height, weight, marital history, ex-husband's nationality (if applicable), education, family background, occupation, father's age, father's occupation, mother's age, mother's occupation, brothers and sisters and the age limit for the potential marriage partner. For Chinese women who resided in Japan, the survey additionally asked about their current residence and hometown, current visas and expiration dates. These question categories were created by China Bride for their male and female customers to complete when they become members. Both male and female members first look at these profiles before arranging matchmaking meetings. The reason why the amount of Chinese women's profiles numbered much higher than Japanese men was that already-married Chinese women were still listed on the profiles, while married Japanese men were removed. The staff members told me that the pictures of married Chinese women were also used to identify what type of women the Japanese male customers liked.

If the demographic profiles did not completely explain their undesirability, was it possible that they had “personal shortcomings”? My conversations with staff members often centered on the male and female clientele. Discussion about the men often touched upon their “weirdness” (*Ja: hen*). For example, a certain Mr. Honda visited Dongyang for his wedding ceremony in August 2009. I was in China and shared a car to Dongyang. My first impression of Honda was that he was young and friendly. During the four-hour drive to Dongyang from the airport, the Chinese driver told me that it was first time he had seen a Japanese customer have such a lively conversation with another person. Other Japanese men he had seen were very quiet and unfriendly. However, Honda’s luggage was extremely small and light because he only brought one shirt for his entire four-day trip. Later, in Dongyang, a local staff member told me, “Mr. Honda is normal except the fact that he is dirty, but because he is dirty he cannot find a Japanese wife.” Even if a person acted “normal” in other contexts, if they were unable to find a co-national wife, they became “unmarriageable persons.” Hence, national endogamous marriage was the key to defining one’s marriageability in this context.

By looking at the imagined or assumed social category of the “unmarriageable person,” I argue that marriage works to normalize the national population (Foucault 1977) and individuals’ life cycles (Turner 1969, van Gennep 1960); it also acts as a disciplinary mechanism to produce marriageable bodies at multiple levels. Moreover, I argue that marriage also works as an exclusionary mechanism (Borneman 1996); those who fail to transform themselves into marriageable persons are excluded from the domestic marriage market and the healthy population and from membership in the national community. In particular, I examine marriage as an exclusionary system by focusing on how those who are heterosexual and able-bodied, yet cannot find a marriage partner, are categorized not only as being unmarriageable but also *lifelong single* ("*shogai mikon*, within governmental statistics). This chapter also asks how those who are labeled as unmarriageable negotiate and reshape their own marriageability and personhood by engaging in transnational marriages. Informed by an anthropological analysis of personhood and stigma, I examine ways in which the notion of a stigmatized person—namely an unmarriageable person—is relationally and historically created. I further explore how such stigma, when not easily visible, is paradoxically reproduced by revealing it in order to negate it.

Healthy Population, Healthy Marriageable Persons

The brokers at the agency called the Japanese clientele under the age of forty "golden eggs" (*Ja: kin no tamago*). They claimed that the younger men would attract more Chinese women, so that their brokerage work would be easier. Indeed, I met few men under the age of forty. I met some men in their late thirties, but they were likely to be turning forty soon. Once, when a man in his late twenties came to the agency, the staff members could not hide their surprise; as one staff member asked him, "Why do you think you want to marry a Chinese woman at your age?" I also observed a similar attitude towards age during a wedding tour that I followed in Harbin. The mother and sister of the Japanese man involved came to China to attend his wedding party. After accompanying the new couple for two days, the mother confessed to me, “I don’t know why he missed the chance to marry during his marriageable age (*Ja: tekireiki*). I wonder what was wrong with him then.” Therefore, explicitly or implicitly, age was seen as one of the important factors behind the choice to marry a Chinese bride.

The issues of late marriage and the decreasing marriage rate have attracted significant media attention over the past couple of decades in Japan. For instance, according to an article in *Asahi* newspaper, by 2020, the elderly population will constitute more than 30% of the national population, and by 2030, single-person households will constitute more than 40% (Asahi 2010/12/26). Behind these trends, an increasing “percentage of [people being] lifelong single” (*Ja: shougai mikon ritu*) was seen as a major reason for such “social problems.” The article further stated that by 2030, 30% of men and 20% of women would remain “lifelong singles” in Japanese society. The term “*lifelong single rate*” also appeared in official governmental statistics (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) and was defined as the percentage of single persons over fifty without a marital history. According to the description, persons who have remained single up until the age of fifty are considered without much of a chance for marrying later in their lives. In the 1960s and the 1970s, only approximately 2% of men and 3% of women had remained single at age 50. However, these percentages started increasing in the 1980s. In 2010, statistics showed that 15.96% of men and 7.25% of women were now in the category of “lifelong single person.”

As in many other countries, Japan has been experiencing a transformation in the structure of and ideology surrounding family and marriage. According to official statistics, ”Love Marriage” replaced ”Arranged Marriage” around 1970, and notions of that romantic love, intimacy, emotional bonds, and individual choice are important for marriage have become dominant (Hashimoto and Traphagan 2008). Moreover, over the past several decades there has been a steady decline in the birthrate, longer "delays" before marrying, and even promulgation of the idea of not marrying at all (Ronald and Alexy 2011,13). While the ideologies of marriage have been changing, marriage is still considered to be the sole legitimate site for creating families in Japanese society; as such, increasing numbers of unmarried persons are viewed as contributing to a rapidly declining birthrate and an aging society. If the number of unmarried persons continues to increase, an overhaul of the national healthcare and pension systems would also be required.[35] A marriage broker even lamented that it would be not only unhealthy, but actually disgusting (*kimochi warui*) if more and more Japanese men remained single in the near future.

While the current "marriage squeeze" is often viewed in society and by media as stemming from changes on the part of Japanese women, the so-called "marriage crisis" today seemed not to be limited to Japanese men.[36] The so-called "marriage crisis" (*kekkon nan*) involved not only difficulties for getting married, but also difficulties in finding a "suitable" partner. It did not just affect people in rural areas; people in urban areas, including women, also expressed difficulties in finding a suitable marriage partner.

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[35] In the government and media discourses, both the declining marriage-rate and the declining birth-rate have come to be seen as urgent problems in contemporary Japan. For example, "The 1.29 shock" referred to the alarm expressed when the birthrate fell to 1.29 in 2003, a first in the post-war era. After 2003, the birth-rate slightly has increased to 1.37 in 2009 and 1.39 in 2010. According to a government report, a birthrate of 1.29 falls far short of the "population replacement level," which is estimated to be 2.08 (The Ministry of Land). Accordingly, the 1.29 shock came to represent a national crisis and source of "anxiety" among Japanese nationals.

[36] As journalist Shirakawa puts it, "Women do not marry; men cannot marry" (2002). As Japanese women entered the workforce and gained more economic independence, marriage for them has changed "from duty to desire" (Yanagisako 1997). Implicit in this is the idea that women are not encountering desirable partners.

This seeming national anxiety was also evident in a report issued by the Japanese government. On January 24, 2005, the Ministry of Economics, Trade, and Industry established a committee named "The Committee Studying What the Marriage Industry Ought to be in the Era of the Low Birthrate."[37] The report suggested that a continued decline in the birth rate might affect the lives of the citizens by producing economic stagnation (1). At the same time, this "crisis" was also linked to the social norms attached to marriage in Japan. While the report did not deny or criticize "new forms of family," such as de facto marriage or extramarital children, it did clearly state that its research was based on and aimed to maintain "our nation's existing family systems" which suggests "(legally) marrying and having a family" (1).

This investigation included survey data generated from targeting the "unmarried." Here the "unmarried" were defined as people between the age of twenty and forty-four who were not married (the legal Japanese age for marriage is sixteen for women, eighteen for men). These "unmarried" were divided into two categories, "people who do not marry" (individuals who willingly stay single) and who "have difficulty in marrying"(individuals who wished to marry or in report parlance "unwillingly stayed single")(6). Those who "unwillingly stayed single" were further divided into eight categories according to the reasons for which they are unable to marry. Some of the categories were related to their external environment, such as the lack of opportunities to meet potential partners or the decline in community matching-making functions, while others were related to personality issues, such as their lack of communication skills or ideas toward marriage (6).

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[37] The purpose of the committee is cited to be as follows:
Regarding the declining birthrate, which has been continually decreasing to the point of record levels, the level of social concern has been increasing. However, reasons for the declining birthrate, such as the trends of postponing marriage or even not marrying at all, have not been discussed in terms of their impact on "marrying and having a family." On the other hand, due to high demands and expectations of young people in regard to marrying and having children, it will be important to examine social processes which can facilitate marriage and child birth. (News Release,1)

The report also stated that although traditionally "marrying and having a family" in Japan had been facilitated by relatives or communities, or more recently by relationships at the office, due to changes in social structures and the national consciousness, these functions had greatly deteriorated. Thus, the report advocated hat the government needed to assist in these functions, in particular by stimulating the marriage industry (1). Thus, "marrying and having a family" was seen as being the original, "natural" course of life, and other options were regarded as atypical. In its conclusion, as a policy recommendation, the committee presented two goals regarding the future status and function of the marriage industry. The first was that the marriage industry should be a "life design industry," which provided assistance not only in matching men and women but also in designing their lives (25). The term "life design" denoted the idea of providing guidance concerning "how to live" a life by including marriage as a part of life, as well as how to maintain a balance in one's life after marriage (25). The second goal was that the marriage industry should offer "life solutions," aiding in "social care" through multiple services such as counseling and consulting as well as employment and health, which would transform individuals in order to prepare for and orient their lives toward marriage (25-26).

This perception of marriage as part of one's life cycle is not unique to this context. As anthropologists van Gennep (2004 [1960]) and Turner (1995 [1969]) observe, a succession of stages in life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, parenthood, and death, enables an individual to pass from one (un)social position to another. What is interesting in this context is that marriage is not only perceived as a given stage of one's life cycle, but also an apparatus to normalize such a life cycle and regulate the national population, society, and unmarriageable persons. Indeed, notions of normalized life cycles—e.g. ideas about the age by which one needs to be married—were shared by many men I met at the transnational agencies.

Foucault argues that biopolitics a form of power that regulates and controls the population in part by constituting the body as "the basis of the biological processes" including birth, health, and longevity and thereby subjecting it to supervised interventions and regulatory controls (1978,139). Foucaudian notions of biopolitics focus on sex as a mean of access to life and the body. In Japanese society, marriage and sex are closely linked, for marriage is viewed as the legitimate site for childbirth and creating families. The development of bio-power is related to the growing importance of normalization: "a normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life" (1978, 144). The importance of the norm, as contrasted to the judicial system of law, lies in that it focuses on continuous regulation and corrective mechanisms. While the law has not disappeared, Foucault argues, the law "operates more and more as a norm" (1978, 144). In short, judicial institutions are incorporated into other institutions, such as medical bodies, public health systems, and so on, which function as regulatory mechanisms.

In the case of normalizing marriage in Japanese society, marriage is not only expected within an individual's lifecycle, but in with a certain band of age (the appropriate age range for marriage). The “appropriate marriage period” (*tekireiki*) is a Japanese term which denotes the socially created age range during which persons ideally marry. These periods are often assumed to be different for men and women, based in part on the assumption that women face an age limit for bearing children. During an interview, one domestic marriage broker told me that if a woman goes to a marriage agency after the age of 35, her chances of finding a suitable match would be dramatically diminished. In other words, few men would choose a woman over the age of 35 as a marriage partner. According to this broker, the age of 35 is the upper limit for a woman, after which her marital opportunities decrease. Although this period is extended for men, remaining single into one’s late thirties or early forties was still seen as unusual. Moreover, a person who did not marry by the age of 50 would be viewed not only as late, but also as having entered the category of “lifetime single.” Accordingly, if people need help with finding a marriage partner, the marriage industry would provide assistance by, as Foucault put it, “the technique of assistance.”[38]

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[38] As Foucault shows, (1984[1972], 275), manifold institutions provide normalizing assistance to the poor or sick. While authoritarian medicalization serves to regulate the social body, outside of this, there also exists the “techniques of assistance” where medicine or care are provided as a form of “service”(1984, 275). Foucault explains that up to the end of the seventeenth century, outside of assistance as a collective means to deal with disease, it was also addressed to the category of the “sick poor”(1984, 275). And yet “sickness” is not exclusive to a sick person, but also includes “infirmity, old age, inability to find work, and destitution” and those that are “necessitous paupers” (1984, 276). During the eighteenth century, these procedures of assistance were reexamined. Foucault explains that economists and administrators criticized these systems of assistance because they allow the “idle” to remain outside of the circuits of production (1984, 276). Accordingly, observation of the population produced distinct categories of unfortunates, or functional discriminations: “the good poor and the bad poor, the willfully idle and the involuntarily unemployed, those who can do some kind of work and those who cannot”(1984, 276). The aim was to transform able-bodied poor into “useful labor.” Thus, assistance does not exclude the idle population but rather aims to include and transform them into useful labor.

The Marriage Market and "The Age of Konkatsu (Marriage Hunting)"

For most of the men I met at the transnational marriage agencies, it was not the first time for them to visit a marriage agency. They also had visited other domestic "introduction agencies" to find a Japanese bride. The marriage industry itself is not new in Japan. The first marriage agencies that utilized computerized match-making services or psychological tests emerged in the 1970s, and now there are currently more than 3700-3900 such institutions in Japan (West 2011). These institutions include so-called go-between services (86.7%) in which matchmakers mediate personal meetings based on each side's requests, data-matching services (8.4%) in which individuals input their information and requests for the computer to find suitable matches (often with the "assistance" of an agency's staff members), and Internet matching services (3.1%) in which no matchmakers are involved.

Although these businesses are not new in Japan, they have gained new media and public attention since the late 2000s. One of the reasons for such attention was sociologist Yamada Masahiro and his co-authored book called, "The Age of *Konkatsu*." When I arrived in Tokyo in early 2009, the term *konkatsu* had become quite prevalent in Japanese society. *Konkatsu* ("marriage activity" or "marriage hunting") is a combination of the terms *kekkon* (marriage) and *katsudou* (activity). The word first emerged in the weekly magazine AERA in 2007, when Yamada Masahiro coined it in an interview with journalist Shirakawa Touko. Yamada and Shirakawa later elaborated upon this concept and published a book titled *Konkatsu Jidai* (*The Era of "Marriage Hunting"*) in 2008. This book became a bestseller, and the term *konkatsu* was nominated for the title of "Fashionable New Word of the Year" (*Ja: ryukougo*) in 2009.

Here I outline the Yamada's take on transformation of marriage in Japan. Yamada (2008) explains that the original meaning of *konkatsu*, or marriage hunting, stemmed from the analogy of job hunting. According to Yamada, looking for a job and marrying are the two important life events. When a human being reaches maturity, it is crucial to find a job and marry in order to be recognized by society as a full human being (*Ja: ichi nin mae*). Yamada states that while the importance of these two events has not changed, what *has* changed is the necessity of activities designed specifically to help achieve these goals. His argument is as follows: During pre-modern Japanese society (until the Edo period), people did not have the option of choosing their occupation. Instead, people were supposed to inherit their family occupations. In a similar manner, people did not have the option of choosing thier marriage partner. Parents chose their son's or daughter's spouses based upon the status of the father. In short, there were neither the need nor space for any specific activities concerning these two events. Consequently, people overlooked these activities without consciously thinking about them (2008, 12-13).

Yamada continues that in modern society, the freedom has emerged for individuals to choose both their occupations and their marriage partners. Until recently, however, there were still various restrictions in Japanese society. For example, when students graduated from college, their schools or alumni networks helped them find jobs. Within certain networks, students who sought a job during a certain period were almost guaranteed to find a job without much effort. However, when Japan's boom years collapsed in the 1990s, various areas were liberalized, including job-hunting. Since the 1980s, finding a job has become difficult, in part due to the termination of the recruitment agreement for college students (1996), the launch of the Equal Employment Opportunity

Law (1985, 1999) and the decrease in job opportunities. Accordingly, "*shukatsu*" (job-hunting; *shushoku* means "job" and *katudou* means "activity") became a necessary activity to find a job (or land a better job). He argues that liberalization also created inequalities between those who could find a good job and those who could not. Some students might get better jobs, while others might only receive non-traditional positions, such as jobs with part-time hours, and others might not even find any jobs at all.

Yamada uses this model of social transformation as an analogy for the evolution of marriage in Japan. Until the 1980s, it was common to find a marriage partner with support from one's workplace or community. For instance, it was not uncommon for male and female employees holding jobs at the same workplace (albeit with different statuses) to marry, or a brother to introduce his sister to a friend. Thus, encounters between males and females during this period were automatically set up through social connections. According to Yamada, before the 1980s this marriage market was a restricted market rather than a completely free one (2008, 44). However, with the emphasis on economic liberalism in the 1980s, opportunities for social encounters were also liberated, producing unequal chances for meeting the opposite sex. Dating and sexual relationships in premodern society were automatically linked with marriage; however, in modern society, they do not necessarily direct people toward marriage. Moreover, people's values and lifestyles, particularly those regarding the division of labor based on gender, have diversified and now create more obstacles to marriage. In short, because there are more options and freedom--not only when it comes to finding a job but also concerning finding a marriage partner--it has become more difficult to marry someone via customary practices. As a result, finding someone to marry now requires activities (*Ja: katsudou*) involving more personal effort. It is the inequalities created by these liberalizing trends which reward personal ability and effort that have both made it difficult for some to find jobs and also prevented some from finding marriage partners. According to Yamada, this is the cause of the modern "marriage crisis."

Yamada's co-author, Shirakawa, also emphasizes in the same book the urgency of this marriage crisis. She describes the Japanese as a racial group that is not good at romance or love: "Indeed, Japanese used to be poor at romance/love. Without realizing the fact, the love (*Ja: renai*) market was opened up, and the current situation is the outcome of this" (2008, 42). According to her, one reason that getting married is more difficult today is the contradiction that has emerged due to the fact that people think they need romance and love in order to marry, but they are not good at these things. Later in the book, Shirakawa also introduces one form of marriage activity—using matchmaking services. She states that matchmaking services serve as a replacement for traditional *omiai* (arranged marriages) and educates readers on how to choose the best matchmaking agency and utilize their services wisely (2008, 113-126). Shirakawa also briefly discusses international matchmaking services. According to her, international matchmaking agencies require expensive fees and have unclear procedures, often generating complaints from their customers (2008, 127). Thus, she warns readers to examine the workings of any agency well before using its services.

Interestingly, Yamada and Shirakawa often frame marriage in a commercial fashion, using terms such as "marriage market" (*Ja: kekkon shijyo*) "individuals' market values," or "marriage services." Nonetheless, they do not describe *konkatsu* in terms of the commercialization of marriage, the commodification of persons, or the monetization of services providing opportunities for meeting the opposite sex. These authors take the "marriage market" as a natural outcome of a social transformation. Rather than focusing on the commercial aspects of the marriage market, their discussions mainly emphasize the linkage between *konkatsu* and low birth rates and the aging population in modern society. They describe demise of noncommercial intermediaries in communities, a remarkable increase in liberalized opportunities for meeting the opposite sex, and changing gender roles and expectations as contributing to the current marriage crisis. Yamada and Shirakawa leave the commercial aspects—in particular, commercialization and commodification of intimate relationships—out of their discussion altogether. All the same, the concept of *konkatsu* inspired strategies not only for local communities, and the government, but also had very commercial effects.[39]

Making Marriageable Persons: Marriage as Personal Ability

The catchphrase, *konkatsu,* subsequently became quite popular in the media and spawned a cottage industry of commercial spinoffs. In addition to the publication of numerous manuals on how to find a marriage partner, "culture schools" offered *konkatsu* lessons, and department stores sold *konkatsu* gift packages that included the appropriate set of clothing for finding a mate. Several trendy dramas about *konkatsu* also made their appearance on primetime television. Domestic marriage agencies also employed this term to recruit new customers. Yamada (2010) later noted that *konkatsu* developed its own popular meanings and was used by people who did not understand or even care about its original meaning.

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[39] In their second book titled *konkatsu*, *Sociology of Konkatsu Phenomenon* (2010), Yamada and Shirakawa collected essays written by academic scholars. The book argued that many people misunderstood what *konkatsu* originally meant. Yamada pointed out that the authors intended to illustrate the gap between governmental policies regarding the declining birthrate and the current situations of single persons. The government's policies tried to promote childbirth for married couples, yet they did not take the decreasing marriage rate itself into consideration. They aimed to point out that the cause for the declining birthrate is the increase of unmarried persons, and conscious activities are inevitable for those persons to want to marry today (2010, 18-19).

One example of a *konkatsu* manual is the 2009 book, "*The Person We Want to Meet Again" (Ja: mata aitaku naru hito)*, which quickly became a bestseller. The author, an instructor named Ohashi Kiyoharu, had established a bridegroom school in 2004. Ohashi claimed to be a marriage consultant and had been active in the national media. Although he originally offered lessons on finding a marriage partner to single men, at the time I was in Japan he had recently began allowing single women in on these programs. Ohashi states that the people best able to find marriage partners are individuals who see themselves as commodities *(Ja*: *shohin*) and can analyze, target, and manage their most appealing counterparts to reach their main objective, namely marriage (2009, 25). According to Ohashi, economic power, such as income, represents one of the important "human abilities" (2009,18). If a woman wishes to seek a man with high economic ability, Ohashi claims that she has to have equally attractive points in order to provide an acceptable match for him. Ohashi uses the English term "stage" (*Ja: sutēji*) to describe the hierarchical value of an individual on the marriage market. Which stage (e.g. A, B, C…) an individual occupies is determined by the combination of their appearance, education, income, family background, culture, economic values, thought processes, communication skills, flexibility, kindness, and consideration—in short the assignment of an individual to a stage constitutes the "total evaluation of [their] human ability" (2009, 61). The higher the stage an individual occupies (A being the highest), the more popular they are with the opposite sex. He also claims that those who cannot find a marriage partner tend to evaluate themselves too highly—without any effort to elevate which stage they actually are—and seek partners whose occupy higher stages than their own (2009, 62). Although many people want to marry a person whose stage is comparatively higher, he states, it's most ideal for people at the same stage to marry.

Most sections in his book start with questions or worries from people who attended Onashi's lessons, which he then uses as a device to introduce his answers. Ohashi tells us that one of the easiest strategies to elevate oneself to a higher stage is to polish one's appearance. In responding to a comment claiming that what is on the inside is more important than outward appearance, Ohashi writes, "one's appearance is a mirror reflecting your interiority." He suggests we need to think of ourselves as commodities and work specifically on improving the qualities of that commodity (67). Subsequently, Ohashi suggests six basic points (70-71): 1) become conscious of your attire and wear what flatters you, 2) do not be too fat or too skinny (manage your fitness), 3) know your most suitable hairstyle, 4) have good posture, 5) smile, and 6) be hygienic (avoid body odor and bad breath). Ohashi further recommends that to be more conscious about attire, one should avoid old, cheap, or unfashionable clothes. Pictures in the book show samples of good and bad attire.

Konkatsu Seminar

In spring of 2009, I attended a three-lesson seminar in Tokyo offered by Ohashi. This seminar was targeted at single men and women interested in *konkatsu*. I informed Ohashi that I was a student researching *konkatsu*, and took part along with other attendees who were actually involved in actively seeking marriage partners. The seminar lasted for three months, from April to June. We went to class once a month in the evening, and between these classes, Ohashi urged the attendees to practice what we learned in class. During the seminars, Ohashi generally lectured. Intermittently he also led interactive activities involving the attendees. There were around 40 students, 20 men and 20 women. I was unable to gather their demographic information, but many of them looked as if they were somewhere in their late thirties to early forties. Ohashi's lessons were primarily based on his own book, but he also included more straightforward advice in the seminar.

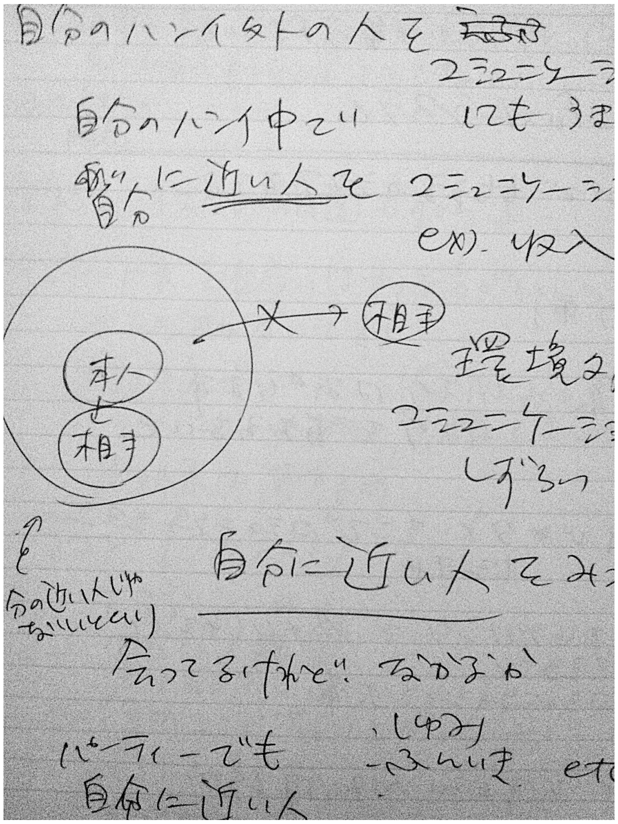
In the first seminar, Ohashi started by stressing the importance and necessity of *konkatsu*. He mentioned that although meeting a marriage partner in a natural way was best, when we pass the age of 30, natural encounters (*Ja: shizen na deai*) tend to disappear. Consequently, we have to make our own opportunities for encounters by conducting *konkatsu*. Moreover, Ohashi told us that we needed to use every minute of the day for *konkatsu*. If we were not dating anyone presently, we needed to go out with someone immediately. This is because going out with someone was like training, and we had to improve our skills. Then he told us that if we do not have opportunities to meet the opposite sex, we need to "buy" opportunities with any means. While Ohashi was giving lectures, the attendees quietly listened and some took notes.

During the seminars, Ohashi explained that we need to find someone close (*Ja: chikai hito*). Sometimes he used the term, "someone in the same league (*Ja: toushindai*)" to describe who a suitable partner should be. He drew one spot on a white board, indicating the self (*Ja*: *honnin*). Then, he drew a circle around the spot. He said, "Find someone close to you, someone within your territory." Then, he drew another spot a little farther from the first. He said, "If you want to marry someone far from you, it would be difficult to communicate." Although Ohashi did not exactly define what "close" meant, he briefly mentioned that someone close might be someone who shared a similar family background or hobbies, or was equivalent in appearance and "aura" (*Ja: funiki*) (figure 2).

During the second seminar, Ohashi focused on the first impressions that we give to others and communication skills. Drawing on his book, he told us that first impressions could be improved by polishing one's appearance. Communication skills, we were told, could also be enhanced by repeated practice. In particular, he suggested that it is important to improve one's skills in appropriate reactions and facial expressions, and in being able to converse on a variety of topics.

In these seminars as well as in books on *konkatsu*, I repeatedly came across a particular discourse. First and foremost, it framed individuals as commodities with certain values in the marriage market. Consequently, to improve one's value in the marriage market, an individual could draw upon the assessments and advice of marriage instructors or advisors to polish themselves. Any skills taught by these advisors needed to be practiced repeatedly. In order to find a "suitable" marriage partner, one had to evaluate one's own position within the marriage market based not only on income, but also on appearance, personality, communication skills, and so on. If one overestimated one's own value, it would be difficult to find a partner, and thus, it was important to evaluate oneself in order to find an appropriate partner.

During the last seminar, Ohashi instructed attendees to apply what we had learned and engage in practice talks. We were directed to talk to three members of the opposite



自分のハンイ外の人を
コミュニケーシ

自分のハンイ中でり　にても うま

自分に近い人を コミュニケーシ
ex). 収入

環境な
コミュニケーシ
しずらい

分の近い人じゃ
ないといい)

自分に近い人をみつ

会ってるけれど!! なかなか

パーティーでも
自分に近い人

・しゅみ
・ふんいき
etc

FIGURE 2 My field notes from the Konkatsu seminar

sex for five minutes each (a total 10 minutes for one practice) and to write evaluations of each other. During those five minutes, we needed to introduce ourselves and tell the other partner anything about ourselves that would make a good impression—in other words, to construct ourselves as a desirable marriage partner. Surprisingly, three of my practice partners were very fluent during the introductions and provided interesting narratives about their hobbies within the limited amount of time. For example, one practice partner explained that he has conducted konkatsu in many contexts before he began his introduction. Recently, he walked to his office in the morning rather than take a train. He told me that walking is both good for a person's health and it is also cost-effective. However, he concluded that the reason he enjoyed walking to work was because he could stop by the coffee shop and enjoy breakfast before arriving at his office. So, the calories he lost and the money he saved by walking were balanced in the end. We both laughed.

Conversely, my practice talks were terrible because I had not prepared beforehand; I did not know what to say about my hobbies, my life, or myself. I fear that talking about my academic life might bore them or make them feel that I was too arrogant or too educated as a woman. Sharing stories about traveling around the United States, Japan, and China might have made them feel I was too different. Even if it was only a practice session, introducing myself in class and introducing myself as a potential marriage partner were two different things. Because many different topics came to mind, such as the books I recently read, studying Chinese, or liking spicy food, my talk was not focused. After the practice talks, I received three evaluation forms. Two evaluations politely suggested that while my eye contact and reactions gave a good impression, I should also explain more about myself and what I do. One evaluation was harsher; my partner wrote that my introduction was not clear enough, and I also needed to give more details about my hobbies because my explanation was too abstract and ambiguous. He also wrote that occasionally I was at a loss for words. After these practice sessions I was exhausted and felt that *konkatsu* really requires repeated practice.

Marrying a Non-Japanese Person: Outside of the Marriage Market?

Not surprisingly, marrying a non-Japanese person was not recommended or even mentioned in these *konkatsu* books or seminars. While commercial matchmaking services have been advertized quite prominently in Japan since the mid-2000s, there seems to be an implicit separation between domestic and nondomestic marriage markets. Apparently, unlike South Korea, domestic marriage brokers and state policy do not consider transnational marriages to be a solution, or at least not the ideal solution for Japan today (cf. Timothy Lim 2010). In interviews with domestic marriage brokers, the conversations did not go into the topic of transnational marriages unless I initiated that line of discussion. Domestic marriage brokers also had certain presumptions about those who utilize the services of transnational marriage agencies, who they understood to be farmers or fishers in the countryside.

One female marriage broker who had connections with China Bride said she did not—and would not be willing to—mention transnational marriages at all on her company's website. Even if she sent a number of male customers who had experienced difficulties in finding a Japanese bride to China Bride, those referrals were conducted unofficially. Recommending non-Japanese Asian women for Japanese men could also be considered offensive. Some men who came to China Bride confessed that when domestic marriage brokers first suggested marriage with Chinese women, they felt offended and did not want to accept the broker's advice. One man said, "I did not want to compromise that much (*Ja: soko made wa dakyou shitaku nai*)."

Thus, marrying a non-Japanese woman was often seen as a compromise, an undesired option chosen when one gave up on finding a Japanese bride. Therefore, those who visited transnational marriage agencies were seen as being excluded from the domestic marriage market. When marriage becomes a means to regulate and normalize people, this mechanism also works to exclude those who do not fit the so-called category of normal. John Borneman (1996) provides a critical insight into marriages that operate as exclusionary apparatus. According to Borneman, "marriage today is one of the few positive rights that has attained nearly universal consensus" (1996, 216) regarding recognition and protection in both the legal and social realms. Thus, marriage is claimed as a universal human right like life, liberty, and happiness (1996, 216). Borneman further states, “because of this world ideology, the connections of marriage to the assertion of privilege, to closure, death, abjection, and exclusion are rarely seen and therefore rarely examined” (1996, 216). He argues for a critical examination of how marriages operate through “exclusionary means” (1996, 217).

Expanding on Borneman’s (1996) argument, Matthew Kohrman (2000) examines the ways in which exclusionary marriage practices contribute to constituting marginal categories such as “the disabled” in China (2000, 892). According to Kohrman, bodily imperfections are frequently associated with “social imperfection,” especially for men in China (2000, 892). Thus, one of Kohrman’s male informants who had difficulty walking due to childhood polio had a hard time finding a marriage partner. However, Kohrman shows, disabled men did not originally identify themselves as disabled. It is through exclusionary marriage processes, such as those that determine who can or cannot marry and whom people can or cannot marry, that the “disabled” category shapes these men’s identities.

Drawing upon the arguments made by Borneman (1996) and Kohrman (2000), I contend that unmarriageable persons are created and excluded from a certain marriage market as well as from the healthy population. Anthropological studies of marriage have critically discussed the issue of marriage in terms of gays, lesbians, HIP-positive individuals, or disabled people. However, few studies have examined heterosexuals, able-bodied people, and healthy individuals who are somehow seen as unmarriageable due to dominant social and cultural norms in particular national contexts. These individuals are viewed as having missed a chance to marry, facing various obstacles or problems, or simply being socially inept. Many marriage brokers I met with admitted that transnational marriage agencies were frequented by so-called unmarriageable (*Ja: kekkonn dekinai*) men. According to the brokers, those who were excluded from the domestic marriage market, yet still wished to marry, would come to transnational marriage agencies. Thus, the act of coming to a transnational marriage agency already presupposed a certain stigmatized condition and social position.

“Asian Brides” and “Unmarriageable Men”

In order to understand the notion of stigma attached to those who decide to engage in cross-border marriages, it is important to examine the historical, cultural, and social production of “unmarriageable” persons. The stigmatized image of marrying a non-Japanese Asian woman is also created by a particular history of “Asian” brides in Japan. I argue that the stereotypical images of “unmarriageable men” and “Asian brides” are mutually constructed. “Asian brides” (more precisely non-Japanese Asian brides) were originally introduced in rural Japan as a solution for bride shortages. Japanese men’s difficulty to find a partner was not initially seen as due to their personal qualities. However, images of undesired locations and the men themselves as undesirable came to overlap, and brides from so-called developing countries were seen as willing to marry such men regardless of the latter’s unfavorable traits.

More specifically, “importing” brides from other Asian countries originally emerged as a phenomenon in the Japanese countryside. Starting in the mid-1980s, group matchmaking tours were administrated by local governments and by private commercial institutions for rural men. In particular, Asahi village in Yamagata prefecture in northeast Japan was one of the pioneer locations where the local government organized matchmaking services to pair local Japanese men with women from the Philippines (Syukuya 1988; Kuwayama 1995). Asahi village was a typical example of a location where a shortage of brides was seen as a serious issue. This "shortage" was due to an imbalanced sex ratio, caused in part by women's changing values and internal migration to cities on the one hand, and the persistence of a conservative system of household and familial obligations on the other. So while young women (as well as second and third sons) chose to move to the cities, the oldest sons were expected to remain behind in the village with their parents.

Since the early 1980s, concerns grew about the shortage of brides in Asahi, and this was came to be linked to survival of the village. In this context, the local government tried many different strategies to find women who were willing to marry local men, including finding Japanese women from other parts of Japan. In 1985, after many failed attempts to recruit Japanese women, the local government sent a group of Japanese men to the Philippines with the support of a private brokerage company. The matchmaking tour lasted one week. During the tour, each Japanese man met three to five Filipino women. Thus, even if some women turned the man down, he had almost a 100% chance of finding a bride (Shukuya 1988, 47). The Japanese men returned to the Philippines a month later for their marriage. The two trips to the Philippines, wedding ceremony included, cost 3,000,000 yen. All the money was given to the private brokerage company, not to the local government. After the first trip in 1985, nine couples were brokered within a year. By 1995, there were 1,006 foreign brides in the Yamagata prefecture

(Kuwayama 1995, 13). The strategy adopted by Asahi village attracted the attention of other areas that had similar bride shortage issues. Consequently, in the mid-1980s, several other local governments also started organizing group matchmaking tours to the Philippines. As Kuwayama explains, the sending countries have changed over time. In the mid-1980s, the major sending country was the Philippines. In the early 1990s, brides from South Korea became the majority, but due to Korea's economic development, since 1992, brides from China have now become the majority (Kuwayama 1995, 16).

However, as Kuwayama explains, brokerage work in the countryside was not simply viewed as a "business," but rather as the "voluntary" action of local brokers and local government in support of the rural population (17). Those who acted as local brokers were usually those who were trusted in the community often elderly people. These were the same individuals who also used to act as go-betweens to match suitable partners within the village. Although there were criticisms of these matchmaking arrangements, with even locals making comparisons to human trafficking, the brokerage business started not simply as a commercial enterprise, but also as an expression of "goodwill" (*Ja: zeni*) on the part of local government and respected individuals to help rural men find brides and ultimately support the local community by engaging in its reproduction (Kuwayama 1995, 17; Higurashi 1989, 236).

Regardless of whether or not "goodwill" was involved, in Japan these matchmaking tours were often criticized and mocked by the national (and more urban-based) media, which characterized not only as "mail order brides" (Shukuya 1988), but as involving "instant marriage tours" (Yomiuri 2010.3.23), "bride hunting tours" (Shukan Bunshu 2006.03.02), and "buying brides under the name of matchmaking" (Shukan Post

2006. 3.10). Nakamatsu (2005) observes that public discourses concerning Asian brides often centered on women's poverty, rural origins, and the backwardness of the sending countries, and thus on their status as economic victims. On the other hand, Japanese men from rural areas were also portrayed in media as engaging in backward and even irrational marital practices and feudalistic customs (2005, 411). Accordingly, even if marriages with Chinese women today were not necessarily contracted in rural Japan, as I witnessed in Tokyo, such stereotypical images of "Asian brides" and "unmarriageable men in rural Japan" were mutually constitutive and each evoked the image of each other.

Negotiating Unmarriageability, Reshaping Personhood

Therefore, "unmarriageability" is not an innate essence or quality that certain people have, but rather I argue, the stigmatized notion of unmarriageable persons is relationally created, negotiated, and contested in wider fields of power. Anthropological literature on personhood and stigma are useful in showing how a certain category and type of person is shaped by interactions that are embedded within social and cultural norms. Yet, socially created persons can also act on reshaping their personhood. Of course, the negotiation might fail if other actors do not participate or respond.

I met one client, Kato, described earlier, a number of times at China Bride during my fieldwork. I asked him how he found China Bride. Kato said that he found it through the Internet. He confessed that it was really terrifying to enter the agency for the first time. He had never been to any other transnational marriage agency. Kato stressed that it was quite frightening not only because he had to provide his personal information to the agency, but also because some of these kinds of agencies might be involved in the illegal trafficking of women. He viewed a number of transnational marriage agencies' websites and thought that China Bride appeared to be the best one. Some agencies advertised that "you can marry within three days!" but statements like this made him even more apprehensive, so he avoided those agencies altogether. Although there was another agency he contacted and felt comfortable with, that agency only provided services for matchmaking tours to China, while China Bride additionally offered matchmaking parties and meetings with Chinese women in Japan.

I asked Kato if he was specifically looking for a Chinese woman in Japan (*Ja: zainichi*) or would he be willing to go to China if he found someone nice. He said that he might go to China, but since he thinks it is important to see the person a number of times in order to know her personality (*Ja: ningensei*), it would be more realistic to find a Chinese woman in Japan. He again stressed that he thinks he also would be suitable for Japanese women and thus did not care at all about nationality. He said he might go to China during the coming Golden Week holiday (a set of national holidays during the first week of May), and added that if he went, he was planning to stay there for ten days or so in order to really get to know the women he would meet.

Kato started to flip through the profile books and said, "It gives me a really awkward feeling (*Ja: iwakan*). It is as if I am flipping through a catalog. It's really awkward." I asked him what kind of woman he was looking for. He immediately responded to my question, replying, "I don't know." After a little pause, he continued, "I do not know anything…but I really like talking, so her language ability would be important. However, I don't know how much of her personality I will be able to discover by merely talking with her. Therefore, I need to meet with her a number of times before I make a decision to marry her."

I told Kato that I had been to Dongyang two years ago and had observed five matchmaking meetings there. He was surprised to learn that I had been working on this research topic for quite awhile. He, while laughing, asked me if those Japanese men looked like him, pointing to himself and his clothes (a corduroy brown jacket, a black pair of pants, and a shiny grey scarf, which I thought looked pretty stylish). I said that there were a number of men and they all looked different. There were younger men as well as older men, so it was a little difficult to generalize. He interpreted me as being polite and tried to change the topic.

Our conversation was sporadic, and again Kato started to look through the profile books. Then, Kato confessed that his mother (his father had already passed away) completely disagreed with the idea that he should marry a Chinese woman. He told his mother that he visited this agency the other day and she said to Kato, "Are you crazy?" Kato was a second son, but he had a better relationship with his mother than with his elder brother. Therefore, Kato was supposed to inherit his mother's small company. However, he thought she would come around if they really sat down and discussed it. Over the next several weeks, Kato met numerous Chinese women who resided in Japan. Because he was allowed to go out with several women simultaneously, Kato had been meeting with two women at the same time. However, he could not make a decision on marriage. I frequently visited China Bride and was always there when Kato came by (usually on weekends). After meeting Kato several times and having dinner together along with the broker and other male clientele a couple of times, Kato told me that there was one thing he could not give up: He was looking for a pure woman, meaning a virgin.

After having the Internet *omiai* with several Chinese women, Kato finally decided to visit China during Golden Week. He was planning to spend 10 days, as he had said earlier.

I met Kato at China Bride right after he came back from China. Kato explained how his trip went. Kato first visited Dalian, where one of the China Bride staff members helped him meet several women. However, he was not satisfied with any of them. He then visited Dongyang, where China Bride had a branch office. In Dongyang, with the support of China Bride's local staff members, he met several women. There, he finally found his match. Although he was originally interested in another woman, she seemed not to have any feelings for him. Kato said, "I could have married a prettier woman, but I chosen my wife based on her personality."

To make sure his prospective bride was a virgin, Kato implicitly asked the broker to inquire if the woman had any previous relationships with men. What Kato did not expect was that the broker would ask her this question in front of everyone, including female staff members. This caused an awkward, even uncomfortable, atmosphere. However, Kato later acknowledged that he appreciated the broker doing this, because Kato was able to know that she was indeed a virgin.

The woman, Song Liang, also agreed with Kato's proposal and they became engaged. Yet Kato told me that when he came back to Japan, his mother and brother were completely opposed to his engagement. His friends also were surprised and even agitated by his engagement. They told Kato, "You are not the person who would marry a Chinese woman. You do not have to go for an international marriage. It is not too late, I will introduce you to some Japanese women." Kato told me, "They think that international marriages are for those unmarriageable men." Nonetheless, Kato himself was also unsure in his decision. He was planning to revisit China to register his marriage and hold a wedding ceremony in one month. Yet, during this one month, Kato visited China Bride on the weekends and talked to the staff members about his concerns and worries. Ultimately, Kato married his Chinese bride and held the wedding ceremony as planned. During the next several months, until his bride arrived in Japan in early September, he repeatedly visited China Bride to continue talking with the broker about his worries.

Like Kato, many of the male clientele I met at transnational marriage agencies recognized to some extent the stigmatized image attached to the practices in which they were engaging. Erving Goffman (1963) states that stigma is an undesired difference from what the "normals" anticipated (1963, 5). The normals are those "who do not depart negatively from the particular expectations at issue" (5). Yet importantly, he states, "An attribute that stigmatizes one type of possessor can confirm the usualness of another, and therefore is neither creditable nor discreditable as a thing in itself" (3). If individuals are expected to marry at a certain age with a certain person, those who come to the transnational marriage agencies failed in two areas—not marrying at a certain age and not marrying a Japanese person.

However, as Goffman points out, stigmatized individuals can also control information about stigmatized attributes. Goffman provides two perspectives on stigma. The first is that the stigmatized individuals assume their differences are known or evident, such as a physical disability. The second is that their differences are not known or not immediately perceivable. Goffman refers to the first case as "the discredited" and the second as "the discreditable" (1963, 4). For the discredited, one possibility is the cooperation of such individuals with normals by acting as if their differences were irrelevant. On the other hand, the discreditable may manage information about their stigmas. For example, stigmatized individuals can manage whether to display or not to display, to tell or not to tell, and to whom, how, when, and where they disclose their differences (1959, 42).

Importantly, such negotiation is not a one-way communication, but often embedded within dynamic relations. Here, after briefly outlining the anthropological literature on personhood, I will further discuss how the stigmatized notion of unmarriageable persons is relationally constructed. Concerning personhood, Marcel Mauss theorized the concept of our selves and our persons as artifacts of a long and varied social history (1985[1938], 3). According to Mauss, this social history starts with the notion of "personnage" (the ceremonial mask, title, rank, and role of an individual in a particular clan) to "personne" (institutionalized basic fact of law with certain privileges), and to "persona" (the right to full citizenship and legal personhood with civil rights and duties).[40] Importantly, these categories did not include all members of society. Certain individuals were excluded due to age, gender, of other conditions. For instance, the rights of a "persona" are not bestowed upon the slave. The slave was viewed as owning the body but not possessing a name, personality, or any belongings. Although Mauss arguments have garnered many criticisms (N. J Allen 1985, 27, La Fontaine 1985,

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[40] The next important development in the concept of the person pertains to Christianity. As compared to the notion of personae or persona which lacked any metaphysical foundation, Christians created a metaphysical entity of the 'moral person (personne morale)." Thus according to Mauss, "our own notion of the human person is still basically the Christian one" (19). This moral person (personne) is a "rational substance, indivisible and individual" (20). The notion of "person" (personne) underwent further transformation, becoming the category of "self" (moi), which Mauss claims to be our current conception of the self. This concept of self is identified with self-knowledge and the psychological consciousness.

123, Carsten 2004, 86), Mauss' lecture played a significant role in challenging and destabilizing the seemingly natural concepts of the person and self, embedding them in the context of social history instead of regarding them as an innate essence.[41] Subsequent scholars have sought to examine how various forms of understanding, including personhood, are "culturally variable rather than being a part of some panhuman evolutionary sequence" (Marcus and Fischer 1986:46; Lienhardt 1985; La Fontaine 1985; Fajans 1985; Geertz 1973).[42]

If what it means to be a person culturally varies, what it meant to be a(n) (un)marriageable person also varies. Importantly, the scholars who argue for the cultural creation of personhood further demonstrate that the notion of the person is relationally created (Rosaldo 1984; Kondo 1990; Lutz 1985; Myers 1979; Carsten 2003). For instance, drawing upon Goffman's interaction order (1983),[43] Spencer E. Cahill claims that the person is constituted by relying on others, what he calls "person production." Publicly visible persons are collaborative manufactures such that the concept of person, more precisely "person production," reveals how "those who labor in the interactional production of persons are equipped with systems of social classification and identification" (Cahill 1998, 136). Moreover, if the production of the person is relational, one can negotiate one's personhood within competing norms, discourses, and ideologies. Yet, importantly, interactional person production is not always equally produced by two counterparts (Cahill1998, 138-9; also Bacigalupo 2004; Desjarlais 1997; Abelmann 1997). Therefore, without of cooperation of others to some extent, personhood is disqualified and the image of a complete person is discredited (1988,140).

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[41] For instance, as Allen argues, social history is rooted in an evolutionary view of development (Allen 1985:27, La Fontaine 1985:123, Carsten 2004:86). Allen points out that although Mauss clearly allows that the history of particular societies does not necessarily follow a unilateral, steadily evolutionary schema, it is nevertheless also evident from Mauss' arguments that for Mauss, modern societies have a concept of self while many tribal "primitive" societies have less developed notions of the person that will eventually evolve (Allen 1985:29).

[42] For example, Clifford Geertz's influential essay (1973) illustrates an important move toward cultural definition and conceptualization of the person, in particular one which is derived from grounded ethnographic materials. Geertz demonstrates that the Balinese notion of personhood is different from the European notion of personhood. According to Geertz, in order to identify a human being as a unique individual, Balinese ideas of personhood have six types of labels used in defining a person; personal names, birth order names, kinship terms, teknonyms, status titles, and public title (Geertz 1973: 368). Hence, Balinese act as if persons were impersonal sets of roles while all individual and emotional volatility are systematically repressed. According to Geertz, The Balinese in his study try to achieve a choreographed smoothness in interpersonal relations (Geertz 1973: 390, Marcus and Fischer 47).

[43] Goffman argues that the individual is divided into two parts: a performer and a character (1959:252). Goffman explains that in general the character one performed is equated with the self and seen as housed in the body and thereby the "self" is imputed to the individual. However, on the contrary, Goffman argues that the self itself does not derive from its possessor (252). He states, "A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed

Being an unmarriageable man and engaging in cross-border matchmaking practices are usually invisible forms of stigma. In public interactions with anonymous others, participants do not have to reveal their marital status and do not have to show their involvement with cross-border matchmaking practices. Even if these men are in public with their Chinese wives (as opposed to wives with other nationalities), their Chinese wives might be able to pass as Japanese (more on this in Chapter 3). The people they usually have to negotiate with are their family members, friends, and others who already know about their involvement. In particular, I found the matchmaking processes a crucial site where members negotiate stigma and personhood. Although there was no means to control information about their ages, male clients were still able to manage other pieces of information. Goffman discusses the informing character of the "*with*"

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character, but this imputation—this self—is a product of a scene that comes off, and its not a cause of it" (252). Accordingly the self as a performed character is not embodied by performance, but rather performance (collaborative performance) creates the self. Thus, depending on the failure of performance and interaction order, the self maybe discredited.

relationship as one of stigmatized social information: “In certain circumstances, the social identity of those an individual is with can be used as a source of information concerning his own social identity, the assumption being that he is what the others are” (47). It is important to note that this concept of being *with* someone particularly matters in social occasions, and thus, it is more precise to refer to being seen with particular others.

In contrast, an issue these men could narrate by themselves was whether they came to transnational marriage agencies because they could not find a Japanese bride, or whether they could have found a Japanese bride but voluntarily chose a Chinese bride. As Goffman shows, stigma management pertains mainly to public life; hence, male customers’ social narratives of themselves played an important role, one in evidence when they talked to brokers and myself.

In order to negotiate and negate certain stigma, Kato had to make associated stigma visible in order to differentiate himself from them. In other words, in order to destigmatize himself, he still had to stigmatize others who came to the same agency for the same purpose. Even prior to the interaction with others, such stigmatized notions were internalized among many Japanese men, such that only way to destigmatize themselves was to further make presupposed stigma visible and differentiate themselves from it (cf. Hankin 2009).

Interaction with others might not always take place face-to-face contexts. Another man from *First Love*, Uehara, tried to manage the information about his engagement during a matchmaking tour in a different way. During the last phase of a wedding tour, the broker Kimura explained to Uehara the visa application process and the necessary documents that Japanese men must complete. Ueraha, who just married a day before, wanted to talk to Kimura about his approach. Uehara told Kimura that he used to work in a part-time job for the immigration bureau in Tokyo and thought that he might still know several people there. He did not want those people to know that he found a bride via a matchmaking tour. Instead, Uehara wanted to prove that he met his wife through his friend's introduction in Harbin. Since consistency is one of the most important factors in applying for a spousal visa, Kimura warned Uehara that once he determined his story, he needed to repeat the same narrative in all documents under any conditions. His wife also needed to provide the same story when she applied in China.

Kato and Uehara, while realizing the stigma imposed on their practices and themselves, also tried to negotiate their positions. The negotiation was not solely with individuals, but also with social norms and ideologies. While Kato attempted to separate himself from the so-called "typical men" who come to transnational marriage agencies by stressing his voluntary participation, Uehara tried to deny his participation in a matchmaking tour. By doing so, he was further stigmatizing the practice of participating in a matchmaking tour. Kato was able to manage his stigma in the context of China Bride to some extent. The staff members also backed up his claim by saying "You could have found a Japanese wife couldn't you?" Yet, Kato's attempt seemed to fail with his family members and friends, who claimed that whether it was voluntary or involuntary, seeking a bride at a transnational marriage agency was something an "unmarriageable person" would do. Uehara, on the other hand, sought normality by negotiating the stigmatized relationship with which he engaged not only in front of government officials but also the many people he would encounter in the future. Uehara also claimed that he was not the one I should interview and politely asked me not to contact him regarding my research in the future. When I met Kimura four months later, he told me that Uehara's wife arrived in Japan the other day. Apparently, their application was approved.

As I learned by meeting with Japanese men at transnational marriage agencies, domestic and transnational matchmaking services were not separated in practice; many men who previously visited domestic marriage services came to transnational marriage agencies as an alternative or compromise. Nevertheless, transnational matchmaking practices were seen as existing "outside" of standard matchmaking practices and a certain stigmatized personhood was attached to the participants. Transnational practices were seen as suspicious and were often criticized for the commercialization of marriage and the commodification of brides. These criticisms were based on the obvious economic inequalities between Japanese men and women from other Asian countries and the ways in which marriage brokers treated women. However, this did not mean that domestic matchmaking services were free from charges of commercialization and commodification. As I illustrated, domestic marriage matchmaking was often described in commercial terms. However, domestic matchmaking services, particularly those under the name of *konkatsu*, were considered one of the main means of finding a marriage partner, thus resolving the low birth rate and aging society in Japan. Cross-border marriages were not (at least not yet) seen as a solution for the declining birth rate in Japanese society. Conversely, cross-border marriages were seen as being for people who were "excluded" from the domestic marriage market and thus occupied a position outside of the marriage market.

The Paradox of “Unmarriageable Men”

This chapter demonstrated how the notion of unmarriageable persons is shaped, negotiated, and contested within the social norms of marriage. Marriage played an important role in shaping personhood. Instead of assuming that the notion of “disadvantages” suggests traits that fully explain men’s reasons for remaining unmarried, this chapter sought to analyze the ways in which marriage also works to create a certain personhood. By doing this, I showed that the marriage market was not a neutral realm; it produced the “outside” by marginalizing those who did not proceed along a so-called normal path to marriage. Moreover, as marriage was still maintained as a normal path of the life cycle, it also had come to be seen as a form of personal ability. Unmarried persons should transform themselves into heterosexual marriageable bodies and marriageable persons. The practices involved in making marriageable persons were not limited to those who attended *konkatsu* seminars. Those who somehow failed at this process or delayed in process might end up being considered an “unmarriageable person.” Certain subject positions, namely unmarriageable persons, were produced through the norms of the so-called “marriage market” and marriage in general. Engaging in brokered cross-border marriages was seen as a form of giving up on a normal marriage, which was a national endogamous marriage.

Paradoxically, by seeking out marriage with Chinese women these individuals became unmarriageable. Brokered cross-border marriages were thought to be ones in which those so-called unmarriageable men would engage. In other words, by marrying a Chinese bride, they became “unmarriageable” men. This also shows that not all marriages were equally perceived in society. Moreover, marriage did not guarantee marriageability.

Marriageability was not simply one's ability to marry, but rather the ability to find a suitable Japanese bride. Thus, paradoxically, marrying a Chinese bride did not restore one's marriageability, but rather reconfirmed one's unmarriageability. The second half of this chapter also demonstrated that how the stigmatized person was relationally—yet also asymmetrically—created. Participants also sought to negotiate their own appearance marriageability within the context of matchmaking processes. It was a site where one could negotiate the idea of the stigmatized person with the others, although always within the limits of social and cultural norms. The attempts to destigmatize their practices might fail if others did not cooperate. Here, they engaged in another paradoxical practice. In order to destigmatize themselves, they differentiated themselves from the "deviant" nature of cross-border marriages in which "others" engaged.

Chapter 3

Creating “Similar” Others at Transnational Matchmaking Agencies in Japan

In late November in 2009, I attended a set of matchmaking meetings at a café in a hotel lobby in China. I was initially just sitting there to observe the meetings. But then a local staff member expressed to me her concerns about her translation abilities and asked me to assist in making the meetings go smoothly. The client involved was Mr. Yoshio Sakai, who was a public servant in his early forties. He lived in central Japan, in a city. Although he looked quite nervous at the outset of his meetings, with time his facial expression gradually loosened up. After meeting two Chinese women, he seemed to be more relaxed and comfortable talking about himself. He was enrolled in several domestic matchmaking services, yet could not find a bride. He felt that entering his forties made it really difficult. He came to China on a three-day matchmaking tour after mulling over the option of a Chinese bride for more than half a year. After the two meetings, he confessed:

> I really debated whether or not come to China. When a marriage broker first recommended a Chinese bride, I felt so offended. I did not want to compromise that much (*Ja: soko made ha dakyo shitakunai*). Yet, looking at the Chinese women, I realized that they are not that different from Japanese women. I never thought about myself having a Chinese wife, but this kind of dispelled my hard feelings toward marriage with a Chinese woman.

His ambivalence about coming to China to find a bride was not uncommon. When I was visiting the agency in Tokyo, I saw a marriage broker express his sympathy for this. Like Sakai, he said, “No one wants to go to overseas to find a bride initially,” claimed the broker. As a marriage broker, his job was to introduce Chinese women to Japanese men; however, he also repeatedly told me that the best marriage actually should be between co-national partners. He said, “Japanese men actually should marry Japanese women. That is the natural (*Ja: shizen*) thing." He continued, "They all wanted to marry a Japanese woman, but they were rejected, so they had to seek Chinese women as a substitute (*Ja: dairi*)." Mr. Kimura, another Japanese broker, also explained to me that his customers at the marriage agency also did not want to marry a Chinese bride in the beginning, but many of them came around to thinking that it is all right to marry a Chinese woman. He continued, "Chinese women are located on the verge of the boundaries of the tolerable (*Ja: shouganai no kyokaisen*)."

Why could Chinese women "substitute" for Japanese brides? What made participants think that Chinese brides could be like Japanese brides? What kinds of boundaries did they draw or stretch in order to make sense of their marriage with Chinese women? What made certain others marriageable?

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This chapter explores the lived experiences of Japanese men at transnational marriage agencies, and asks how they came to view Chinese women as marriageable. I am especially interested in the ways in which marriage brokers and male clientele at transnational marriage agencies actively worked to reconceptualize these Japanese-Chinese marriages. As I repeatedly witnessed during my fieldwork, while the participants in these marriages realized the stigma attached to the image of Japanese-Chinese marriages, they sought to legitimate their own intimate relationships as ordinary marriages between two "similar" fellows. So while the couples might be constituted by individuals who come from different cultural, economic, and linguistic backgrounds (or be almost totally strangers), male participants in these marriages frequently described their transnational marital relationships as "not that different" from other domestic marriages, as well as other forms of matchmaking in Japan.

In analyzing transnational intimate relations, scholars have critically discussed women's motivations and desires and addressed issues of women's agency as playing an important role in making these relationships (Constable, 2003, 2005; Brennan 2004; Kelsky 2001; Johnson 2006). On the other hand, while men's motives and desires for women have been examined, men's agency has often been understated or taken for granted.[44] This is also because within unequal global flows of people, men are often seen as those, at least partially, who are "in charge" of these flows (Massey 1997). Not only are men not the ones who will need to relocate after marriage, they also can freely cross national borders to visit candidate brides and possess the ability to invite (or not) potential wives to their own country. Women usually have to wait for visits, letters, phone calls, or a proposal (cf. Brennan 2004). Moreover, due to the frequently noticed gender-based age gap (older men and younger women) in transnational intimate relationships, it seems to be rather natural to recognize the source of men's desire for the women; in other words, desires for young pretty women are more legible than young women's desires for old men (the social construction for such legitimate desire is detailed in Chapter 6). Therefore, analyses of women's agency draw more scholarly attention. During my fieldwork, external observers often asked, "Why is she marrying him?" but few asked, "Why is he marrying her?"

In such contexts, the Japanese men's hesitation in engaging in cross-border marriages is worth paying further attention to. Some men visited transnational marriage agencies while simultaneously expressing that they felt as if they were making a compromise. What do their negotiations tell us about the meaning of marriage with Chinese women for them? How did they negotiate the practices of border-crossing? In order to make not so desirable options "acceptable," I argue that their behavior entailed the creation of "marriageable others." In other words, Japanese men engaged in the production of "marriageable communities," whereby they imagined that their potential partner as belonging to a community from which an acceptable mate could be chosen. In this sense, a marriage partner is not only to be selected, but also has to be "made" within and through multiple gender, racial, national, and translocal norms and imaginings. In the course of matchmaking and their subsequent marital lives, male participants attempted to produce this marriageable community, and thus frame their own relationship as an "almost" endogamous marriage. In creating "almost endogamy," I demonstrate how male participants crossed certain borders and boundaries while concealing and reframing others. This worked to constitute these marriages as ordinary pairings between two suitable persons. It also allowed male participants to perceive their own marriages as still within the bounds of the appropriate, as not having transgressed the cultural norms of marriage. Consequently, my analysis reveals the ideologies of race/color, sexuality, gender, and marriage both in Japanese society and in relation to China.

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[44] Men's motivations for transnational intimate relations are discussed by Nobue Suzuki (2005), Thai (2005), and Constable (2003). For instance, Suzuki observes that Japanese men expressed masculine desires to help Filipino women by taking advantage of the huge discrepancies in the Japanese and the Philippine currencies (2005, 143). While these male desires and fantasies are observable, few works have discussed men's struggles to make such decisions. In other words, male desires are seen as more straightforward and less fraught than female desires.

This chapter's analysis primarily centers on the experiences of Japanese male clientele at transnational marriage agencies. Thus, I mainly focus on the negotiations of border crossing in Japan. Although Chinese women also participated in making "ordinary" marriages from time to time, their aim rather was to "cross" borders in order to gain mobility and new lives by marrying out of their communities (as will be detailed in Chapters 4 and 5). The outline of the rest of this chapter is as follows. First, I discuss how the notion of community boundaries is relevant to the norms of marriage, even on a transnational scale. Second, I demonstrate how the negotiated expansion of the boundaries of marriageable communities is manifested through the practices of matchmaking. Third, by analyzing the indistinct boundaries between economic and non-economic exchanges within matchmaking practices, I demonstrate that the active blurring of this distinction works to render commercial transnational matchmaking a form of more conventional matchmaking by a "go-between." Fourth, I look at forms of de-stigmatizing practices by examining participants' negotiations of notions of similarity and difference, such as through portraying their marriages as matches between two similar people. The perception of similarity between Japanese and Chinese people plays a crucial role here in making cross-border marriages ideally endogamous. However, I also address the strategies that seek to deal with undesirable differences in these marriages through stressing the "natural," gender-based relationship difficulties faced by numerous marital couples. Although these practices and discourses all seem very different, this chapter argues that all are parts of how participants attempt to create legitimate marital relationships that approximate the normal, natural, and ordinary. In the process, participants repeatedly relied on and appropriated existing norms, meanings, and ideologies of marriage, matchmaking, and gender within Japanese society.

Rethinking Endogamy on a Transnational Scale

In order to explore how the practices of cross-border matchmaking create marriageable communities, I find the anthropological notions of endogamy and exogamy (Lévi-Strauss 1969) still relevant and useful, although in need of rethinking in a broader and more flexible manner.[45] When Lévi-Strauss explicated the rule of endogamy, he also offered a distinctive concept of "true endogamy."[46] According to Lévi-Strauss, "True endogamy is merely the refusal to recognize the possibility of marriage beyond the limits of the human community" (Lévi-Strauss 1969, 46). Furthermore, he stated that it was about "the expression of a conceptual limit and of a negative reality" (47). Nonetheless, the definition of this community varied and depended upon the philosophy of the group. For example, Lévi-Strauss argued that a number of "primitive" groups of people refer to themselves as men with the essential characteristic of being a man disappearing outside the limits of their group, such that neighboring people may be described as non-complete men and thus not inconceivable as marriageable persons (Lévi-Strauss 1969, 46).[47] In short, true endogamy is associated with a conceptual limit: the ability or inability to regard fellow citizens, other people, or even other creatures as marriageable or unmarriageable.

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[45] By definition, exogamy is defined as "marriage outside a certain category or group" (Stone 2000), and endogamy as marriage within a certain group. Dumont also makes a precise use of the categories of endogamy and exogamy (Dumont 1983, 39). He stated that the range of permissible marriage is determined by an outer limit (the unit of endogamy) and an inner limit (the unit of exogamy) (Dumont 1983, 39).

[46] According to Lévi-Strauss there are two different types of endogamy, one is that "merely reserve of a role of exogamy and is explicable only in terms of this rule; the other—of true endogamy—is not an aspect of exogamy but is always found along with the latter, although not in the same regard, but simply in connection with it" (Lévi-Strauss 1969, 45). That is, endogamy, or he also called "functional endogamy," produces prohibition (whom you cannot marry) but at the same time a preferential union (whom you should marry). Thus, this type of endogamy, in particular in the prohibition of incest, is prohibiting but also ordering. In this sense, functional endogamy is the flip side of exogamy, in terms of being its simultaneous mechanism of prohibition and order (1969, 51).

[47] Lévi-Strauss (1969, 46) illustrates that a number of primitive tribes refer to themselves by the term for "men" and the essential characteristic of "men" disappears outside the limits to their group. He provides the examples such as that the Eskimos of Norton Sound describe themselves as "complete men" while describing their neighboring people as "nit," or some Brazilian tribes identified the first black slaves imported to America as "earth moneys." Lévi-Strauss states, "In all these cases, it is merely a question of knowing how far to extend the logical connotation of the idea of community, which is itself dependent upon the effective solidarity of the group" (1969,

In discussing the importance of marking boundaries for the construction of a community, Anthony Cohen also provides a critical insight. Cohen argues that community implies commonality among its members that differentiates them from the members of other communities (1985, 12). He states, “Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished” (12). Thus, community boundaries are relational. Further to this point, and more important, community boundaries are symbolic in character. Or put differently, it is symbols that give meanings to the community’s boundaries. As boundaries, symbols are effective because symbols can have many different meanings for each member of a community. Yet, while members may perceive different meanings, they share common symbols and have an attachment and commitment to these symbols. Cohen argues, “The important thrust of this argument is that this relative similarity or difference is not a matter of ‘objective’ assessment—it is a matter of feeling, a matter which resides in the minds of members themselves. Thus, although they recognize important differences among themselves, they also suppose themselves to be more like each other than like the members of other communities” (1985, 20-21).

Marriage always entails notions of borders and boundaries (Constable 2005, 12;

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46). Although I do not follow his structuralist models, I found Lévi-Strauss’ notion of the conceptual limits of the group useful in examining socially conditioned limits of marriageability attached to certain people.

Oxfeld 2005).[48] Heterosexual norms of marriage require a crossing of sexual boundaries, and the incest taboo necessitates a crossing of lineages. When marriages take place on a transnational scale, they may involve the crossing of racial, ethnic, or national boundaries. However, importantly, notions of border crossing are not always rigid. For instance, Louisa Schein (2005), in discussing marriages between Hmong men in the United States and Miao women in China, argues that women consider these marriages as co-ethnic and thus still within their community even while at a global scale (2005, 69). On the other hand, Hmong men conceived themselves marrying a bride from their homeland; thus, these seemingly cross-border marriages are actually perceived as ethnic unions (2005, 76).

Furthermore, the notion of endogamy may also be negotiated even within a nation. For example, Jennifer Robertson examines how the concept of blood has played a crucial role in the ideology of nation-state building in imperial Japan (2005). In discussing the state ideology for creating the “New Japanese,” Robertson illuminates how “ethnic national endogamy” (2005, 329) was constituted based on transmitting pure blood though eugenic marriage. In order to create a superior “Japanese race” for the nation based on ideological and various scientific discourses, the imperial state discouraged marriage with blood relatives and promoted eugenic marriage, a concept Robertson calls “eugenic endogamy” (2005, 343). Accordingly, the imperial state encouraged Japanese people to avoid marriages with blood relatives, which were previously perceived as “strategic endogamy,” and instead promoted marriages from all over yet inside Japan. For example, the state encouraged marriages between men from the south and women from the north (2005, 344). Thus strategic endogamy between blood relatives was replaced by eugenic endogamy within Japan in order to create the pure blood, presumably superior "New Japanese." What is crucially important in Robertson's discussion is that the boundaries for endogamy shifted as they were strategically deployed by the state.

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[48] Ellen Oxfeld similarly argues that marriages among Hakka Chinese in China, Calcutta, India, or Toronto, Canada are viewed as the reproduction of a “de-territorialized ethnic community” (2005, 32).

Drawing upon works that complicated our understandings of crossing, endogamy, and community boundaries, I use the term "cross-border endogamy" in order to capture the seeming contradiction that the participants produced by creating marriageable communities on a transnational scale. As described above, the term endogamy signifies the social rules that limit marriage within one's community so members of that community do not cross any inappropriate borders to find a mate. If we view these Japanese-Chinese marriages from the point of national endogamy, participants are crossing national, ethnic, and racial borders, and thus may be perceived as engaging in exogamy. However, how can we understand their efforts and practices that aim to reframe the boundaries that enclose similar and close marriageable members? When the idea that marrying a co-national partner is still considered to be a Japanese cultural norm and marrying a non-Japanese Asian woman is mocked in society (Suzuki 2003, 91; Faier 2009, 3), how do the participants seek to remain within certain boundaries even while still crossing national borders?

In order to demonstrate the ways in which the creation of marriageable communities involves the reconsideration and stretching of certain boundaries, I focus on the forms of de-stigmatizing practices and discourses that I repeatedly witnessed at transnational marriage agencies. What I observed was participants relying on available ideologies in order to render Japanese-Chinese cross-border marriages ordinary, natural, and endogamous. Notably, this included practices for negotiating and rearranging boundaries, and these practices were never neutral or apolitical. More specifically, in these processes of creating "endogamy" across national borders, socially and culturally undesired inequalities or dissimilarities were concealed while other preferred differences were stressed—all in order to make the marital relationships involved more "natural." Importantly, a "natural" marital relationship was understood to include inequality. Thus, I argue that in the processes of rendering Chinese women marriageable persons, matchmaking processes relied on, revealed, and reproduced certain ideologies of racial, national, and gender inequality in Japan.

Expanding the Marriageable Community

> As you know, most Japanese long used to live in rural communities as farmers [*Ja: noukou minzoku*]. Marriages used to occur within local communities in Japan. A man from the mountains and a woman from a nearby riverside used to meet and marry. However, as society transformed into an information society, a man from the north could then marry a woman from the south. Nonetheless, as society has further developed economically, many Japanese women are not willing to marry, so men then turned their eyes to Chin-chan [i.e., a stereotypical Chinese woman's name] at the Chinese noodle shop in their neighborhood. When they were not even able to marry these Chinese women in their neighborhoods, they then crossed the sea, going to find Chinese brides in China. In short, Japanese-Chinese international marriages are still based on the idea of community marriages in Japan—*a transnational marriage broker in Japan*

This was the story I was told by a broker during my first visit to a transnational marriage agency in Tokyo in the summer of 2007. I was intrigued by his subtle, ambiguous way of situating these Japanese-Chinese marriages. Of course, as a commercial marriage broker, his job is to recruit Japanese men who were willing to marry Chinese women; thus, he needed to make these marriages appealing to potential customers. Nonetheless, he employed a particular narrative to make these Japanese-Chinese marriages appear unremarkable. He did not lay claim to the values of cosmopolitanism or even stress romantic feelings within these marriages; instead he reframed Japanese-Chinese marriages as nothing more than slightly expanded versions of customary marriages. Bu while the marriage broker stressed that Japanese-Chinese marriages were an extended variation of customary "community marriages" (*Ja: chiiki-kekkon*), he also explained that the men who went to China to find a bride were those who could not find a bride in Japan. Thus, by paying expensive marriage fees and crossing national borders, men who were "unmarriageable" in the eyes of Japanese women became "marriageable" in China. Crossing borders played a crucial role here for these men to find a marriage partner, yet the very fact they were crossing borders was obscured in the broker's rendering by stressing an expanded conception of the neighborhood and stretching its seeming aura of normality onto the practices of brokered matchmaking.

How does the notion of marriageability require the conceptual ability to imagine others as sharing in some similarity? Marriage brokers and male clientele often explained to me that it would be simply unimaginable to marry a black, Puerto Rican, Filipino, or Vietnamese woman. It was not realistic for them to envision marrying a woman who seemed to be from distant place, and shared nothing in common. Especially for those who were initially seeking Japanese brides, "dissimilarity" was exactly not what they were looking for. The perception of difference would further enhance their feelings of "transgressive-ness," making all the more salient their deviance from the normative goal of the previously desired domestic marriage. To repeat a quote from a Japanese broker cited previously, "Chinese women are located at the verge of the boundaries of the tolerable (*Ja: shouganai no kyokaisen*).” If this is the case, how do the Japanese men come to view Chinese women, who were seen as on the “verge of the boundaries of the tolerable,” as marriageable, and what do they think they have in common with such Chinese women?

The broker’s story above about the transformation of marriage from something that occurred within a neighborhood to something that now spanned across the sea actually mapped onto the structure of the services China Bride offered. China Bride consisted of two sections. One was for matchmaking with Chinese women who already resided in Japan; the other was with Chinese women who lived in China. The staff members called the former *zainichi* (living in Japan) and the latter either *genchi* (local to China) or *kaigai* (overseas). While the two sections were officially distinct and each section had its own website, names, and different sets of service fees, their services were in reality intermingled.

Male clientele had mainly two ways to become members of China Bride. The first group was called “customers from the network,” and the second group was called “direct customers.” In Japan’s matchmaking industry, there are a couple of major matchmaking networks consisting of hundreds of small and middle-sized marriage agencies. As compared with large marriage agencies that operate only within their own circle of members, small and middle-sized agencies often share their customer information. Through this network, the clientele who belongs to an agency can meet the clientele at a different agency.

China Bride also belonged to this network. China Bride had a close relationship with a number of domestic marriage agencies that, at their peak, introduced more than ten male members to China Brides per year. However, the customers from this network were not “active” seekers of Chinese brides. When domestic marriage brokers had a hard time finding good matches for these men, they recommended that the man visit transnational marriage agencies. Then, domestic brokers would send the men’s profiles to China Bride.

On the other hand, “direct” customers were those who found China Bride through its website, newspaper articles, or TV programs, and decided to contact China Bride on their own initiative. The staff members often described these customers as more “active” and having “better qualities” (or higher level qualities) than those from the network. Although they decided to come to China Bride of their own volition, many of these direct customers had tried domestic matchmaking services previously. Nonetheless, these members were seen as more active since they at least knew how to gather information online and initiated their own actions. Whether being “direct” or “from the network” members, all customers usually first registered for matchmaking services in Japan (instead of visiting China).

China Bride offered monthly matchmaking parties and individual meetings at the agency. At monthly parties, which took place at a nearby restaurant, each male participant had seven to eight minutes to talk with each female participant individually. Male and female participants sat across from each other at the restraurant’s tables, and every seven to eight minutes, men moved to the next seat while women remained where they were. China Bride arranged for drinks and a light lunch to be provided. At these parties, most of the Chinese women spoke Japanese. Considering that the participation fees were 5000 yen/$60 for men who were members and 10,000 yen/$120 for men who were non-members, whereas women were admitted for free, the staff members always invited more women than men so that no man had to wait to talk to a woman. During my fieldwork, I observed ten parties, which usually consisted of 10 to 13 men and women respectively. After the participants finished talking to each other, they filled in a sheet, indicating their first, second, and third preferences. The staff members then input the data into a computer program. At every party, two to five couples were matched. However, these couples, according to the staff members, rarely went on to marry.

The staff members agreed that domestic transnational matchmaking was not easy. They claimed that Chinese women who already resided in Japan were not that different from Japanese women. That is, they not only spoke Japanese and looked Japanese, they could also be as demanding and picky about men's attributes as Japanese women. At monthly parties, the staff members also shared the participants' answer sheets with me. Many times, I found that while men usually filled out three choices, the women's sheets were often blank, indicating they did not find any men they liked. When I talked to some Chinese women during and after the matchmaking parties, some of them expressed that it was so exhausting to talk to Japanese men because they did not know what to talk about and men often did not initiate the conversation. Yet, parties gave male participants opportunities where they could interact, possibly for the first time, with Chinese women. Many, then came to realize that, as one male participant put it, "talking with a Chinese woman is not that different from talking with a Japanese woman." The phrase that I often heard from them was that "there is no feeling of incongruity" (*Ja: iwakan*).

After a party in April 2009, I came back to China Bride with the staff members and some male party participants. Those who had become couples had gone off for a walk or to get a coffee, and among them was the most popular man at the party. He had paired up with the most popular woman. Those who were remained at China Bride were those who had not found a match. A man sitting next to me in the reception room whined half jokingly, “After all, they were not that different from Japanese women. A young, handsome man took all the women!” In the evening, Tanaka invited those who did not find a match out for dinner. Over the course of the meal, Tanaka repeatedly advised them to visit China to find purer and more artless women. “Let’s go to Dongyang together; women in China are purer than Chinese women in Japan.” For many Japanese men when they first walked into China Bride, visiting China was not seen as a realistic option. Nevertheless, the structure of China Bride’s services worked to gradually expand the perceived marriageable communities of male clientele to the point that they came to see Chinese women in China as conceivable brides.

Price of Marriage

The transnational marriage agencies’ websites describe their fees. Below are the service fees of two agencies: China Bride and Wedding China.[49]

China Bride provides the following list of fees on its website. The list includes:

1) Registration fees: 50,000 yen ($630)
2) Matchmaking tour: 150,000 yen ($1,890)
3) Marriage fees: 1,950,000 yen ($24,500) including ten professional wedding photos and a wedding ceremony with three tables.

Also, it offers optional services, including:

1) Aftercare service: 290,000 yen ($3600)

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[49] Other agencies also have their own lists of service fees, but they also charge for similar things.

2) Brides' Japanese language and cultural lessons in China: 200,000 yen ($2500) The website explains that all of these changes will be taxed (5%). The marriage fees also include travel insurance for visiting China, airline tickets to China (economy class), the car transportation between the airport and Dongyang, hotels in China (including three meals per day), bridal coordinators (local staff members), matchmaking meetings, transportation fees for women who come to the matchmaking meetings, and a wedding ceremony. The gifts to a bride and her family are not included in these services, but China Bride prepares a gift package (perfume, tobacco, and a digital camera) for 50,000 yen ($630) as an additional option for purchase. On top of this, grooms are supposed to give at least 200,000 yen ($2500) to their brides as betrothal money, called "*yuinou kin*." If a customer purchases the total package and includes personal spending related to this marriage, the entire process could end up costing as much as 3,500,000 yen ($44,000).

China Bride's "after care services" provide support for the marital relationships that it has brokered, and most of the male clientele willingly purchased this service.[50] Some men told me that they decided on China Bride precisely because they offer an after care service. China Bride also has a refund policy that operates in the case of a bride running away within one month of her arrival in Japan. In such a situation, China Bride would refund 2,000,000 yen ($25000) to their male customer. China Bride had not had to refund any customers at the time of my fieldwork; it had, however, offered several "discount" tours for those whose first marriages through China Bride ended in divorce.

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[50] Melody Chia-Wen Lu (2005) shows that the cross-border marriage businesses in Taiwan also provides "after sales services" (2005, 286). The after sales services help facilitate the brides' adjustment in Taiwan and mediate conflicts among newly wed couples. Although such services demonstrate the commercial aspects of these businesses, Lu argues that some marriage brokers also feel that it is a moral responsibility to voluntarily provide such support before and after marriages. According to Lu, some matchmakers and brides build up a friendship based on there being an extended period of assistance.

Wedding China offers two packages. The basic course (1,680,000 yen; $21000) includes a three-day matchmaking tour and a four-day wedding tour. The two tours include airfare, accommodations, transportation, meals, translation services, an engagement party, a wedding party, wedding photos, administrative support for a spousal visa, and other related fees. In addition, the total course (2,200,000 yen; $27700) includes: a better quality wedding party, wedding rings, a made-to-order Chinese bridal dress, a sightseeing tour in Harbin, marriage fees, a wedding album, living expenses for the Chinese bride prior to arrival in Japan, email translation support, letter translation support, international phone cards for the Chinese bride, language lessons for the Chinese bride, passport fees, and the airfare for travel to Japan. Additionally, male customers must pay betrothal money (200,000 yen) and are expected to give gifts to their brides and their brides' parents. Wedding China also provides aftercare services, which are included in the price of both packages.

As we can see from these expenses, matchmaking involved obvious economic transactions, and marrying through transnational marriage agencies is not inexpensive. Their services, which included "after care services," "refund policies," and package upgrades carry the connotation of a transaction involving "commodities," as if one had to ensure that the commodities are treated well and function as desired after the purchase. Other agencies, such as *First Love,* also offered different services depending on the package that the male customers purchased. Of course, the more expensive the package, the more dedicated the services they offer. Extras included the option of having a wedding party at a better hotel or receiving more extensive assistance when dealing with spousal visas. *Romantic China* even provided a discount package for the men under the age of 30. For male customers over the age of 30, their packages will be about $2000 more expensive.

Commercial Brokers or Traditional Go-Betweens?

The brokerage work began when agencies started receiving calls from potential male clientele. While some agencies operated via e-mail and phone (most likely because they did not want to invest in a dedicated space for receiving customers), China Bride has always invited potential clients to visit their office before joining. The brokers, Tanaka and Shen, explained to me that since they did not have anything to hide, it was important for clientele to be able to visit, see them in person, and be convinced of our trustworthiness of their services. Kimura, a broker operating his business in central Japan, also told me something similar, and he also tried to meet his potential customers in person whenever possible. Once male clientele became members of the agencies, they often described their relationships with brokers with the term trust (*Ja: shinyou*). Many customers chose a particular agency because they thought that the agency was more trustworthy than other similar agencies. They thought that they could rely on the brokers and staff members because of their perceived honesty and support.

Importantly, these trusting relationships were specifically between brokers and their clientele, not between potential brides and grooms. Interestingly, before creating an intimate relationship with their Chinese brides, male customers first attempted to establish a trusted relationship with their brokers. Or even more precisely, the production of a trusting relationship with brokers seemed to be a prerequisite for seeking a Chinese bride through their marriage agencies.

Since male clientele pay huge amounts of money, the importance of trust seems to be understandable—the men involved felt anxious about being deceived by marriage brokers. Many had heard “from somewhere” that other brokers had introduced women who never came to Japan, or arranged marriages with brides who ran away as soon as they arrived, all just to take money from their customers. Indeed, during my fieldwork, I did witness a couple of marriage brokers who disappeared without completing their brokerage work, so that the clientele ended up paying money for nothing. I also observed brokers concealing from the men that they had also charged their future bride, leaving them with large debts (detailed in Chapter 5). Thus, the male clientele needed to know if the brokers were really going to do what they advertised.

However, trust was not seen as necessary solely for the above reasons. If it was only to avoid fraud, their relationship would still remain at the level of buyer and seller. I argue that the production of trust further entailed the creation of certain social relationships. In other words, the notion of trust worked to transform perceptions of the nature of their relationships, which was ultimately linked to how they conceived the brokered marriages themselves. I suggest that brokerage services at transnational marriage agencies were one form of affective labor (Hochschild 2003; Hardt and Negri 2005) that produced certain social relationships and ultimately forms of life in contemporary capitalism. Affective labor, according to Hardt and Negri, is one face of “immaterial labor” (108), that provides the services and information at the heart of economic production. Services include varieties of activities; however, many of them are characterized by the central role played by immaterial goods, such as knowledge, information, communication, relationships, emotional responses, and affect. Importantly, Hardt and Negri observe, "The labor involved in all immaterial production, we should emphasize, remains material—it involves our bodies and brains as all labor does. What is immaterial is its product" (109).[51] Such immaterial labor had traditionally been women's domestic unpaid labor (Hardt and Negri 2005, 110-112; Boris and Parrenas 2010, 2; Hochschild 2003). If conventional matchmaking practices used to be "unpaid" labor by other local members of communities, how do brokerage services engage in commercial activities while still maintaining this nuance?

Commercial brokerage work involved multiple forms of "affective labor." First, as described above, the brokers provided not only information about potential brides, they also offered emotional care and support to male members who were looking for a bride. Second, they consistently worked to blur the boundaries between commercial brokerage services and more traditional practices of matchmaking (*Ja: omiai*) and using go-betweens (*Ja: nakoudo*). This was particularly striking because numerous terms deployed by contemporary brokerage services were analogous with traditional customs in Japan. The term *nakoudo* (go-between) conventionally described an older couple who would help in facilitating a marriage, from arranging the initial engagement up to organizing a ceremony. A person who assisted in matchmaking was called a "*sewa nin*." Often a *sewa nin* continues on to act as *nakoudo* after the couples they introduce engage. *Nakoudo* is usually described as an older couple whose own relationship is good, who know the marrying couple well (Vogel 1961), who are trusted persons, and who are willing to counsel and look after the couple even after their wedding (Applbaum 1995). Therefore, the job of the *nakoudo*—one that is less prevalent in Japan today--goes beyond the simple introduction of individuals.

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[51] Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parrenas (2010) similarly discuss the intensification of commodification in contemporary global capitalism. While commodification of intimacy is not a completely new phenomenon, they argue the current moment can be characterized by its intensification. Intimate labor involves bodily and psychic intimacy, including listening, talking, or just being there. Drawing upon the notion of affective labor, Akiko Takeyama (2010) also argues that an "affect economy" has developed in the service and entertainment industry in postindustrial Japan. Takeyama focuses on host clubs in Japan where male hosts voluntarily commodify themselves into desirable objects, catering romantic excitement to their female customers. Female customers purchase drinks and services at the host clubs, which creates profits for the hosts.

Many of transnational marriage agencies' clients were willing to purchase their services, including "aftercare," but at the same time they were hesitant to view their practices as buying marriage itself. Many men displayed anxiety or feelings of guilt about projecting the image that they were buying a bride, especially when they looked through the catalogues and compared the women's profiles (also see Chapter 2). Such feelings could cause problems. For instance, while meeting with several Chinese women, a Mr. Takai explained to staff members that he wished to spend one hour with each woman, which was considered a long time for such matchmaking meetings. He explained his reasons: even if he were not interested in a certain woman, ending a meeting earlylier would be impolite. It would seem as if the meeting was an audition. The local staff members, conversely, disagreed with Takai's idea and said that "it would be ruder if you are not interested in her and yet she still has to be there; if you do not marry her, there is no reason for her to be here. She wants to go home."

However, such anxiety and guilt could be ameliorated by blurring the boundaries between the commercial and non-commercial aspects of matchmaking practices. According Bourdieu, although seemingly noneconomic practices might not be easily qualified as being driven by economic interests, they never escape from an economic logic (1990, 215). He argues that a noneconomic practice, such as gift exchange, is one of the social games in which givers and receivers refuse to acknowledge the objective truth of said game by collectively misrecognizing it (1990, 198). In particular, the symbolic aspects of relationships, such as those among kinship, neighborhood, and work, prevent certain types of economy from being conceptualized as economic. However, what is crucial here is not to say that all practices are economic activities as opposed to non-economic ones, but rather that it is necessary to discard the economic/noneconomic dichotomy. Bourdieu argues that we are required us to "abandon the economic/noneconomic dichotomy, which makes it impossible to see the science of 'economic' practices as a particular case of a science capable of treating all practices, including those that are experienced as disinterested or gratuitous, and therefore freed from the 'economy,' as economic practices aimed at maximizing material or symbolic profit" (215). Economic capital can operate in the euphemized forms of symbolic capital, that is, it is disguised under the veil of enchanted and euphemized relations. This requires constant labor devoted to making and maintaining relations in the form of care or attention. Trust, or more precisely "the inherent quality of a person who inspires trust" (218), is another important form of investment in labor for creating such veiled moral relationships. Making and sustaining "trusted" relationships or moral-based relations is crucial because as Bourdieu puts it, "They cannot appropriate the labor, services, goods, homage and respect of others without 'winning' them personally, 'trying' them, in short, creating a bond between persons" (219). Thus, it entails collective continuous labor devoted to maintaining misrecognition, which might take the forms of trust, gratitude, generosity, or moral debt.

Viviana A. Zelizer alternately provides a view centered more on the production of meaning in activities that entail payments and argues that people incessantly employ different forms of payment within their intimate relations. She states, “It is not the money involved that determined the relationship’s quality, but the relationship that defined the appropriateness of one sort of payment or another (2006, 818).” What is important to note is that although people use various forms of payment in intimate relations, they also regularly differentiate monetary transactions according to the definition of the relationships in which they are involved by “[adapting] symbols, rituals, practices, and physically distinguishable forms of money to mark distinct social relations (819).” Zelizer further states, “This is serious work. It is precisely because different forms of payment signify differences in the character of the social relations currently operating (826).” According to her, this can also work in the opposite direction; namely, different meanings of social ties distinguish the forms of payment accordingly.

Indeed, the relationships between the brokers and most of the married couples did not end when they married. While some couples had more frequent contact with brokers due to problems, many couples maintained their relationship with their broker even when their marriage was going go well. Tanaka often explained to me that China Bride was like a pseudo-family (*Ja: giji kazoku*) where he acted as a father. He helped his customers find a bride, and continued to care (*Ja: sewa*) for them into their married life. He stated that his job does not end when he brokered marriages, but also included support until they had children. This, he claimed, is because once they have children, their marriage would become more stable, and couples that reached this stage rarely got divorced.

Based on this philosophy, Tanaka often invited his new and old customers (and me) out to dinner and drinks. When he heard that a couple had a serious fight, he sent

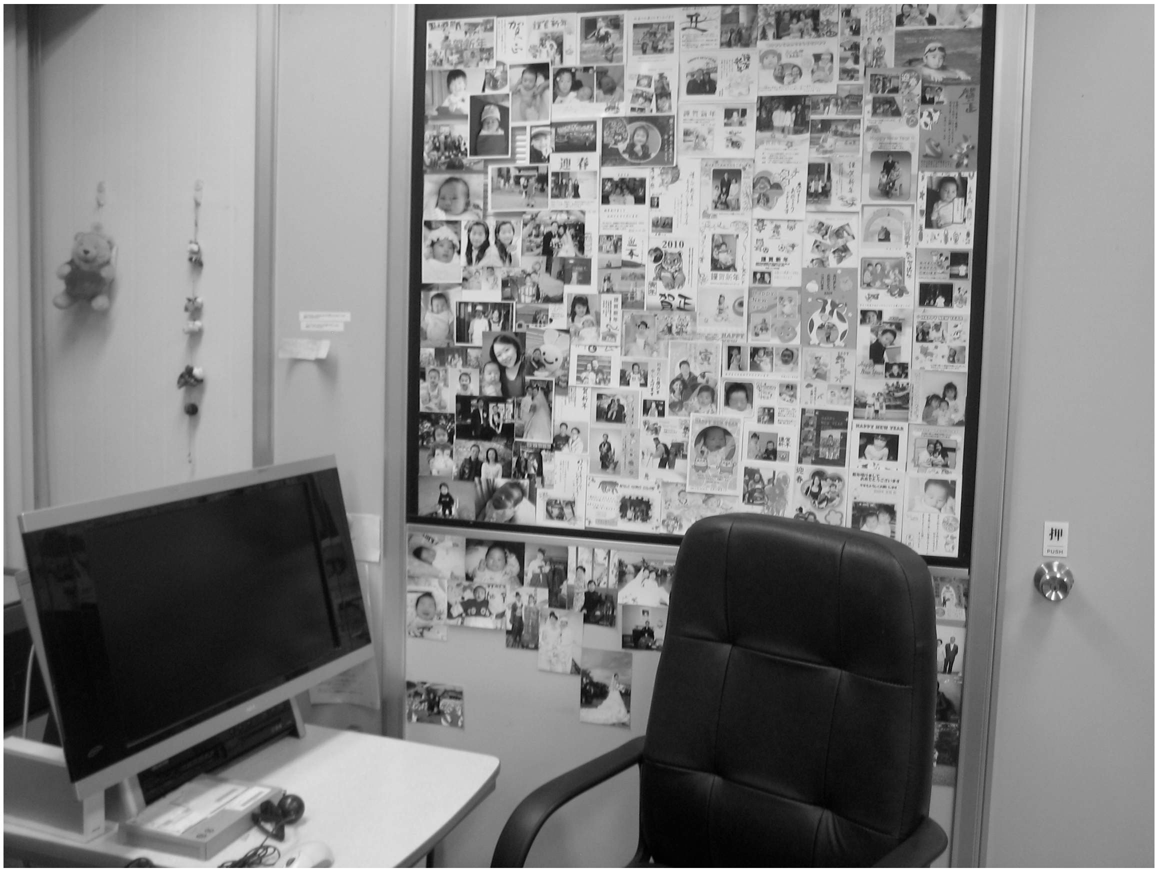

FIGURE 3 New Years Cards posted on the wall of the agency in Tokyo

them tickets to Tokyo Disneyland to help them with reconciling. It was also his ritual to send a gift every time couples had a newborn baby. Conversely, many couples also returned to China Bride bearing gifts to demonstrate their appreciation and update the staff on how they were doing. This also enabled me to meet with married couples and establish contacts for my research. When I visited China Bride, the staff members often served me with cakes, cookies, or Japanese style sweets (*Ja: wagashi*) that they had received from previous customers. Every year, China Bride received numerous New Year cards from their clientele, which were posted on the walls (figure 3). Old clients also came back to talk about their newborn babies, new houses, and other life happenings.

These behaviors are probably not unique to cross-border couples. Any couple might ask their parents or friends for support and advice. Sometimes, couples may need someone to whom they can safely grumble about their marital lives. Yet, if couples were seen as participating in stigmatized relationships based on the ways and means in which they which met, telling others about their problems might further stigmatize their marriages. The marriage agency was not only a supportive venue, but also a safe place where couples could deal with their issues and troubles.

When I visited China Bride in summer 2011, a broker, Shen, brought me up to date with stories of clients whom I previously had met between 2007 and 2010. This couple purchased a house; that couple had a second baby; yet another couple was having a difficult time due to economic issues; some men still had not found a suitable bride; and some men stopped visiting China Bride. A few couples had divorced, and some in cases the men involved had returned to China Bride for a second attempt. Finally, some men married Japanese women in the end. When I asked about specific couples or people I had met, the broker had recent information on almost all of them. She told me: “If we just take money from the male customers and only do our work from a business perspective, those customers’ marital lives would not work. Trusting relationships are necessary.”

It is crucial to note that the role of monetary transactions in creating intimate relations is not unique to transnational matchmaking industry. Various intimate domains involve such transactions, including as childcare, domestic work, elderly care work; arguably, the most comparable domain is the domestic matchmaking industry (cf. Rivas 2002; Cheever 2003). Domestic marriage agencies also provide services for men and women who seek marriage partners in Japan. People pay money to become members, gain access to the profiles of members of the opposite sex, attend matchmaking parties and meetings, and marry. Interestingly, however, the media has rarely criticized domestic matchmaking services for the commercialization of intimate relationships. These services are seen as providing opportunities for encounters (*Ja: deai*) between people who have the equal right to accept or decline proposals. These monetary transactions thus are given a different meaning.

The discourses and practices of the male clientele and brokers engaged in transnational matchmaking are neither new nor unique. However, because they are not new and unique, participants were able to see their marriages as “ordinary” arranged marriages established through introductions by trusted persons. They partly, or creatively, relied on existing practices and discourses. By doing so, they also de-commercialized and thus de-stigmatized their marriages. Importantly, while it was “unpaid” assistance, traditional forms of matchmaking were also not free from economic transactions. As another transnational marriage broker at *Wedding China* in Heilongjiang explained to me, people might think that local go-betweens did not receive any money for introducing a bride to a groom, but actually, economic transactions took place in other areas such as in the organization of a wedding party at the go-between’s relatives’ hotels, through the taking of photos at the go-between’s family studios, or even after the marriage when couples were supposed to buy things from a go-between’s store, etc. Eventually, the broker claimed, go-betweens ended up receiving almost the same amount of money the commercial brokers were receiving from their customers. Economic transactions are simply a little more obvious in the case of contemporary transnational matchmaking, he concluded.

Making Similar Fellows: Creating Endogamous Marriages

I met Mr. Kitamura when I was visiting the marriage agency. Mr. Kitamura was a college graduate in his early forties who lived in Tokyo and worked in the general affairs division of a well-known organization. He had recently divorced his Japanese wife, whom he had met through a domestic matchmaking service. They had one daughter, but his former wife had taken custody of her. Kitamura's father owned two apartments in Tokyo, both of which were part of Kitamura's inheritance. He also owned a newly built house in Tokyo. Although his income was modest, he would certainly not have any future worries about his financial situation. Following his divorce, Kitamura had revisited his original marriage broker. He did not view remaining single as an option. However, the marriage broker told him that it would be impossible for him to find a Japanese wife due to his age. Even if he happened to miraculously find a Japanese woman, she would at the least be in her late thirties or early forties. He apparently did not prefer that option either.

Because of this, Kitamura turned to the possibility of transnational marriage. I asked him if he had thought about a specific nationality. He told me that he had first thought of marrying a Korean, as his nephew was married to a Korean woman. He had researched Korean brides online and realized there were few agencies that introduced Korean women. He said he never thought about Filipino women because, as he put it, "Basically I wanted to marry a similar person (*Ja: onaji youna hito*)." I asked him what he meant by similar. He replied, "Our faces and cultures are almost the same [as the Chinese]. I heard that Chinese women respect and look after their parents, and my sister also told me that many Chinese follow Confucianism. I also wish to look after her parents. Religion, customs, and traditions long existing in Japan all came from China."

He told me that some Chinese people live in the apartment that his father owns in Tokyo. He explained, “When I was talking to them, I did not have feel any incongruity at all (*Ja: iwakan*). Sometimes they left the door open, as we used to do long ago in Japan and as people still do in the countryside.”

The agency’s male clientele often made comparisons between Chinese women and Filipino women; Filipino women constituted the second-largest non-Japanese bride population in Japan. A female broker explained to me that, “Some Japanese men thought about other nationalities as options, but usually they chose Chinese women first. This was due to the Chinese women’s skin color, their use of written characters (*Ja: kanji*), and customs. If the men married Filipino women and walked outside with them, people would look at them with curiosity because the two look so different. People would certainly notice this difference.” She added that Russian women would be too different in their eating habits, and their bodies are generally too large for Japanese men. When I asked another male customer, Mr. Iguchi, whether he ever thought about marrying a woman of a different nationality, his answer was prompt: “No way! I did not want to marry a Filipino woman because their skin color is different. I wanted to marry someone whose skin color is the same.”

Japanese men at other marriage agencies also discussed the importance of the women “looking Japanese.” During a wedding tour administered by another agency, I accompanied two newly married couples to a photo studio; at the time I overheard two Japanese men chatting. Mr. Uehara told Mr. Ogawa, “When Chinese girls come to Japan, the first three months will be a battle (*Ja: shōbu*). If they obtain some strange habits (*Ja: hen na kuse*) during the first three months, they will carry them throughout their life.”

Ogawa agreed with him. Their conversation was not only about how the women should act but also how they should look. Ogawa was more optimistic than Uehara and said, “My wife does not look like she is Chinese, and it should be okay, as no one will notice it!”

Yet, while shopping afterward, Ogawa repeatedly told his Chinese bride, “Don’t buy that, it looks so Chinese,” and “You cannot wear that in Japan.” On the way back to their hotel, Uehara said, “They cannot wear any clothing purchased here in Japan.” Ogawa added, “I hope that she won’t bring anything from China. She can just come without any luggage.” The similarity between Japanese and Chinese were not seen simply as a natural product of phenotypes. While participants might describe their skin color and bodies as similar, discipline was still required to transform a “Chinese” into a “Japanese.”

The work of male participants to transform their Chinese wives into Japanese pointed to similarity as something that was not automatic. Indeed, the statements above about Chinese fashion suggest that resemblance between Japanese and the Chinese should not be interpreted as simply natural.[52] While investigation into the production of differences has been crucial to those in the field of anthropology (Gupta and Ferguson 1994), I argue that we can also garner important analytical insights from looking at the production of similarity between communities. Anthropologist Simon Harrison argues that the concept of similarity is never absent, even when differences are highly stressed (2002). Instead, the perception of similarity can be the reason for creating a difference—in other words, difference is produced precisely in order to differentiate oneself from others. Sigmund Freud's (1961) concept of the "narcissism of minor difference" also highlights the strong tendency among those that are closely related, or even neighboring states, to exaggerate their differences and distinctiveness (72).

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[52] In the context of contemporary transnational matchmaking, the construction of a difference obviously played a part in representing Chinese brides, especially in the agencies’ advertising campaigns. But in many cases, advertising stressed the similarities in appearance and figure (*sugata katachi*) between the Japanese and Chinese more than their differences. Interestingly, the production of differences between Japan and China is more prevalent in popular media and academic contexts. This was partly because Japan and China historically characterized each other as nationally and racially different, marked most vividly by Japan’s colonization of China and postwar disputes over the legacy of that era (Young 1999; Tanaka 1995). Even today, the Japanese media often depicts Chinese people as possessing different racial characteristics and even dissimilar DNA, all of which makes them more barbarous and primitive (*Sankei Shinbun* 2001, 5–8).

Conversely, the concept of similarity can be strategically employed to reorder boundaries. For example, Ara Wilson (1988) showed that American catalogues of Asian brides represented Asian women as not only different and exotic, but also "Westernized," aiming to some degree to make their marriages seem endogamous to potential American male clientele. Although stressing resemblance may work to redraw boundaries, such strategic constructions of similarity never fully eliminate power inequalities.[53] Lieba Faier has explored the ways in which Filipino women who came to Japan as entertainers were portrayed as "good brides" (*Ja: ii oyomesan*) and "more Japanese than young Japanese women today" (2009, 152). Faier critically demonstrates that Filipino women learning to do things in "the Japanese way" reinforced the ideal of "traditional Japanese women," one which young Japanese women today were perceived as not willing to perform. While Chinese brides are also described as being “like Japanese women,” my aim is to rather excavate the premise that presupposes Chinese women possess the potential to pass as being Japanese, even before starting their marital lives. Through the processes of fashioning resemblances between the Japanese and the Chinese, these marriages are thus “naturalized” as within socially permissible boundaries (cf. Newendorp 2008, Shu-mei Shih 1998).

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[53] Tomoko Nakamatsu (2005) showed how certain images of "Asian brides" are created in the Japanese marriage industry by manipulating cultural, racial, and economic differences, as well as the similarities between Japan and the rest of Asia (407). Nakamatsu argues that "Race markers were at times diminished and at other times amplified, depending on if the particular marker was compatible with marriageability or not" (407). Moreover, when describing Korean women, for example, ethnic markers such as their traditional clothing were presented while stressing harmonious relationships by addressing Korea as the origin of Japanese culture, or Koreans as being of the same Oriental race (407). As Nakamatsu (2005) indicates, the marriage agencies I studied also presented Chinese women with terms such as "pure" (*jyun sui*), "artless" (*soboku*), or "like Japanese women from the past" on their websites. However, I felt that these phrases were more common on the websites than in the actual conversations held at the agencies.

The politics of similarity, instead of simply forcing others to become similar or assimilated, stresses “natural” and “innate” similarities to others. Thus, assimilation seems less obvious and less forceful based on the assumption that similar things naturally belong to the same category.[54] While excluding “different” elements from a group implies noticeable power inequalities, including “similar” elements into a group might even imply a friendliness and generosity that mask the power inequalities involved. In other words, including external or marginal elements based on similarities is seen as less forceful than excluding internal elements based on differences. The felt commonality among members also involves the expression or feelings of equality and egalitarianism, while masking inequalities (Anderson 1983; Cohen 1985).

The practices of participants in Japanese-Chinese marriages reveal how certain notions of visual appearance and form (*Ja: sugata katachi*) are deployed as a premise that conceals the power of inclusion and assimilation. The comment that “you look like a Japanese” was treated as a compliment concerning not only the ability of Chinese wives to successfully adapt to Japanese daily customs, but also, ultimately, their malleability and marriageability. Nonetheless, since such comments are treated as flattering remarks, they are masked as apolitical even if "Japaneseness" actually overrides – and eventually extinguishes –"Chineseness." Thus, the notion of "similarity" in these contexts entails asymmetrical relationships. The similarity between two counterparts does not always mean that they are equal.[55] I repeatedly heard comments such as "Chinese women look Japanese," but never "Japanese men look Chinese." Visuality as a presupposition, although not an assurance (Hotaka Roth 2002; Tsuda 2003), makes Chinese women malleable so that they can be included in the marriageable community without crossing the borders of being marriageable.[56] Such discourse plays a crucial role in rendering these marriages endogamous. Thus, these men are not necessarily crossing borders or transgressing cultural norms, in particular due to the idea that the marriages are between two "similar" people.

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[54] Importantly, this strategic rearrangement of boundaries is not limited to the production of marriageability. During Japan’s imperial era, discourse emphasizing Okinawa’s resemblance to Japan in terms of linguistic roots and culture rendered its imperial annexation seemingly apolitical (Christy 1997).

Such production of similarity is particularly remarkable in its parallels with the conventional practices of marriage in Japan. Japanese anthropologist Chie Nakane observes, "marriage between households of similar standing is the widely prevailing ideal in almost every locality in Japan" (Nakane 1967, 160; also cf. Applbaum 1995). She further explains, "such a marriage circle will not normally extend beyond the range of people with a common way of life and a similar type of economy, and where the villages already have some kind of economic and social relations with each other. This is because households of 'similar standing' not only implies similar social and economic backgrounds upon which the activities of the households are centered, but also the sharing of familiar knowledge" (1967, 161). Similarly, Applbaum observes that arranged marriages are not simply the introduction of two persons for dating, but importantly entail the question of "identifying the proper category of individuals one should marry" (1995, 1). Thus, he asks, "How do you marry the proper stranger?" (1995, 1). Applbaum further explains that the proper stranger is someone with "some basis for association," for instance, someone known to a family member, at the same work place, or someone from one's neighborhood community. He interestingly put this as, "arranged marriage should be with someone from the category of knowable, as compared with unknowable strangers" (2).

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[55] As Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) argues, the construction of national identity in Japan has always been imagined in asymmetrical relations among the West, Japan, and Asia. Thus, Japan's relationships with other Asian nations are described in Japan as "similar but superior" (2002). Iwabuchi contends, "As the only non-Western imperial and colonial power which invaded geographically contiguous Asian regions, Japan resorted to an ideology of pan-Asianism to camouflage its imperial ambition" (8). Thus, Japan's national identity is created not simply by the dichotomy of Japan-West or East-West, but rather Japan-West-Asia.

[56] Hotaka Roth (2002) has noted that for Japanese-Brazilians, what is required is Japanese linguistic ability and appearing to look Japanese.

A local staff member once told me, "all Japanese men who married Chinese women somehow try to find commonalities, even an "aura" (*Ja: funiki*), but if they cannot find any, they want to say that they it was then "fate" (*Ja: en*). But, from the beginning they themselves picked the women based on the pictures and profiles. Maybe, to marry a someone who shares no commonalities makes them a little embarrassed (*Ja: ushiro metai*)." The idea that similarity originally was based upon the standing of an individual's household has come to overlap with a similarity generated through the perception of like phenotypes and disciplined bodies. In that process, the Chinese women are transformed into "knowable," "malleable," "disciplinable," and therefore, "marriageable."

Being Made Japanese or Acting Japanese

While Chinese female participants may engage in making themselves look like “Japanese,” they also may refuse, talk back, and negotiate their position in their marital relations. While Japanese men were busy crafting similarities, most of the Chinese women often did not know what their grooms were talking about due linguistic barriers. Translation by the agency’s staff members was tactically limited; in other words, the staff would not translate what they were not supposed to. This is also because their business was to broker marriages, not to help couples get to know each other better. As a staff member told me, “These marriages would not be contracted if the couples understood each other well. Their marriages are made on the basis of mutual misunderstandings (*kanchigai*).”

Japanese-language classes were where the Chinese brides exchanged their stories with other brides, commiserated, and sometimes competed to show who received the most expensive gifts from their husbands. One day in August, Ms. Liang Song came to class and told us, “I am not feeling well today. Last night, my husband said on the phone that my Japanese still sounds like a foreigner. So my husband is trying to arrange intensive language lessons five days per week for me!” Song’s husband Mr. Kato, whom I met in Tokyo, asked her to study not only conversational language, but also correct grammar. When I met Kato in Tokyo, he also claimed that he did not want his wife to speak “foreign-sounding Japanese” (*Ja: gaikokujin mitaina nihongo*). The teacher and other brides were also upset and indignant. A bride said, “Of course! Because we are not Japanese! We never speak like the Japanese. Then they should have married a Japanese wife. But they couldn’t. Maybe it was cheaper to marry a Chinese wife!” She continued, "Your husband is such a chauvinistic male. You are so pitiable (*Ch: kelian*). Get a divorce!"

Song departed for Japan a couple of weeks later. She attended a language class almost every day in Japan. Ironically, the bride who criticized Kato now envied Song, saying, "My husband does not allow me to go to a language school because it is too expensive. He is so stingy." While many women complained that their husbands requested that they act Japanese, being faced with a lack of resources for them to adapt to Japanese society was seen as a worse. For instance, one bride complained that her husband did not give her a Japanese name, while other brides who came to Japan from the same agency all had new Japanese names.[57] While Song attended a private language school almost every day and improved her linguistic ability, other brides could only attend free lessons offered by community volunteers once a week. Some brides wore clothes purchased in Japan, but others continued wearing the clothes they brought from China. The women encountered difficult and contradictory negotiations concerning keeping, gaining, and forgetting. Ironically, their wish to keep and gain often clashed. Gaining "Japanese" things was both a privilege and the object of frustration. Although many brides complained about being "made Japanese," the resources they could use to act Japanese were seen as a benefit that they gained from their marriages.

"They are Just Men and Women": Naturalizing Gender Differences

The staff members frequently spent time responding to current and previous clientele who sought assistance in solving their problems. When I was at China Bride, staff members were often on the phone. Sometimes they would even spend two or three hours talking with a client. The requests they received ranged from those that asked for simple translations to help settling a quarrel or even arranging a divorce. In the case of Japanese men with Chinese wives, they would often perceive their marital lives during the first few months as very challenging and chaotic. Sometimes, Japanese husbands called China Bride because they did not understand why their wives were crying or getting upset. Couples also visited China Bride when they needed a third party to intervene in their conflicts. While simply providing translating could solve some of the issues, it was not always convenient for couples to call or visit China Bride every time they had difficulty communicating. Moreover, a Chinese staff member, Li, often told me that the required assistance was not simply translating between Japanese and Chinese, but also mediating between the two cultures. Li tried to teach the Chinese brides about Japanese customs and even the traits of Japanese men. For instance, she would tell Chinese brides that “Japanese men rarely express their affection directly.”

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[57] Many couples I met officially or unofficially created a "Japanese name" for the Chinese wives with more familiar characters in Japan. Such names were often created for "convenience" (*Ja: benri*) when living in Japan; sometime the Chinese characters in their names did not exist in Japan, and other times, it ws just to avoid the "wrong impression" (*Ja: hen na gokai*) in society.

According to the broker, Shen, a common source for conflicts was financial issues. For instance, a couple might have different expectations and wishes concerning the size of the remittance to go to the wife’s parents in China. Shen explained to me, “Of course, women want to send remittances to their parents. However, they should not ask their husbands for 100,000 yen per month; that would be too much. They could ask for 20,000 or 30,000 yen, but would have to consult with their husbands. It is our job to tell wives about the reality of their husbands’ financial situation.” Although many women I met sent some form of remittance, the amount varied depending on their financial situations. Some women sent a remittance from their husbands' salary on a regular basis; others brought money and gifts home when they visited their family every year or every few years. Conflicts revolving around money could also arise from small daily occurrences. One day, Li was on the phone with a male customer whose Chinese bride had come to Japan three months before. He bought his wife cosmetics every month. His wife had started taking his gifts for granted and stopped expressing gratitude. He was dissatisfied with his wife's attitude and called Li for advice. He was frustrated because not only did his wife not understand what he meant, but also because her way of talking was too direct and often sounded rude to him. After hanging up, Li told me that she strongly advised men not to say things like "They do this because they are Chinese." She said, "Japanese people often ask me things like, 'Are all Chinese like this?' or 'They are unique Chinese characters,' but these are things people should not say in transnational marriages."

Brokers and staff members often advised Japanese men to de-emphasize nationality and national character. Moreover, when listening to men's complaints about their difficulties communicating, Tanaka often stated: "After all, they are just men and women." Then, he continued, "Men and women are different creatures; they will never understand each other." According to Tanaka, marriage is conventionally "proposed by men and accepted by women." Hence men have to take the initiative because men are to provide and women are to receive. This idea emphasized men's activeness and women's passivity. Tanaka often gave this advice to those Japanese men who still hesitated to visit China in order to meet women.

Tanaka also made such comments when he was talking with other clients. Matsui, who married but then divorced a Chinese woman found through China Bride, returned to the agency to seek a new Chinese wife. He confessed that in his last marriage to a Chinese woman he was too busy with work and did not have time attend to his wife's life in Japan. One New Year holiday, his wife returned to China and never came back. Two years had passed since the incident, and now he had a new, more stable job, and so he decided to seek a bride again. Matsui had met a number of Japanese women through a domestic matchmaking service, yet somehow nothing serious had come of the encounters. Tanaka repeatedly encouraged Matsui to seek a Chinese bride in China, yet Matsui was little hesitant because of the language barrier. After finishing a meeting with a Chinese woman residing in Japan, Matsui was not fully satisfied with her. He concluded, "Male-female relationships are the most complicated things in the world."

Other brokers also shared the understanding that the male-female relationship was the key in cross-border marriages. In particular, many believed that male-female relationships were "irrational." For instance, Aoki, a broker at *Wedding China*, told me he was concerned about correspondence between newlywed husbands and wives without the use of a proper translator. Sometimes, couples would use a dictionary or online translation service, which often produces strange translations. Aoki said, "We don't know what can happen in a relationship between men and women. Anything can happen and a small thing might damage their relationship. They might even break up before their marital life in Japan." A possible breakup before a woman arrives in Japan might occur, according to him, not because they do not speak the same language or do not know each other well enough, but because they are "men and women."

Moreover, each couple's miscommunications and differences were portrayed as gender differences, or due to sex-based divisions of labor. This way, the sources of conflict were rendered as “natural” outcomes of male-female relationships. Why is it important to de-emphasize nationality and emphasize gender differences? How do gender-based accounts transform the nature of their conflicts? How does stressing gender differences—being a male or female—instead of national differences work to resolve and soothe conflicts, misunderstandings, and disparities, and consequently de-stigmatize their marriages?

In order to understand their practices, I find Bourdieu’s notion of “doxa” and “orthodoxy” (1977) helpful. By drawing from objective principles, taken for granted doxa reproduce, secure, and legitimate a world of self-evidence. For instance, differences or the division of power between the sexes appear as self-evident, and this, taken for granted in a natural world, secures a “unity in division, that is to say, hierarchy” (1977, 165). Thus, the “self-evident” belief is also the basis for power inequalities between certain groups. Importantly, these taken for granted everyday orders can be challenged. Nonetheless, in such crisis situations where the self-evident world is contested, Bourdieu argues that language or extraordinary discourse gives a systematic explanation to extraordinary experiences (1977, 170). That is, drawing legitimacy and authority from dominant groups, discourse reproduces, secures, and defends the integrity of doxa (1977, 169). Thus, when the limits of doxa are questioned voluntarily or involuntarily, discourses play a crucial role in re-legitimating taken for granted worlds. Critical discourses are particularly important when the limits of doxa are questioned.

Feminist scholars have questioned seemingly natural distinctions between males and females and argued that distinctions, such as public/private, production/reproduction, or political/domestic, are the products of ideology (Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Rosaldo 1980, 404; Yanagisako & Delaney 1995, 9; Martin 1991). However, these differentiated categories are still widely employed and treated as natural in society. These seemingly natural differences are employed not only to separate sexes, but also to ease communication between them (such as “Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus” by John Gray 1992).[58]

Marriage, particularly heteronormative marriage, involves a tactical arrangement of similarities and differences. Heteronormative marriage is generally between two similar counterparts, but it is also between two different genders. According to this ideology, the naturalness of marriages between two dissimilar counterparts or between the individuals of the same gender is to be doubted. The practices of brokered Japanese-Chinese marriages engaged in reaffirming the marriages’ ordinariness in two ways: stressing physical similarities between two counterparts, as well as emphasizing differences and inequalities between two genders. Discourses about natural gender differences at China Bride were particularly emphasized when marital relationships came under stress. Participants would question their own marriages, since they perceived their difficulties as atypical (for example, linguistic misapprehension). I witnessed repeatedly how conflict or the possible failure of a marriage would elicit efforts on the part of brokers and staff to re-stress and affirm differences between men and women as the most salient. Moreover, by verifying certain differences and inequalities, these marital relationships were also redefined as ordinary in the ways they obscured other divisions and hierarchies. Such practices can be understood as orthodoxy (Bourdieu 1977, 169)

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[58] John Gray argues that men and women speak different languages; “When misunderstandings arise, remember that we speak different languages; take the time necessary to translate what your partner really means or wants to say” (1992, 91).

"which aims, without entirely succeeding, at restoring the primal state of innocence of doxa" (169).

The broker Tanaka also used this gender-dichotomous image in order to explain household finances. Some men were concerned that they might have made the wrong decision by marrying a person who had high financial demands. Nonetheless, Tanaka's strategy was to show that Chinese women's financial demands were not the undesired consequence of marrying someone from a developed country, or a product of their marital relationships being based on financial ties. Rather, Tanaka sought to reframe financial demands as the product of natural gender differences. According to Tanaka, in any marriage, the role of the man is to provide, while women are to accept what they are told. Tanaka's favorite sexual joke was also to connect this dichotomous image with the idea that men penetrate (*Ja: ireru*), while women accept (*Ja: ukeru*). Thus, men should initiate their sexual desires, while women should not reject this. Most notably, these discourses were employed to console or persuade male clientele, as brokers considered these discourses capable of objectifying and justifying conflicts between Japanese husbands and their Chinese wives. Part of the marketing strategy of China Bride was to avoid divorces as much as possible. Tanaka and the other staff members at China Bride often claimed very few of their brokered marriages ended in divorce, contrasting themselves with other agencies that introduced women who would become "runaway brides."

Additionally, acknowledging the conflicts in these marriages as something other than the result of gender differences would further stigmatize them, and provide evidence that they were brokered based on convenience. The last thing participants wanted was to have their marriages perceived as involving two strangers who sought an easy way to achieve their goals through an unnatural arranged international pairing. In order to avoid this image, conflicts needed to be rendered as part of the ordinary struggles that any couple must face.

Japanese-Chinese matchmaking processes negotiate the limits of doxa, while still relying on it. Although Bourdieu discusses challenging doxa in terms of the relationship between the dominator and the dominated (1977, 169), at China Bride, those producing the discourses and listening to them wished to reaffirm taken-for-granted assumptions about marriage. By rendering a brokered Japanese-Chinese marital relationship one simply between a man and a woman, participants could avoid perceiving themselves as transgressing social norms. Such masking emphasized the relationship across sexual and gender boundaries, whilst downplaying other borders and differences. By doing so, marriage became a place where differences and inequities were reproduced as only was natural between genders.

Natural Differences, Intolerable Disparities

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that the male clientele and marriage brokers engaged in transnational marriage industry in Japan not only participated in instant matching and commercial exchange, but also the negotiation, production, and rearrangement of meanings, boundaries, and norms. This chapter has also argued that the matchmaking processes used to create endogamous marriages simultaneously obscured, rearranged, and/or stressed stretched boundaries. In the process, the brokering of Japanese-Chinese marriages also depended on available discourses of gender and marriage in Japan. However, cross-border marriages were often more stigmatized because they were seen as transgressing the social norms of marriage, which is, I argue, national endogamy. When some marriages were seen as transgressing certain norms, their participants needed to work harder to reframe their relations as not totally outside the boundaries of legitimacy and acceptance. In order to make their unions ordinary, with the help of marriage brokers the male participants not only revealed but also reproduced appropriate similarities and differences that “regular” marital couples were supposed to have. Their anxieties further drew the line between tolerable and intolerable matches by situating theirs in the former and others types, such as marriage to a Filipino bride, in the latter. By analyzing the destigmatizing practices in cross-border marriages, one finds that the processes used also reveal and appropriate the existing norms and ideologies of marriage, matchmaking, and gender in Japan with their inherent power relations in tow.

Importantly, I was not trying to show that these brokered marriages were the same as other domestic marriages. Indeed, various forms of inequalities exist within these marriages, and those inequalities have made these cross-border matches possible. Gender, racial, and economic inequalities affect not only relationships between states but may also affect the dynamics of individual cross-border marital relationships. Moreover, women who relocate to Japan may find themselves in a more difficult, risky position due to the vulnerabilities created by their unfamiliarity with the language, customs, and people of Japan. Nevertheless, this chapter also aimed to point out that inequalities are not limited to such cross-border marital relationships but also exist—in a so-called natural way—in other marriages. Such inequalities, nonetheless, became further visible and were viewed as problematic when relations were already under suspicion.

Chapter 4

Marrying Up, Out, and Off: Local Expectations, Translocal Alternatives

I first saw Ms. Han Meiling in a profile catalogue at the agency in Tokyo in 2009. Her photos looked like they had been taken at a professional photo studio. She was holding sunflowers, sitting in a chair, and smiling. Then, I saw her "live" online in late March 2009. I was observing Mr. Sakiyama's Internet matchmaking meeting with her at the Tokyo office. I also witnessed the second Internet meeting between them a week later. When Meiling had another Internet meeting with a different Japanese man two weeks later, I was also at the agency. Therefore, when I met her in person for the first time, in late July in Dongyang, I felt as though I was meeting someone who I had known for a long time. But, of course, I only knew of her in a certain way and she did not know me at all.

Han Meiling was in her mid-twenties, a high school graduate divorcée without a child. Soon after her first marriage at the age of twenty, her Chinese ex-husband's demeanor had changed; he often became drunk and violent. Soon they ended up getting divorced. After that, Meiling went back to her parents' house and worked as a sales clerk at a clothing shop in the market. Her income was modest, but it was enough for her as she lived with her parents. One day, she found a newspaper advertisement for a marriage agency dealing in Japanese men. She called the agency, but at that time, she was just trying to see what it was like. She also liked Japanese animation and often watched it online. The broker asked her to stop by the office to register. Registration itself was free for women. A couple of weeks after registration, she was anxious to receive a call from the broker for matchmaking meetings, but that did not happen for a couple of months. So, she said, she had almost forgotten about it and was living her ordinary life. She had several Chinese boyfriends, but she did not think seriously about marrying them. None of them had stable jobs. Although she did not feel pressure to marry at that time, she did not want to maintain stuck in the status quo of her current life.

When Meiling talked to Sakiyama during an online matchmaking meeting for the first time, she did not have any feelings for him. She just felt comfortable talking with him. During the second meeting with Sakiyama, Meiling told him that she would give him sixty out of one hundred points; that is, he was barely passing. She told him that if they happened to marry, she would not want to have a child for at least a year. She first would want to get accustomed to life in Japan. Then she could start thinking about having a baby. Sakiyama agreed. She also told him that she would not want to just stay home. After learning the language, she would want to work outside the home. Sakiyama also agreed. He told her that he hoped that she could also help him manage his soon-to-be inherited apartment in the future. A week later, Meiling had another Internet meeting with a different Japanese man at the agency. This time, she clearly told the man's broker that she could not stand him (*Ch: shoubuliao*). Accordingly, Meiling agreed to meet Sakiyama in person in China.

However, none of the agency staff members was optimistic about their match. They suspected that Meiling would probably decline his proposal, because "they don't match" (*Ja: tsuriawanai*). In the brokers' eyes, Meiling was a young, pretty, and smart girl, while Sakiyama was a clumsy man in his forties. Regardless of such concerns, when Sakiyama visited Dongyang in early May, Meiling agreed to marry him. Sakiyama returned to Dongyang in late May to register the marriage, and they held a wedding ceremony. On the night of the wedding, Meiling told him that she was getting her period, implying that she could not have sex. However, later, she confessed to me that she was not actually getting her period. After marrying Sakiyama, Meiling quit her job and started attending the language and culture class administered by China Bride while waiting for her permission for residency. Her residency permission was approved in early September, and she departed for Japan in late September.

Several weeks later, I received an email from Sakiyama. He wrote, “Meiling told me that her reason for coming to Japan was not because she loves me. I am worried about what is going to happen between us.” Several days later, the Tokyo staff members let us know that, surprisingly, Meiling was pregnant. The first thing that came to the local staff members’ minds was that the baby might not be Sakiyama’s. They knew that Meiling had had a Chinese boyfriend up until she left Dongyang. However, fortunately, they soon found out that it was Sakiyama’s baby. Although Sakiyama did not know of the staff members’ concerns (including that she had a boyfriend in China), he gained confidence from one broker’s statement: “If she did not like you, she would definitely use a condom. But she didn’t. So she is ready to have a life with you.” Five months later, I visited Meiling in Japan during her pregnancy. She said, “I did not imagine that I would be a housewife! Soon, I will have a baby and really become like a *shufu* [housewife in Japanese].” She laughed. Instead of working outside the home or attending Japanese language lessons, she was spending most of her time at home, watching television and chatting on the Internet. Going shopping was also part of her almost daily routine. Whenever Meiling needed something, such as new maternity clothing, Sakiyama left some bills on the table before he left for work.

Han Meiling was neither a representative nor an exceptional case of a woman who chose to marry a Japanese man. Indeed, there were no typical or exceptional cases. While the women all went through similar procedures concerning matchmaking, their experiences varied considerably. Nevertheless, Meiling was not the only one who was not completely satisfied with her husband when they married. Even so, she chose to stay with him. How does such ambivalence help us understand the meanings of marriage for the women?

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This chapter explores women's various experiences of cross-border marriages in one of the major bride-sending communities, Dongyang in Liaoning Province. I examine how the Chinese women enacted and navigated their struggles, hopes, hesitations, and pressures in local and transnational contexts. Like Han Meiling, many women I met in Dongyang displayed ambivalent attitudes toward cross-border marriage; they were not completely contented or enthusiastic, yet they hoped for a better future from these marriages. What makes marriage to Japanese men an option? What kind of option is it for them? How do cross-border marriages play a role in fashioning these women's lives and futures? Moreover, how can we conceptualize women's willingness and simultaneous ambivalence to cross borders?

One aim of this chapter is to complicate local and global relations and rethink women's desires, experiences, and struggles within situated localities.[59] Whereas increased global flows of people, items, technologies, or ideas partly created a condition where cross-border marriages were made possible, this chapter suggests that local expectations and values also played crucial formative roles in the decisions to cross national borders to marry. In other words, it was not the desire for difference or the foreign that pushed women beyond their local communities, but rather it was their attempts to navigate local norms on a translocal scale. Their willingness to cross national borders to marry was closely coupled with their efforts and struggles to pursue local expectations.

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[59] Tim Oakes and Louisa Schein (2006) use the term "translocal" to simultaneously highlight mobilities and localities. Their term translocality draws our attention to the need not to lose sight of the importance of localities in people's lives, while simultaneously analyzing multiple forms of mobilities.

Previous works on transnational intimate relationships observe that women's willingness to marry a foreign man and relocate to a foreign country is often shaped by their gendered imagining of the West, or other developed countries, and their desire to escape from local gender ideologies and familiar norms and responsibilities (cf. Constable 2005, Kelsky 1999, Brennan 2004, Thai 2005). These studies suggest that seeking a foreign man is often associated with feelings of dismay toward local men, who are either effeminized or seen as too macho. Conversely, "foreign men" are viewed as modern and as more likely to respect independence and gender equality. Therefore, women's desire for transnational intimate relationships is produced by and produces their attempts to transgress or escape from local norms. That is, for women, ideas such as "West," "International," or "foreign" are seen as having a dichotomous relation with the local.

Nevertheless, the Chinese women's experiences I witnessed in Dongyang provided dissimilar dynamics between the local norms and perceived "foreign."

Analyzing increased Internet romance and email-mediated marriages among young Cameroonian woman who seek European husbands, Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2007) observes that women's desires for such marriages derives "more from local history than from global politic" (2007, 642). She claims that seeking a foreign husband is not necessarily transgressing the local gender ideologies but rather a means to fulfill local expectations of proper womanhood and marriage.[60] Thus, the transformation these Internet marriages brought was not the change of ideology itself, but rather a means to achieve the same gender norms. Whereas for the Cameroonian women Johnson-Hanks studied, it was the local men who did not fulfill women's ideal marriages, for the Chinese women I met, they felt responsibility for not fulfilling or meeting the local expectations for ideal brides.

Accordingly, in this chapter, I argue that, in Dongyang, Chinese women's physical departure from the local by engaging in cross-border marriages constitutes one way to conform to the local marital norms, such as concerning the centrality of marriage in their life and expectations of marrying up. Therefore, inquiring about what marriage means locally for the women is crucial. For instance, what does it mean to be married, or not to be married, by a certain age, and how does marriage shape women's lives, personhood, and prospective living situations? In the remainder of this chapter, I offer ethnographies of how women navigated their practices and sometimes contradictory consequences of marrying out, working on appearance within situated localities and transnational contexts.

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[60] Johnson-Hanks (2007) further explains that in Cameroon, marriage still has a symbolic centrality. Finding a proper marriage creates proper womanhood and honor. She also shows that the Cameroonian women expressed feelings of dissatisfaction toward local men, such as "local marriage is nothing," or local men are "backward" (2007, 653), however, she importantly points out that "Cameroonian women seeking foreign husbands on the internet are doing something counterintuitive: using a new, transnational technology to achieve old, local aims when the old, local methods for achieving those aims no longer suffice" (2007, 655).

Stories of Marrying Up, Off, or Out

Ms. Pei Xu was one of the women I followed from the beginning of her journey, starting at a matchmaking meeting. When I had just arrived in Dongyang in July 2009, Pei Xu was invited to a meeting with Mr. Goto from Japan. Over the several days of the matchmaking tour, I did not have many chances to talk with her, but later, after she started attending Japanese language lessons, we had daily interactions at the school as well as outside of it. Later, she told me that at thirty-six, after she had divorced her Chinese husband, she had spent several years in Indonesia as a singer and dancer for Chinese-Indonesian (*Ch: hua qiao*) tourists. This opportunity gave her a chance to save money to buy a car and an apartment in Dongyang. She retired from singing and was working as an independent trader, buying clothing in China and selling it in Indonesia.

Soon after Goto arrived in Dongyang, he met Pei Xu. Goto checked into his own room, changed his clothes, and came to the room for the meeting. During their meeting, two staff members (Ms. Yano and Ms. Chen) and I also sat in the room. After introducing where Goto lived by showing a map of Japan, Chen asked Goto if he had any questions:

Goto: How much does she know about Japanese culture and customs? You know, in Japan there are customs; for example, it is women who need to compromise [*Ja: oreru*].

Yano (instead of asking Xu): We will teach all the women about Japanese culture and customs before they leave for Japan. It should be okay [*Ja: daijōbu desu*].

Goto: What kind of life do you want? It seems that in terms of mores [*Ja:*

doutoku], Japan has a higher level than China. Chinese people cross the street randomly, and people are even walking on the highways.

Chen (asking Xu in Chinese): What kind of life do you want?

Xu: (answering in Chinese) I want a stable life [*Ch: anding*] and a better life than now [*Ch: bi xianzai hao*].

Chen (in Japanese): She said that she wants a stable life with a higher level than the current one.

Goto: What do you mean by a higher level? I don't think that her life would change that much. She already has a car and a house here. I am also already retired.

Yano and Chen looked at each other and realized that Chen had translated something that she should not have, or that Xu's direct answer was not the ideal answer in this context.

Chen: (restating in Japanese): I am sorry as I think I mistranslated. I did not mean that the standard of living is higher, but she wants a life where a wife and a husband work together to cooperate [*Ja: issho ni kyoryoku*].

Goto: I thought so. It is not about a level or something. I also want a life where simply being together is enjoyable. In that sense, it seems that we are like-minded [*Ja: kiga aisou*].

After the fifteen-minute meeting, Chen asked Pei Xu about her impression of Goto. She accepted his proposal and agreed to marry him. Early the next morning, Goto, Xu, and Chen went to Shenyang to visit the Consulate-General of Japan to obtain certification that Goto was single and then to register for marriage. This process usually takes a day. Because the car did not have enough space for me, I stayed in Dongyang with the local brokerage staff members. Engaged couples usually plan to come back to Dongyang in the evening and go to the fanciest Western-style restaurant in Dongyang for dinner. However, on the way back in the evening, Chen called and told us that the couple preferred to pick up something and eat it in the car, as they wanted to go to a barber. I was a little confused about their change of plans. The day before the wedding, why did they need to skip dinner at a nice restaurant and go to a barber? If Goto needed to have his hair cut, he could go to a barber in Japan. The next morning, I learned that, because the wedding was the next day and photographs would be taken, Goto needed to go to a barber. Xu had asked him to dye his hair black. When Yano asked Goto if everything was okay at the barber, he said, “Yes, people usually tell me that I look young, even if I don’t dye my hair….” They held a wedding ceremony that night.

On the last day of Goto’s stay, Xu asked Goto one question during the dinner by using a translator. She asked, “What if I get fat in the future, are you still okay with that?” Goto answered, “That is not good! Women always have to be pretty. If they stop caring about their appearance, they are not women anymore.” When the translator told her what he had said, Xu made a painful grimace. She first asked the local staff not to translate anything that she would say. Then, she started complaining about his male chauvinist attitudes. On the way back to the brokerage, a local staff member told me, “Xu Pei is still pretty, but she is getting close to forty. Even if she is pretty, it is different from when she was in her twenties. She needs to find a way to settle down before becoming forty.”

A couple of months later, during an interview with Xu at a café, we talked about the day before the wedding. She admitted that she had asked him to dye his hair black. She continued:

> I did not tell my friends about his real age. I told them that he is fifty-two years old. Only my family knew that he is actually sixty-four years old. But in Japan, I wouldn't mind if he has white hair at all because no one knows me there. Yet, in Dongyang, if someone saw me walking with an old man, people might say something about me later. So I asked him to dye his hair.

Recalling the day of the matchmaking meeting, Xu explained to me that, although she did not have enough time to consider the likely proposal when she was invited to the meeting, she already knew Goto's basic information from his profile, and she knew she was going to accept his proposal before she had even met him because of his attributes (including his economic status and residence).

I asked the same question that I asked many Japanese men: "Have you ever thought about marrying other nationalities?"

She answered, "Never. I never thought about marrying or going to Europe or America. I only want to go to Japan."

I asked why.

"I think that the Western lifestyles and customs [*Ch: shenghuo xiguan*] are too different. The West is also too far," she answered. She also had several friends already living in Japan and knew that there were many Chinese people in Japan. She also knew that some women married Korean men. Nonetheless, she rejected that option, saying, "Korean men could be abusive. Many women who married Korean men are now returning to Dongyang to escape from them." Although she did not have actual friends who experienced such situations, she participated in circulating such rumors.

Yet, Xu's perspective on marriage to a Japanese man was ambivalent. In order to explain Japanese-Chinese marriages, she said:

> In Dongyang, women who cannot find a marriage partner in China would marry a Japanese man. For me, it has been difficult to find someone whose attributes

> [*tiaojian*] are better than mine. Even if I might find someone, those men [with good *tiaojian*] would choose a pretty, young woman in her twenties. I am too old. My age is the only obstacle. Marriage is not the best way to go to Japan. It is not something that I can proudly talk about. I did not tell all my friends about my marriage. I want to come back to Dongyang during Chinese New Year. My father said that I could come home, but not with Goto. He said that he would be embarrassed if our neighbors saw him. My father is sixty-seven years old, and Goto is sixty-four years old. He thinks that I made a decision to marry without considering anything. My father does not really have a bad impression of Japan, yet he is concerned about Goto's age, such a sudden marriage, and my going to a faraway place.

She confessed that her first marriage gave her some lessons. Before her first marriage, she and her ex-husband had gone out for five years. When they married, instead of her moving to his place, he moved into her house. It was an extraordinary case in Dongyang. She thought that because he was uncomfortable living in her house, he gradually did not come home, often going out drinking with his friends. Consequently, their marriage ended within one year. At the end of the interview, she concluded that, "marriage and courtship are different; courtship might be *langman* (romance) but marriage is *jingji* (economy) and *tiaojian* (attributes)."

During my stay in Dongyang, I also met a number of women whose attempts to find a Japanese husband could not be understood independently from their local marital expectations. When I visited a branch office, I met a woman who registered in March 2009 but after a year and a half still had not heard anything from the broker. So, she decided to come by the office again. She explained that all her friends were married and she was really in a hurry and desperate (*Ch: zhaoji*). She was twenty-five years old, and for her, the age of twenty-five was too late to marry. She said, "My mother is also desperate. I cannot just wait forever. If I have to wait for another half year [to hear from the broker], I will be in trouble." As the broker explained to her, matchmaking meetings might be next week, but might be much later, and they did not really know when the meetings would happen. Furthermore, in many cases, women would not be invited for matchmaking meetings at all. She said, “The women in their thirties do not have the right to choose [*Ch: meiyou quanli*]. If someone is in her thirties, she may be chosen by a man once, but if she declines him, she does not know when the next chance would be. So, she cannot decline him.” I asked about the women in their twenties, and she said that women in their twenties still have the right to choose because they will probably have another chance.

This woman was working in the cosmetics section of a supermarket. The broker suggested that she continue working, because if she just waits (without working), she does not know when (or if) she would be invited to a matchmaking meeting. She had a friend studying abroad in Tokyo who told her that life in Japan was really hard. Her friend had been in Japan for a couple of years but still could not speak Japanese well. Yet, going to Japan was still a better option for this woman. When she was about to leave the office, the broker told her that whenever he found an appropriate man (*Ch: heshi de*), he would contact her. In practice, though, it was not a matter of finding a “suitable” person for her. She had to be chosen by a Japanese man for the meeting.

I met another woman, Ms. Peng Zhi, at the branch office in Dongyang when she came to register as a member. She was soon invited for an Internet matchmaking meeting with Mr. Akita from Tokyo. When Akita came to Dongyang for in-person matchmaking meetings a couple of weeks later, Zhi was one of his bride candidates. Because Akita’s “first choice” declined his proposal, Akita asked Zhi for a long-distance courtship. Courtship over a period of time was not really recommended by the staff members, as linguistic difficulties might cause unnecessary troubles before marriage; it was also seen as not polite to the women, as courtship would not give any guarantees of marriage. However, the staff assumed that Akita would make a decision soon and let Akita and Zhi communicate with each other freely. While Peng Zhi seemed to enjoy their phone conversations for a couple of weeks, Akita ultimately terminated their courtship. When I visited her, she told me that they broke up. We continued our conversation at a nearby KFC. Peng Zhi told me:

> Five or six years ago, I was dating someone I really liked. But we broke up; his mother did not like me. But since then, I have not met anyone I really like. Right now, there is someone who likes me and wants to marry me in Dongyang. I don't dislike him, yet I don't really like him either. If, after all, I have to marry someone I don't really like, I want to go to Japan and have a life there. If I have to choose between a Chinese man I don't really like and a Japanese man I don't really like, I would choose to marry a Japanese man and have a new life in Japan. Yet…I still want to marry someone I really like! I might sound really contradictory. If I marry here, I want to marry someone with a stable job, but this seems to be almost impossible. This time, after breaking up with Akita, I am really struggling to think what to do for the future—whether I marry in Dongyang and live here for good or go to Japan and have a new life.

These women's struggles, pressures, and attempts to find a marriage partner were not limited to cross-border marriages. The migration of these Chinese women was not a "survival strategy" (Brennan 2004) per se, where one sacrifices and sells herself or marries out to escape poverty.[61] Although the women I met were not necessarily the poorest of the poor, and financial support was important, what they sought was not simply a tool to improve their economic standard of living. Marrying a Japanese man was also a means to avoid social dead ends, including uncertainty, loneliness, a predictable life, and even the status quo of singlehood.

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[61] Denise Brennan makes a distinction between a survival strategy and an advancement strategy when discussing sex workers in the Dominican Republic (2004, 23-24). Brennan describes that a survival strategy is a means to simply survive by selling sex. On the contrary, those women who sell sex to foreign tourists use an "advancement strategy" (2004, 23) as a fast track to economic success and to improve their lives, including through marriage and migration to male tourists' home countries.

Local Expectations of Marriage, Transnational Alternatives

While the meaning of marriage was shifting within the local context (Yan 2003), it was still viewed as an imperative part of one's lifecycle and for securing the future (Ebrey 1991; Watson 1991; Ngai 2005; Fan 2008). In Dongyang, after the age of twenty-five or so, women and their parents started to become anxious (*Ch: zhaoji*) about finding a partner. In another town, Xinghai (Chapter 5), it was even earlier; after the age of twenty, parents and relatives start looking for good prospects. In both communities, the first question the locals often asked me was whether I was married or not. When I told them I was not, they then asked my age. My single status, along with my being in my early thirties at that time, surprised the locals, and some even let out a small shriek because it was unbelievable for them. However, since I was a "foreigner" (*Ch: waiguoren*), they tried to make sense of it by rationalizing that "foreigners are different" (*Ch: waiguoren bu yiyang*). Nevertheless, local Chinese women were not granted any exceptions. Age was one of the crucial conditions of marriageability for women. A local told me "if the women are already 27 or 28, it is almost impossible to find a partner locally. The men between 28 and 30 years old with good conditions (*Ch: tiaojian*) usually are already married. If women's conditions are good, it is more difficult for them to find a suitable partner; then, they usually find Japanese or Korean husbands. I know one woman in my neighborhood. She is 27 and really pretty but she could not find anyone locally."

Another woman, whom I first met in China while she was visiting her family, told me when we met again in Japan, “When I married, I was in my late twenties, which is way too late to find a partner in Dongyang. So my mother said if I could marry, I should go wherever I could do so. I think that transnational marriages are for those who cannot marry locally. If I were in my early twenties, I would never marry a Japanese man.” She continued, “I can go to China once or twice per year, so I think my circumstances are more fortunate than for others. My husband also gives my family money: 600,000 yen [US $7,300] twice a year when he gets a bonus. But I don’t want to live in Japan forever. I am asking my husband to move to China when he retires.”

The expectation was that a woman living the single life should not maintain that status quo. These women feel implicit or explicit pressure to marry and to make their lives. (Men also have to marry, but their age limit comes later.) Unlike the professional women Constable studied (2003, 2005), most of the women I met did not have a college education, full-time job, or occupational skills. Thus, no woman thought about supporting herself for the rest of her life. Furthermore, supporting oneself was not the only purpose of marriage. To be married by a certain age was also to confirm an expected path in local life, and sometimes to show one’s normalcy (as the locals initially let out a shriek when they learned about my single status). It is important to point out that by crossing national borders, the women were not necessarily transgressing or challenging the local norms, or even local gender ideologies. Rather, I argue that the women’s physical departure from the local by engaging in cross-border marriages was ironically one way to ideologically conform to the local marital norms. In other words, women’s geographical border crossing was their effort to not transgress ideological borders and taken for granted marital norms and expectations.

Indeed, when the women looked for a Japanese husband, their criteria for marriage were not too different from what they would expect for local men. When Xu Pei claimed that marriage is economic factors and attributes, her claims also applied to marriage in the local context. She tried to analyze her former "failed" marriage as due to her unusual conduct, overweighting romance, not prioritizing economic standing, and not following the norm of patrilocality. Moreover, women's wishes for marrying up—i.e. marrying someone with a higher socio-economic standing—were not limited to cross-border marriages. When the women expressed it was almost impossible to find a partner locally, they also meant that what was impossible was to "marry up."

Japanese-Chinese marriages have parallels with other forms of gendered migration on a global scale (cf. Constable 2009; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Sassen 2000; Parreñas 2001; Massey 1994; Pessar and Mahler 2007). Commonly, women in "developing" countries marry and relocate to "developed" countries.[62] As far as I know, the brokered marriages between Japan and China are limited to Japanese men and Chinese women. There were no brokerage agencies introducing Japanese women to Chinese men, or Chinese men to Japanese women.[63] Those couples do exist, but they were not married through brokerage services.

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[62] Such cases also include marriage migrations from the Philippines and Mainland China to the United States (Constable 2003), the Dominican Republic to Germany (Brennan 2005), Russia to the United States (Patico 2009), Vietnam to South Korea (Lee 2011), and so forth.

[63] Akiko Takeyama (2005, 2010) shows that some Japanese single women seek emotional companionship from younger male hosts in clubs. Her work demonstrates changing gender relations (more women gain economic power) and the paradoxical reproduction of gender ideologies (such as women devote themselves to men) within interactions between Japanese women and hosts in Japan.

Marriage and women's mobility is not a new phenomenon in Chinese society. Patricia Buckley Ebrey (1991) observes that Chinese society tends toward hypergamy, that is, women try to marry up into a socially and economically higher family.[64] Ebrey (1991) writes, "After marriage, a woman's status will be largely determined by the social and economic standing of the family she has joined, and so she will gain by marrying 'up' into a prosperous family" (5). Such practices are also based on patrilineal descent and patrilocality (Watson 1975, 1982). Thus, marriage mobility involves the social and physical movement of women (Croll 1981; Fan 2008). William Lavely (1991) similarly discusses marriage and mobility in China, claiming "in China, and as elsewhere, some localities are better than others. The implied 'spatial hierarchy' thus becomes a factor in the mate-selection process" (286). He further explains that because residence is also a key factor for economic success in contemporary rural China, women attempt marrying up into a place that is spatially superior, while a man's residence can be a key factor for determining his desirability in the marriage market.[65]

Within China, rural-urban migration was also restricted by the household registration system instituted in 1955, which was to prevent rural peasants from flowing into cities and towns. In such a context, marriage was one of the legitimate means for women to migrate to other places. Lavely (1991) points out that it was natural for women to wish to marry close to their natal home. Yet, once a tie to a distant community was established, more matches would be made because women who married earlier would introduce their family members and relatives to men in their new communities. Rubie Watson (1991) notes that "the majority of Chinese brides enter their husbands' families and communities as strangers. At marriage, a young woman must establish her credentials in circumstances that may be far from welcoming. In contrast, most grooms continue to live and work in the environment they have always known" (350).

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[64] William Lavely (1991) points out that in China, homogamous matching (*men dang hu dui*) is typical, but ideal of hypergamy is not unusual, especially for those seek a husband or a son in-law (1991, 288).

[65] William Lavely (1991) explains that while the revolution in land reform and collectivization after the 1950 has radically reduced differentials within communities, the differentials between communities (especially rural and urban) were not effectively redressed. As a result, "residence thus emerged as a crucial index of economic status in rural China, and hypergamy increasingly became defined spatially" (1991, 289).

In contemporary Chinese society after the post-Mao reforms, such marriage and spatial and social mobility were still intertwined, yet the distance has expanded (Fan 2008). In particular, rural-urban migration was loosened by the household registration reform in the 1980s, and migration into other urban places also projects hope for upward mobility (cf. Yan 2003; Rofel 2007). For example, Arianne Gaetano (2008) observes that for Chinese labor migrant women (*Ch: dagongmei*) from rural areas, relocation to larger cities, such as Beijing, offers them not only temporary autonomy, but also a new imagination in which "future change is possible" (630). In particular, such future change can be seen as feasible through finding an urban husband.

When women married a Japanese man and relocated themselves to Japan, this also overlapped with the local conceptions of marrying up geographically, economically, and socially. The practice of "global hypergamy" (Constable 2005) here cannot be understood without understating the local practices and values of hypergamy. There were a few cases of paradoxical global hypergamy in which women were globally marry up in terms of geography, yet marrying down in terms of local status in a new community (cf. Thai 2005, 2008, Oxfeld 2005, Constable 2005). Nonetheless, there were also many cases where regardless of initial ambivalent attitudes; the brides obtained higher standard of life in Japan. The goal of marrying up globally was transposed or expanded from pre-existing local expectations concerning marriage. Practices of marriage might have transformed, yet cultural legitimacy and the importance of marriage and marrying up were symbolically reinforced (cf. Johnson-Hanks 2007).

Departure, Hope, and Anxiety

While marrying out was expected, crossing borders also provoked both hope for a better life and anxiety. In particular, marrying into a community where they would not even speak the language made many women anxious. During the Japanese language lessons in Dongyang, Pei Xu often expressed her concerns about her spousal visa application. She married a Japanese man at the end of July 2009 through China Bride, and she had been waiting in Dongyang for the certificate of residency (*Ja: zairyu kyoka*) from Japan. Xu's concern was especially about the age gap between her husband, Mr. Goto, and herself (she was thirty-six and Goto was sixty-four). She heard rumors that the couples with a large age gap had more difficulty obtaining visas. She would be in trouble, she said, if she could not go, because she had already told her family that she was going to Japan. She also had sold her car.

Every Thursday at noon, Xu received a call from Goto in Japan. Goto was always punctual, calling exactly at 12:00 p.m. Because Xu did not understand what Goto was telling her, she decided to stay at school until 12:00 p.m., so that her teacher, Xiaohong, and I could translate Goto's call. Their calls usually lasted ten minutes or so, and they usually talked about the weather, Goto's everyday life, and plans for Xu's life in Japan. One Thursday at the end of September, Goto called her promptly at noon. Instead of talking about their regular topics, such as the weather, Goto's first words were, "Your certificate of status of residency in Japan is approved!" Because we had put our faces really close to her phone, we also heard it. Xiaohong and I looked at each other, got excited, and told Xu, "Great!" We translated it to her quickly: "*Shouxu xialaile*!" However, Xu was rather dumbfounded. Goto continued, "Tomorrow I will visit China Bride with the document, and the document will arrive in Dongyang probably next week. When you receive it next week, please go to Shenyang to apply for a visa. Also, don't forget to apply for a passport." Again, we translated. Xu still looked shocked by the news. Yet, they continued their phone conversation for several minutes, talking about the weather and so on. After hanging up the phone, the three of us ran up to the calendar hanging on the wall. Xiaohong tried to figure it out: "If the document arrives in Dongyang next week, the following week will be National Independence holidays and you cannot go to the Japanese embassy in Shenyang. So, if you go there the following Monday, and it usually takes a week to issue a visa, then you can go to Japan by the end of October!" Xu made a really painful face and looked like she was about to cry.

We went out for lunch. Because Xu seemed to be really worried about going to Japan, I told her that even if the visa was issued shortly, she could go there whenever she was ready. Xu said, "I am not emotionally ready yet [*Ch: wo haimei xinli zhunbei hao*]." Xiaohong told her, "You were concerned about whether or not your application would be approved, and when it is approved, you are so sad and almost crying! You should be happy!" Indeed, the other day, Xu was worried about whether her spousal visa would be issued without any delays or problems. Yet, when she received the call that her certificate of residency had been approved, she was almost ready to cry—not happy tears, but fearful tears.

Pei Xu's worries about "not going to Japan" and "going to Japan" confused me at first. Yet, I gradually came to realize that her hopes and hesitations about going to Japan could exist simultaneously. She wanted to go to Japan; yet, she also hesitated, but she felt that she needed to go because she had told others that she was going to Japan. As I came to know more women, I discovered that Xu was not the only one whose aspirations, hopes, hesitations, and distresses shifted with her everyday experience. Yet, despite these feelings, many women left China for Japan.

Women's Agency: Love or Life?

Recent scholars observe the importance of the role of "love" and emotion in women's decision-making about migration (cf. Mai and King 2009, Faier 2011).[66] In addressing women's agency in transnational intimate relationships, existing works tend to focus on a cultural logic of desire that centers on women's romantic feelings toward their counterparts (cf. Constable, 2003, Cheng 2010, Johnson-Hanks 2007, Johnson 2007, Kelsky 2001).[67] Sealing Cheng (2010), for example, by examining Filipina entertainers in the US military zones in South Korea, argues that we should not erase women's subjectivity, as they are both laborers and subjects in migration. She claims that women also bring their own romantic (and erotic) imaginings to their transnational intimate relationships.

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[66] Lieba Faier (2008) in her previous work, approaches "love" in a different way. She observes that Filipino brides in Japan use "love" to claim their transnational subjectivity, challenging their stigmatized images. In her analysis of sex workers in Dominican Republic, Denise Brennan demonstrates sex workers use love as "performance" in order to achieve their goals (2005).

[67] For instance, Karen Kelsky observes that the Japanese women's desire for the West and the western men reveals their critique of patriarchal nationalism in Japan (2001). The Japanese women, who are marginalized and frustrated within the Japanese corporate system due to gender and age, turn to the West as a means of resistance to the male dominated Japanese society. Furthermore the West, in particular Western men, are romanticized and eroticized, as compared with the "backward" Japanese men.

The Chinese women I met came to the agency and matchmaking meetings to find a Japanese husband of their volition sometimes even against their parents' wishes or without telling them. However, at the same time, Japanese men were not always viewed as the objects of their desire. Such Chinese women's ambivalent attitudes toward cross-border marriages with Japanese men initially puzzled me. Pei Xu was not the only woman who showed hesitation about revealing her engagement in cross-border marriages. Just as Xu was not willing to tell others about her marriage to Goto, other women showed similar feelings. When Xu was attending her Japanese lessons, Ms. Wang Lijuan joined the class a month later. Lijuan, a thirty-four-year-old divorcée with an eight-year-old son, married a Japanese man at the end of September. Although her former Chinese husband took guardianship, Lijuan lived with their son. When she married a Japanese man, Mr. Noguchi, who was in his early forties, bureaucratic errors prevented them from holding a wedding ceremony. Two months later, Noguchi came back to Dongyang for the wedding ceremony and the taking of photographs, which are important parts of the "proof" of their marriage for the Immigration Office.

During the day at the photography studio, Lijuan told me that her "friend" might not make it to the wedding ceremony. I interpreted what she said as meaning that one of her friends might not come.[68] So, I told her that this was disappointing, but not to worry. However, she was not referring to one specific friend, as no one came. The local agency staff members prepared two tables. Each table could seat approximately ten people. As planned, one table was for Noguchi's guests and the other was for Lijuan's guests. As no one came from Japan for Noguchi, the local staff members sat in as his guests. The party was supposed to start at 6:00 p.m. Although we waited for Lijuan's guests, indeed, no one came. All the staff members became worried and even embarrassed, as one of the tables was empty. Some staff members started suggesting not filming one of the tables in the wedding video. Fortunately, also present were two other male customers from Japan and their prospective Chinese brides. In order to even up the number of guests at each table, a local staff member suggested that some of us move to the other table, so that it would look like some guests were sitting at each table. After five or six people moved to the other table, both tables had some guests, and thereafter the wedding ceremony was held. The following day, Lijuan told me that she actually did not invite anyone. She said that she did not want others to know that she was marrying a Japanese man. If she had told some of her friends, then other people would soon know because Dongyang is a small town. So, while the local staff members were waiting for her guests, she already knew that no one would come.

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[68] In Chinese language, a friend and friends can be described in the same word, "*pengyou*."

Moreover, the women often described Japanese men as male chauvinist (*dananzi zhuyi*). A Japanese language teacher, Xiaohong, also told me that Chinese women often get upset when they learn the Japanese term for "husband" (*shujin*). *Shujin* is written in Chinese characters as *zhuren* (which means "master," "host," or "owner"). They think that the term is not polite toward women. When looking at Japanese utensils for couples, a bride also complained, "Why are men's chopsticks longer than women's and why are men's tea mugs larger than women's?" The different size of utensils, which is usually taken for granted in Japan, became a sign of gender inequality to the Chinese women;

these women had taken for granted the reduced gender differentiation of the Maoist era (cf. Freeman 2011).[69]

Women’s emotional feelings, such as love or romance, in making a decision have been one of the crucial themes of existing anthropological work. Bringing romantic emotions back to the analysis of marriage is not unique to cross-border marriages. For instance, discussing marriage in domestic contexts, Wardlow and Hirsch (2006) suggest that the involvement of romantic love and companionship in marriage refers to “the idea of marriage as a project, the aim of which is individual fulfillment and satisfaction, rather than (or in addition to) social reproduction” (2006, 4). Thus, marriage takes place instead of, and not only for, family-based arrangements, social obligation, or advancing and enduring generations. The motivations, goals, and ideals of marriage are emotional (and also sexual) self-fulfillment. By examining romantic love and emotional bonds as keys for creating a modern person, Padilla and colleagues (2006) similarly argue that “love brings subjectivity back into kinship studies” (xiv). In these contexts, love is viewed as a powerful vehicle through which women create their subjectivity and exercise agency.

Why were these Chinese women I met willing to marry if they did not really love their husbands? Such a question, however, already presumes certain assumptions that love is always a precondition for marriage. I do not mean to deny the possibility of love at all in these marriages; however, I should also not privilege love or romantic feelings as sole resources to legitimate women’s decisions. Indeed, women’s ambivalent attitudes push us further to complicate any cultural logic of desire (Constable 2005) by suggesting various meanings of marriage and border-crossings within a particular locality and translocality. On the one hand, an argument for love and romance provides crucial insight, in particular by challenging the simplistic picture of the commodification of intimate relations. Nevertheless, on the other hand, it ironically also reproduces the idea that love or romantic feelings are privileged sites in which women's subjectivity is addressed. By claiming the possibility of love as a motivation, other motives (such as seeking a better life, secured future, or marital status) are reduced to material motives or a survival strategy, in which women's decisions are underestimated or denied. This consequently misses various cultural meanings of marriage.

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[69] Caren Freeman (2011, 111) observes that Chosŏnjok women who migrate from China to South Korea also talked about “Chinese gender equality” and “Korean patriarchy” to articulate their cultural conflicts when they adjusted to marital life in South Korea.

For the women in Dongyang, marriage seeking upward mobility was not solely based on economic motives but also crucially evoked more abstract hopes for making a better life and personhood. Agency, as Laura Ahearn defines, is "the culturally constrained capacity to act" (Ahearn 2001a, 54; 2001b). This also means that conceptions of agency differ from time to time and society to society. Importantly, one's action is always mediated by and constitutive of one's sociocultural contexts (cf. Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979; Desjarlais 1997). Following Ahearn's approach to agency, instead of finding a homogeneous definition of agency, I also find it is important to examine how the women conceived themselves as making their own decisions and actions regardless of the situation.[70]

The women's decisions to visit the transnational marriage agency derived both from social pressures and hopes to make their own lives. Here conceptions of life included economic factors, but were not limited to them.[71] For instance, Olwig and Sørensen (2002) argue, “The notion of livelihood offers a particularly useful concept in analyzing the ways in which actors deal with the varying and complex local and global interrelations in which human life is embedded today” (2002, 4). In a similar manner, Norman Long observes, “Livelihood best expresses the idea of individuals and groups striving to make a living, attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities, and choosing between the different value positions” (2000,196; also cited Olwig and Sørensen 2002, 4). Moreover, the building of livelihood should include social and interpersonal relationships that constitute the worlds they live in by negotiating “value choice, status issues, identification with or destination from other modes of living and types of social persons” (2000, 197). Thus, livelihood is something that people make (within constrained circumstances) during the course of their life: what kind of world they want to live in, what kind of social relationships they want to have, and what kind of person they want to be. This, of course, does not preclude the possibility of love for their marital life. Rather, it provides an alternative way of addressing women’s agency and their willingness to make their own life even if their decisions are limited and also shaped within gendered ideologies of marriage.

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[70] Laura Ahearn's work on love letter writing practices in Nepal in the 1980's and 1990's provides a valuable example of how ethnographic work can examine the concept of agency. Ahearn, while being aware of extensive discussions in practice theory about agency, argues that "Instead of attempting to locate, label, and measure agency myself, I try to discover how people in Junigau conceptualize it" (2001a, 56).

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[71] The idioms that make a livelihood usually refer to economic factors, such as maintaining one’s living by earning money or seeking better economic opportunities. Economic elements are indeed inescapable in order to live one’s life. Nonetheless, this should not be limited to economic motives. Olwig and Sørensen (2002) observe how the older notion of livelihood, “course of life, life time, kind or manner of life,” shifted to the current meaning exclusively linked with economic and more material terms (2002, 3).

Marring Out or Marrying into a Neighboring Community?

If, upon marriage, women's relocation to their husband' residence is not novel, if the prospect of upward mobility by means of marriage is not new, and marriage symbolizes a secured future even in the local context, the question we should ask is not about the lack of romantic feelings, but rather the significance of relocation across national borders. How can a person who does not even speak the same language be a "suitable" partner? Regardless of such ambivalent and anxious attitudes toward marriage with Japanese men, what still made Japan a marriageable place for the women in Dongyang?

On the one hand, crossing national borders worked to negotiate women's marriageability. For those who missed a chance to marry in a local context, they engaged in what Hung Cam Thai (2008) calls "convertibility of social worth and respect" (10). Drawing upon Bourdieu's social field theory, yet further expanding it into transnational fields, Thai (2008) argues that transnational social fields can be sites where various forms of capital are convertible from one form to another, and he observes that highly educated "unmarriageable" Vietnamese women in Vietnam can be marriageable for the working-class Vietnamese men in the United States and vice versa. Therefore, social worth in marital choice can be convertible on a transnational scale.

Nonetheless, on the other hand, I claim that convertibility does not work in any transnational field. That is, not all of the social fields (locality) can be linked up for such conversion. In order to be social sites of conversion, for the men and the women who engaged in Japanese-Chinese marriages, such sites have to possess some presumed or imagined commonality for exchange. The women were not simply marrying into any "rich" or "modern" country, while the men were not simply marrying women from any "poorer" country. For instance, most of the women I met in Dongyang told me that they were not really interested in marrying American or European partners. For one thing, there were no brokers who introduced Western men to Chinese women in Dongyang. But it was not solely a lack of opportunities. For instance, one Chinese woman told me that if she went to Dalian, which is four hours away from Dongyang, she would find many agencies introducing men from different Western countries. Nonetheless, she was not willing to go there because she not only did not know those brokers, but also anyone in those Western countries. She stated, "Their [Westerners']) lifestyle [*shenghuo xiguan*] is too different from us." Moreover, such inability to imagine marrying into an "unfamiliar" place indicates the limits of convertibility.

The practice of marrying out also had its limit.[72] For the women in Dongyang, cross-border marriage to Japanese men was a bearable option, which did not totally conform to but also did not completely contravene the local norms; at least it adhered to the expectations of marrying off, out, and up. Some places are viewed as unimaginable to marry into, because they are "far" and "unfamiliar." The women imagined Japan as a "proximate" and "familiar" place by drawing upon networks (either direct or indirect) forged by historical connections and earlier migrants. Such migration flows included not only other brides, but also those who went to Japan for work or study (see Chapter 1).

Uneven Opportunities for Mobility

While cross-border marriage to Japanese men provided some women with an opportunity to find a marriage partner and to navigate marriageability, it did not provide the same chance for everyone. Cross-border marriages are characterized by what Doreen Massey (1993) calls "power-geometry" (61), where "different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections" (61). As Massey (1991) argues, it is not simply the difference between those who move and those who do not. Rather, power-geometry demonstrates how certain groups and individuals are situated in relation to flows and the movement. Although Chinese brides move across national borders, they do not initiate the flows, nor or are they in charge of the movements. It is the Japanese men who partly initiate the movements and decide which women can relocate to Japan (see Chapter 3). Nonetheless, the ways in which certain individuals are placed in relation to transnational flows cannot clearly be described. In particular, if mobility is granted to those who are perceived as "suitable" marriage partners, how are individual differences further elucidated based on one's access or lack of access to mobility?

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[72] Lévi-Strauss (1969) observes that marriages are always endogamy and exogamy.

The brides' Japanese language teacher, Zhao Xiaohong, was also a young single woman in her mid-twenties, and she was born in Dongyang. Although Xiaohong had never been to Japan, she went to college in Dalian and majored in Japanese. Her Japanese was indeed pretty fluent, and I was surprised to hear that she had never been to Japan. She also liked to watch Japanese dramas online, and because of that she knew many Japanese slang expressions. After graduating from college in Dalian, she returned to Dongyang and had been a Japanese teacher at a school administered by China Bride for almost two years. She had been teaching a number of Chinese brides, and a local staff member told me that she would be the most knowledgeable person about the brides. Xiaohong and the brides met on a daily basis, and after class, they often went dining and shopping together. Moreover, while other local staff members were seen as persons of the agency (*Ch: gongsi de ren*), Xiaohong was seen as a friend or supporter by the brides. Indeed, when brides had something to complain about, they always complained at school. Thus, Xiaohong often listened to brides' complaints, worries, hopes, and distresses. She also maintained contact with a number of brides after they left for Japan. Xiaohong sometimes told me about who got divorced, who was having extramarital affairs, and so on.

Because Xiaohong spoke Japanese well, many people asked her if she was also interested in marrying a Japanese man. While Xiaohong denied her interest in marrying Japanese men, her pictures were listed on the websites of other marriage agencies in Dongyang. A local broker once asked Xiaohong about her pictures as well as a short self-introduction film. Xiaohong denied it and explained that she did not send her pictures to anyone, and she claimed that perhaps someone else had sent them. When another staff member asked her about it, she answered the same thing. However, none of the staff members believed her. They told me that she was interested in marrying a Japanese man, but that she could not because she was "chubby" (*Ch: pang*) and "not pretty" (*Ch: bu haokan*). Xiaohong was "fatter" than the Chinese brides at the school. She also wore glasses. Although Xiaohong and the brides themselves often talked about other people's appearances, such as who was pretty and who was fat, the staff members' evaluation of Xiaohong's appearance was particularly harsh. The staff members often made fun of Xiaohong, saying that she was fat and not pretty. They often described her by using a Japanese term that means "dowdy middle-aged woman" (*Ja: oba san*).

A couple months later, Xiaohong told me that she had been interested in going to

Japan, but after listening to many stories from the brides who went to Japan, she realized that living expenses were much higher in Japan, and it would not be easy to save money if she lived there. On the other hand, although the average income in Dongyang is lower, living expenses are also cheaper. So, she said, it is about the issue of the rate, and the outcome would be almost the same. Now she thought that she did not have to go to Japan. Also, her parents had been sick lately, which increased her desire not to go to Japan. Xiaohong sometimes told me that she has *xiangqin* (matchmaking) after class with a Chinese man. Her friends introduced her to a couple of men, and she dated some of them. But when I met with her in January 2010, she said that she had broken up with her boyfriend. Yet, she was planning to meet another man in the near future. She said, "If I were to marry, I want to marry an older man, but not more than ten years older. I cannot deal with more than that! I'd like a reliable man. My parents often depend on me. I cannot handle it if there are more people who will depend on me! I also want to depend on someone." While she saw a number of brides off to Japan, she also wished to marry to make her life.

Beauty and Mobility

In Dongyang, marrying a Japanese man was often seen as an option for a young, "pretty girls" (*Ch: piaoliang de nvhaier*). Teacher Xiaohong's inability to find a Japanese man because of her appearance was made fun of by the broker. Pei Xu, who was thirty-six years old at that time, was older than the other brides; yet, many people viewed her as really pretty (*Ch: hen piaoliang*). She had lightly curly long brown hair, a slim body, big eyes, and always put on full makeup. She also spent a lot of time taking care of her hair and skin. Wang Lijuan was thirty-four; yet, she was not considered pretty. Whenever unlucky events happened to her, such as the initial decline of her visa, or her husband not being nice to her, the broker frequently said, “She was not supposed to marry a Japanese man, yet somehow she was able to do that. But it was some kind of luck or even mistake *Ja: machigai*].” Thus, women’s attributes were used not simply to explain their actual mobility or immobility, but also to further differentiate between those who were worthy and unworthy of mobility. In other words, appearance became a key to determining a woman’s individual worth for mobility.

Here beauty as a tool for mobility includes not only geographical mobility, but also upward mobility of class, economic status, and cultural capital. Importantly, the relationship between beauty and mobility was not limited to cross-border marriages. Within China, beauty may also transcend the registration system by marrying a man in urban areas.[73] The women also explained that suitable matches can be based on one’s prettiness. In other words, the prettier women are, the higher they can marry. Tiantian Zheng observes that the power of the post-Mao state operated not only through administrative regulations and policies, but also through cultural discourses, including consumption and body culture (Zheng 2004). In her analysis of hostesses in Dalian, China, Zheng demonstrates that in such cultural discourse, the hierarchical dichotomy between “uncivilized” rural and “modern” urban was constructed within power relations. In particular, the female body became a battleground for the formation of hegemonic cultural norms. Hostesses, most of whom originally migrated from rural China, attempted to refashion their body and appearance by engaging in conspicuous consumption in order to appeal to male customers who had social and cultural capital.[74]

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[73] Due to the registration system in China, changing one’s residency was really difficult. Marriage was one of the means to change one’s residence.

For the women I met, the category of "the Chinese women" (or even women in a certain locale) did not represent a unified social group. Socioeconomic status alone does not always structure one's relation to the flow. Although gender is a key element, it also unevenly characterizes the ideal of "femininity" of Chinese women. That is, some women were described as "pretty," and others were "not pretty" or "ugly." "Pretty women" apparently had more chances to engage in the flow. Even within the local context, certain physical attributes can also be a requirement for finding a job in China. For instance, I witnessed many job lists that require a minimum of a certain height for waitresses (e.g. above 160cm). I do not intend to describe what physical attitudes are viewed as "pretty" or "ugly" here. Of course, such a description is subjective. Rather, I depended on the rumors, gossip, and discursive narratives that form certain categories of physical attractiveness. Among brides, evaluating each other's appearance was common. Whenever they had a new hairstyle or clothing, they judged whether or not it looked good. Telling each other "you gained/lost weight" was also common. Being slim was seen as good. As teacher Xiaohong was always labeled as "fat," she always said that she had to go on a diet (*Ch: jian fei*). In other words, physical attractiveness is socially and culturally constructed and also has to be narrated and agreed on by members of society. Within conversations, the locals usually agreed about who was pretty and who was not (and of course there are "average" (*Ch: yiban de*) people). Moreover, mobility, in particular migration to Japan, was not described in a homogeneous way. A prospective Japanese husbands' age, occupation, social status, and residence (including whether or not he owned a house) also were evaluated as part of the quality of mobility, which was weighted against the women's appearance.

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[74] Zheng claims that while they exercised agency and made their body for instrumental uses, it paradoxically reinforced the state hegemonic dichotomy between rural and urban, which marginalized them in the first place.

From Pretty (*piaoliang*) to Looking "Japanese" (*xiang riben ren*)

One of the central questions for scholars working on the issues of beauty is whether seeking beauty is a product of choice or social control (cf. Bordo 1985; Davis 1995). Instead of seeking one or the other of these answers, a number of ethnographies show that working on one's appearance can be both an agentic act, and thus empowering, and also limiting within normative gender images and capitalist societies (Miller 2006; Spielvogel 2003; Adrian 2003; Zheng 2004).

For many Chinese brides I met, their appearance was not necessarily seen as a site of agency (cf. Zheng 2004). While working on the body or appearance can be the project in which bodies are subjected and disciplined (Foucault 1979; Bartky 1990; Zheng 2005), there are also limits. For the Chinese women I met, the conceptions of who was pretty and who was not did not change easily. Rather, one's beauty was seen as almost innate. This was also because these brides were not financially affluent, such that the only things they could do was buy inexpensive facial masks or occasionally visit hair salons. Teacher Xiaohong tried going on a diet and adopting the same hairstyle as other brides, yet, for others, she remained a "fat" and "unappealing" woman. Even Xu Pei, whom numerous people described as pretty, realized that her appearance was not as good as when she was in her twenties. While she worked on her appearance, she also felt the limits of maintaining her beauty as she aged.

Interestingly, the standard for what is pretty (*Ch: piaoliang*) seemed not totally the same as that in Japan. In fashion magazines in Dongyang, there were a number of advertisements for Japanese cosmetic companies using Japanese actresses. One bride was looking through the magazine and pointed out one of the advertisements and asked me, "Do Japanese people think she [the Japanese actress] is pretty? She is not pretty at all. There are many more women who are much prettier in China." Then, another bride mentioned that many Japanese men want to marry Chinese women because they are more beautiful than Japanese women. Although, for celebrities, people's opinions are not homogeneous. The Japanese actress, Koyuki was usually seen as pretty in Japan.

When they first came to an agency or a matchmaking meeting, most of the women came in the same clothing they typically wore. Japanese staff members looked at women's profile pictures sent from Dongyang and often told me that the women did not understand what Japanese men would look for. They frequently gave advice, such as how to dress (in a skirt or dress), to sit with their knees tight together, and to smile. Also, if they had long hair, instead of pulling it back, they should let it hang down in front of their chest. They also stressed that they do not need pictures taken at a professional photo studio. The extravagant makeup, dresses, and artificial background used by these studios would be too much for potential Japanese husbands. They would prefer, the staff continued, natural makeup and simple, yet feminine clothing.

Whereas the women could not change their appearance easily, "looking Japanese" was something they could work on. As women's departure for Japan approached, they started thinking about their life in Japan and things they would bring to Japan. Their criteria for consumption gradually shifted to whether or not they could bring an item to Japan, and this also entailed whether or not it would help them "look Japanese." The brides were somehow aware that what was popular in China was not really popular in Japan. For instance, one bride explained that in China, clothing with a lot of sparkling ornamentation was seen as cute and popular, but in Japan, simple clothing in dark colors was more popular. Looking at Japanese fashion magazines available in Dongyang, brides also stated that Chinese makeup sought to be flamboyant, while Japanese makeup appeared natural. Although sometimes they looked at my clothing and compared it with their own clothing to find the difference in taste between Japan and China (I was often wearing dark, simple clothing), their images of what was "Japanese" also came from elsewhere. Teacher Xiaohong was often the one who decided which clothing, hairstyle, or makeup looked Japanese.

Although "Chinese" style and "Japanese" style sometimes just involved simple comparison, most of the time, it also entailed hierarchical judgment. Once a week, the school manager arranged a day for a private lesson between a bride and myself so that the teacher could take a day off and I could get to talk to the bride personally. One morning, Lijuan came with a brand new, bright pink jacket. I honestly thought that she looked good in the jacket and said, "Your jacket is pretty! You look nice (*Ch: haokan*)!" Yet, she suddenly made an embarrassed expression and said, "Teacher Xiaohong yesterday told me that I cannot wear it in Japan. I would look so Chinese." For her, "looking Chinese" was something she had to hide, and if not, it implied that she was not able to refashion herself in her coming life in Japan. It was not simply the cost of clothing. For instance, one day in early winter, Xu Pei came to a class with a knee-length fur coat. She claimed that it was real fur and very expensive. We all touched her coat and said it was really pleasant to the touch. Xu Pei asked, "Do people wear fur coats in Japan today?" Without thinking, I just said, “I rarely see people wearing fur coats nowadays. Maybe Tokyo is not that cold.” Then, she suddenly said, “I won’t bring it to Japan; people would notice that I am Chinese!”

Whereas the women felt the limits and sometimes inability to fulfill the standard local aesthetics, “looking Japanese” was something that the women could work on by choosing particular types of clothing, hairstyle, and makeup. It was not always easy because sometimes what they conceived as “looking Japanese” contradicted what they thought was pretty. Also, what Japanese looked like was not always clear to the brides. The brides asked each other if they would look Japanese in certain clothing. Ironically, while making comments to each other, they condemned the Chinese things and complimented the Japanese things. In order to fashion themselves for a future life in Japan, the women criticized the local standard of aesthetics and recreated hierarchical relations between Japan and China, which they originally opposed.

After They “Married Up”: Marital Lives in Japan

Although Chinese brides relocated to many different places in Japan, most of the women I met in Dongyang moved into middle- to large-sized towns or urban cities such as Tokyo. Scholars working on cross-border marriages have observed that the uniform notion of marrying up and marrying down on a global scale does not quite work (Constable 2005; Thai 2008; Oxfeld 2005; Freeman 2005; Suzuki 2005).[75] Such a paradox of marrying up and marrying down is further complicated by different experiences and contexts in which individuals are embedded. The following stories of brides ethnographically demonstrate the different trajectories of their marital lives in Japan.

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[75] For instance, Thai (2006) shows how transnational marriage produces a paradoxical movement for highly educated Vietnamese women in that they are marrying up in the global scale, yet marrying down in the local scale, as their Vietnamese husbands working in the U.S. engage in a low-wage labor.

Three Brides

While most of the Chinese brides wanted to preserve a network among Chinese brides living in Japan, not all of the brokers and Japanese husbands preferred that option. The broker explained to me:

> Not all the brides live under the same economic and social conditions. Some have more affluent lives than others. Some husbands are more flexible than others are in terms of many things. If the women came from the same town through the same brokerage agency, they would inevitably compare themselves to the others. Then they would ask, "Why is my husband poorer than my friends' husbands?" or "Why can my friend get the newest version of a cell phone and not me?" But we as brokers cannot control or change any of these things. So, it is better not to know what others are doing, so they do not have to compare.

Three brides, Meiling, Liang, and Yu, came from Dongyang and shared the same language lesson period. Meiling relocated to Tokyo, and coincidentally, Liang and Yu married into the same town in central Japan (Liang in the city, and Yu in the suburb). Meiling's and Liang's husbands were relatively well off, while Yu's husband was employed as a contract worker. The brokers were aware of their differences and did not encourage them to keep in touch. However, although they did not usually have a chance to meet up, they often kept up contact through the Internet, so that they knew more or less how the others were doing. While Meiling and Liang were relatively satisfied with their lives, Yu was often frustrated. Although Yu wanted to attend a Japanese language school on a regular basis, she was only able to attend free volunteer lessons at a community center once a week. Because of that, she explained, her Japanese was still not improving even after moving to Japan half a year ago. Moreover, during the weekdays, she had a job as a part-time employee at a factory where many non-Japanese speakers (primarily Nikkei Japanese from Peru) worked. While she did not mind working by herself, her frustrations increased when she learned more about what Liang and Meiling were doing. Liang and her husband traveled to Tokyo, Kyoto, and many different hot springs. Meiling and her husband traveled to the Shanghai EXPO in China, and he also bought her a newly released Coach bag. While Liang and Meiling both had their own problems, to Yu, they looked so happy and fulfilled.

I visited Yu and Liang in winter 2010. Although I was planning to visit them separately, when I visited Liang and her husband, Kato, he suggested that we could all go to the beach together. Therefore, the five of us met up together. It was also Kato's wish to have some acquaintances with whom he could share his experiences of cross-border marriages. He told me that although he did not mean to compare his experience to someone else's, sometimes it was good to exchange information, such as how to renew a spousal visa or how to apply to invite his wife's family to Japan. Kato wished that Meiling and her husband, Sakiyama, lived close by, because he thought that Sakiyama's economic and social background was closer to his. But Meiling and Sakiyama lived in Tokyo, so Kato also tried to become a friend of Yu's husband.

In the car, the three of us women spoke in Chinese and the two men spoke in Japanese. During our conversation, the difference between Liang and Yu became more visible. Liang was attending Japanese language lessons at a private university five days a week. On the other hand, Yu explained that, because of her language ability, she often did not understand what her husband was talking about. When she asked for further explanation, her husband often said, "So annoying!" (*Ja: iraira suru*) and rejected her request. Liang and her husband seemed to have more communication between them. Moreover, recently, Liang returned home to China by herself for two weeks. Yu told us, “I cannot go home. Well, I might have enough money to buy a ticket to China, but I don’t have money to buy gifts. I cannot go home empty-handed.” When I visited Yu in summer 2010, she had just become a masseuse. Her shift was from 5:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m., so she usually spent nights there and came home in the morning. A couple of months later, a staff member at the Tokyo office told me that Yu’s husband had again quit his job. The brokers were concerned about the stability of their marriage.

Eighteen Days of Marital Life

Pei Xu left to go to Tokyo in mid-November. Before she left, she made a list of things that she would ask her husband to buy, including an iPhone (an iPhone was the only phone on which she could type in Chinese and send text messages to China) and a computer (so that she could Skype with her family in China). She also packed a month’s worth of Chinese herbal medicine for her skin. After she left, the first time I heard about her was from the brokers in the Tokyo office. On the phone, the broker told me, “It was a disaster! They came to the office to let us know that she had arrived in Japan all right. It had only been two days since she had arrived. But she looked so unhappy and starving! We had some Chinese dumplings at the office and gave them to her.” When she was in China, she did not cook, so when she was in Japan, she also was not willing to cook.

The following day, Xiaohong and I talked about Pei Xu’s situation in Japan. Xiaohong decided to introduce Xu to another bride, Ms. Qi, who was living in Japan, so that Qi might be able to help Xu. A couple of days later, I called Xu. When she picked up her phone, she was waiting in the fitness club while her husband was playing tennis. She told me:

> It was so hard. We did not know what we were saying to each other. But I think it is getting a little better. I also talked to Ms. Qi, to whom teacher Xiaohong introduced me. She also had a similar situation: she is in her thirties and her husband is in his sixties. When she told me she had also been in a really difficult situation when she had just arrived, I felt a little better because it was not only me. Goto is really stingy! We always eat at home, and the food he cooks does not taste good. The amount is also so tiny. I cry whenever I eat. He has a computer but I do not know how to use it. So, I asked him to buy another one. He said no [*dame*].

She continued, "Whenever I made a long-distance call to China, he always stared at me, and I think he did not want to pay for long-distance calls…" I asked, "What are you doing every day?" "He cooks, and we watch TV, but I don't understand and it is boring. We also do some exercise," she continued. "After talking to Ms. Qi, I felt a little better, but she came from the countryside of Dongyang. She already experienced hardship in China. So, hardship in Japan was not that difficult for her. But my life in Dongyang was not hard at all, so that made my experience in Japan more difficult. But I will do my best. I think I will just do whatever he says to do." "What about what you want to do, then?" I asked. "Well, I don't know what to do and where to go.… Right after I came here, we got in a huge fight because he won't buy me a new computer. I told him that I want to get divorced and go home to China. He was also really angry and agreed. So we called the broker. The broker tried to calm us down. I also talked to the broker, who is Chinese, and we somehow managed not to get divorced." During this call, she mentioned that her mother was not doing well and that she might go back to see her shortly.

In early December 2009, Pei Xu did return to China. After spending eighteen days in Japan, she explained, "I came back because my mother was really sick." She soon came to visit Xiaohong and me at the school and said, "He was just a poor Japanese guy!

I lost four kilograms! After spending eighteen days in Japan, I was really disappointed. I thought that Japan was a really rich and good place, but my husband was just a poor and stingy guy! He won't buy anything because it is expensive! He won't turn on the lights until 4 p.m., and he was reading a newspaper in the dark. When he went shopping, he made a list and wouldn't buy anything other than that. Of course he had chosen the cheapest items. He won't buy meat every day, either!" She concluded, "If you come from the poor countryside like Ms. Qi, Japan is a really good place to live. But my life in China was good. My life in Japan was hell for me." When she left Japan, she promised Goto that she would return in January, but she extended her stay in China. She was able to stay in China because she told her husband that her mother's health was poor. Because her stay extended beyond what she promised Goto, the brokers also needed to step in to solve their issues. Xu was debating whether to get divorced or to go back to Japan for a couple of months. Ultimately, she made a decision: "There is nowhere better than 'home.'" They filed divorce papers in May 2010.

Goto's Story

At the end of January 2010, I was back in Japan. I made an appointment with Goto. Surprisingly, he did not know exactly why Xu Pei had left Japan. Goto explained to me that her mother had some issue with her heart and now was on the waiting list for surgery. While it was not completely false, he seemed not to know about her disappointment with Japan and him. He expressed his feelings:

> I think that her family depends on Xu Pei too much. Once she married out, she became a member of her husband's family. She can visit her mother, but ultimately she has to come back to her own family in Japan. When she arrived in Japan, we had a lot of fights. For instance, I urged her to say "*itadakimasu*" and

> "*gochiso sama*" before and after eating. But she was upset and said, "I won't say it because I am Chinese!" So, I asked Xu Pei if she would become "Japanese" in a couple of years. She said she didn't know. I tried to understand that things would be different from having a Japanese wife [his former Japanese wife had passed away]. Although there are cultural differences, it is after all about personality and kindness. Although I think she is a little bit spoiled, a chance to marry such a pretty woman is so rare. My friends were also surprised to see Xu Pei because she is so beautiful. But she is now married and her parents should not depend on her anymore. Well, this is just my guess because I barely know her yet.

Altogether, Goto paid 3,000,000 yen (approx. $32,000) to the broker. Thus, when they got divorced, the broker felt sorry for him and offered some "discount" services for finding another Chinese bride. The broker this time tried to recommend "older" women. However, Goto rejected those suggestions. Ironically, Goto was more confident than before. He told the broker that if he could marry such a young and pretty woman, he still had a chance to find another young and pretty bride like Xu again. The broker, on the other hand, told me that he looked so old now and would never find any brides again.

Local Norms, Transnational Strategies

Cross-border marriage with Japanese men created for the women in Dongyang a site of struggle between local norms and translocal options. For many (though not all) of the women, maintaining singlehood made them and their family feel uneasy. In particular, age became an urgent issue. After a certain age, many women and their family members felt desperate to find a marriage partner. I argue that by physically departing from the local community, they somehow attempted to navigate their marriageability and conform to the local expected marital norms. However, they also hoped not to go too far away from the local community. They imagined Japan as a neighboring country so that they could come back at any time. At the same time, it was an ambivalent experience because it also provoked feelings of both stigma and hope. Many women told me that they were not particularly proud of their decisions. Nonetheless, the practice of border crossing entailed multiple, different connotations. Marriage across borders was a way to make one’s life, secure one’s future, and fulfill local expectations of personhood.

This chapter also suggests that the dynamics between the local and translocal are not fixed, and sometimes produce contradictory outcomes. Those who want to remain within the boundaries of local ideology might end up moving out of the local community, and those who had a high opinion of local aesthetics might come to criticize these same aesthetic values. While the local actors might transgress, criticize, or transform these local-translocal dynamics, I suggest local norms and values, in particular marriage normativity, constitute critical sites of analysis.

Chapter 5

Mobility as a Local Value: Marriage as a Gendered Site of Investment

My stay in Xinghai started with uncertainty. When I had just arrived in Xinghai, I did not know any brides, marriage brokers, or people who were willing to help me find them. Thus, I also did not know what to start with and how long I would stay there. My original plan was to arrive there before the Chinese New Year in 2010 and meet brides who came home from Japan to visit their families. However, no one was willing to introduce me to any brides. Although not knowing any informants provoked my anxiety, this also gave me opportunities to explore seemingly irrelevant matters. Not knowing what to do or where to go during the New Year, I made a call to a family whom I had met in Japan a month prior. Fortunately, they invited me to spend the New Year with them at their house in an outlying village. While visiting a bride in a village was my ideal plan, visiting a local family unexpectedly gave me the larger picture of Xinghai and the local idea of "going to Japan."

The village was located about a 15-minute drive outside of the town and consisted of about 70-80 households. The villagers were primarily farmers. Their work began in April, so during the winter, they enjoyed a long break. Ms. Gao had just returned from Japan, where we first met. Her husband's mother was a Japanese war orphan. Gao had lived in Japan since 1995. Her daughter and son also joined her and her husband in Japan several years later. They remained in Japan. Yet, Gao's grandsons, two daughters (aged 7 and 10), and one 1-year-old son had come back to Xinghai with Gao. Even though Gao had been living in Japan for 15 years and had taken a number of different jobs--working as a janitor and in a dry cleaning shop--she confessed that she could not speak Japanese well. Our conversations were only ever in Chinese.

During the week of the New Year, neighbors gathered every day at Gao's house to play mahjong. I asked Gao how many people from the village had moved to Japan. She tried to count for a moment: "That house had war orphans, that house was for marriage," and then she looked at me and said, "they are all gone" (*Ch: dou zoule*). By marriage, she was also referring to marriages between people in Xinghai and second- or third-generation war orphans living in Japan. She said that each household had sent someone to Japan in one way or another. After she and her husband retired, she came back to Xinghai and bought a room in an apartment in town. She rented out the room and lived in a newly built house in the neighboring village. She was now preparing a trainee visa for her nephew to go to Japan, but she admitted that a trainee visa would not help him save much money. Yet, they were still sending him to Japan.

One afternoon, a friend of Gao's two granddaughters came to their house, and they were watching some drama on the Internet. For some reason, one of the daughters became agitated with her friend and aggressively asked her, "Does your family have money?" She continued, "My house (*Ch: laojia*) has money!"

Her sister added, "My father and mother's monthly income is 400,000 RMB ($63,000) and 200,000 RMB ($31,500)!" Considering the amount of money they cited, I assumed they were talking about annual income, not monthly income. Yet, the distinction mattered little to the daughters. The daughters' friend suddenly covered her ears and screamed so that she did not have to hear them. I later asked Gao about the friend, and she told me that her house did not send anyone to Japan.

What struck me was that not only brides sought to go to Japan, but also by other locals, both men and women. Moreover, the idea of going to Japan was explicitly associated with making money. When Ms. Gao explained, “They are all gone,” how did those who remained behind maintain hopes about mobility and experience immobility? In these local contexts, how did Chinese brides enact marriage migrations? What did marriage mean, and when did mobility become one a local value?

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This chapter addresses the different ways in which border crossing was enacted in the form of marriage. In Xinghai, located in Heilongjiang Province, the flow of people in the form of marriage migration had started in the mid-1990s. However, this flow itself was not new. The flow of people between Xinghai and Japan started in the 1930s (from Japan to Xinghai) and has moved in the opposite direction--from Xinghai to Japan--since the 1980s (detailed in Chapter 1). In this context, marriage has become one of the means for transnational mobility. In this chapter, I explore how the women have enacted and experienced cross-border marriages with Japanese men in a particular local context in which desire and hope for mobility have become local norms.

My aim in this chapter is twofold. First, I intend to blur the boundary between marriage migration and other forms of migration, such as labor migration. Thus, the migratory flows in the form of marriage were hardly separated from other forms of mobility. Marriage here became a strategy and a gendered site of investment for mobility. Second, however, I also suggest that pragmatic mobility in the form of marriage pushes us further to interrogate the gendered aspects of such mobility. When the idea of “going to Japan” was already embedded within the local community as a way to make money and seek better lives and futures, and the practice of patrilocality gave women an advantage in obtaining mobility. Nevertheless, in the process of seeking and enacting mobility, while brides became subjects in migration, their sense of subjectivity was unstable and beyond their control due to the dependent nature of the mobility they engaged in—marriage. Thus, I argue that it is not solely global brokerage work that made women objects, but also, importantly, the practice of patrilocality that rendered women paradoxically both subjects and objects in migration. This chapter addresses women's unstable subjecthood within the context of marriage migration. As Massey (1994) observes, those on the move are not always in charge of the flow. Therefore, I am concerned here with the ways in which the women navigate trajectories of mobility and immobility. This chapter traces how local values of mobility shape women's hopes, struggles, and the pressures they experience.

Crapanzano (2004) distinguishes between desire and hope in that desire presupposes human agency, whereas hope transcends human agency, such as through fate or chance, for its fulfillment. Whereas an individual acts on desire, an individual relies on something or someone else to realize hope. Crapanzano further addresses the temporal dimension of hope. He states that hope's statements "Do not seek to illuminate the reality which exists, but the reality which is coming" (2004, 102). Thus, hope might be open-ended, lack final definition, or be subject to change (100). Desire and hope might simultaneously exist, and acting based on desire might depend on hope. Drawing upon the works of Ernest Bloch and Richard Rorty, Miyazaki argues that "Hope emerges as a method of engagement with the world that has particular implications for the temporality of knowledge formation" (2004, 16). Miyazaki approaches hope as a method that rests on prospective moments (or not-yet moments) and insists on a future-oriented salvation.[76]

My perspective on women's hope for mobility also stems from such future-oriented thinking on the part of the women (cf. Chu 2010). Marriage migration displays the future-oriented, yet dependent nature of hope. Women enacted and invested in mobility, yet their pragmatic mobility and marital lives depended on something else, such as their husbands, visa approval, and potential return. In the remainder of this chapter, I offer ethnographies of local environments, financial transactions in matchmaking practices, and departures in order to demonstrate the complex interactions among local norms, marital practices, and women's aspirations, hopes, and experienced pressures.

Japan as the Object of Familiarity and Unfamiliarity

What made Xinghai distinct from other places in China was its display of seeming familiarity with Japan. All restaurants and stores, except old ones, displayed their store names with accompanying Japanese translations. Usually the lettering for store names had Chinese on the top and Japanese translations below in smaller letters. According to a government official, recently it became a local rule that businesses had to display Japanese translations on their signs. When I first arrived, I was struck by these Japanese signs and often walked around the town looking at them. I was often also privately amused by those signs since almost all Japanese translations were odd. Japanese names were literally translated from the Chinese, and the results were strange and sometimes rather funny. For instance, "Hedao Massage Place" (*Ch: hedao anmoyuan*) in Chinese somehow became "Will Massage Roads and Yards" (*Ja: michi to niwa wo massāji shimasu*) in Japanese (figure 4). Sometimes, Japanese letters were not displayed with a right angle so that one word was crooked. Later, I heard that usually those translations were products of computer translations, which often produced unnatural results. Sometimes the translation might be right, but those who physically displayed signs do not know Japanese and did not know which way to angle the letters. Some stores also appropriated the names of locations that had personal significance for their owners, such as the names of cities they had visited or in which they had worked in Japan, like "Tokyo Supermarket" (*Ch: dongjing chaoshi*) or "Nagano Convenient Store" (*Ch: changye bianlidian*).

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[76] Desire has been a crucial concept in recent scholarship on China. For instance, Lisa Rofel argues that desire is a key cultural trope to reconfigure one's relationship to a post-socialist world in China (Rofel 2007; E.Y. Zhang 2007; Schein 1999, 2004). One's capability to express desire and assert the figure of what Rofel calls the "desiring subject" (5) has became a critical cultural practice. Importantly, this production of desiring subjects should be understood in shifting historical and political contexts in China. Rofel argues, "The specificity of desiring practices in China lies in the efforts by the Chinese state and its citizens to overcome their socialist past" (7). With the increasing market economy owing to globalization, desire fosters the modern, cosmopolitan subjectivity in the post-Mao reform and neoliberal era.

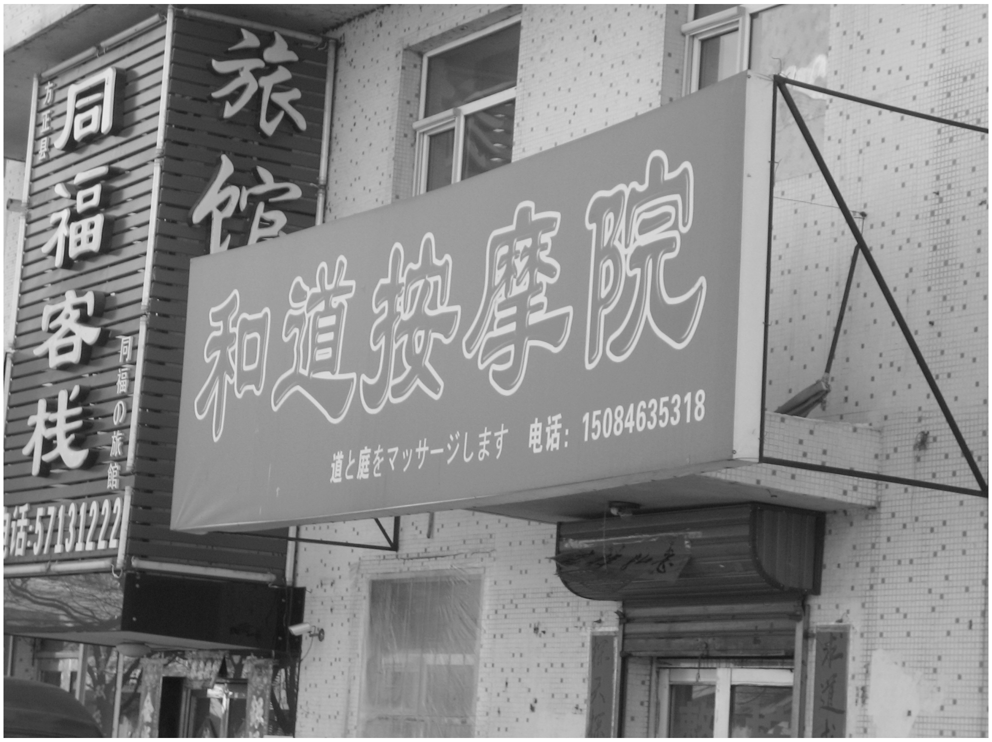

FIGURE 4 A store sign with Japanese translation in Xinghai

I asked the locals why all stores displayed Japanese signage. A teacher at a Japanese school told me that many people from Xinghai went to Japan because Xinghai and Japan have a unique relationship. He continued, “We want to show friendliness (*Ch: qinqie*) to Japanese and when they visit Xinghai, they see Japanese names and it is convenient (*Ch: fangbian*) for them.” Due to the history of war orphans and the subsequent boom in matchmaking tours, Japanese journalists also sometimes visited Xinghai. Yet, as far as I knew, there were few Japanese tourists in Xinghai except those who visited there for matchmaking meetings or the Japanese pilgrimages to the war-orphan monuments every summer. Another government official claimed that they wanted to establish Xinghai as a place that had an exceptional relationship with Japan. Thus, displaying familiarity with Japan was also part of a local effort to create Xinghai’s uniqueness. The town had even recently developed a “*qiaocun*”—a quarter where those who went to Japan built large and extravagant houses while they themselves still lived and worked in Japan (figure 5).[77]

The built environment is a good site for ethnographic analysis. Julie Chu (2011), for instance, has studied the transformation of the built environment in Fuzhou, where locals created lavish buildings and temples with oversea remittances from the United States; and yet the locals in that area experienced the feeling of displacement as the result of immobility. This contrasts with the assumption in other scholarship that feelings of displacement accompany mobility (cf. Hall 1997: Gilroy 1993). Like the village Chu studied, the locals in Xinghai also shaped and were shaped by the built environment. The

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[77] Chu (2011) also observes that in Fuzho in China, the large homes called “American guests” were built with remittances often flowing from the members in the United States. Interestingly, some American guests built with oversea connections were left unoccupied, empty, and unfurnished.

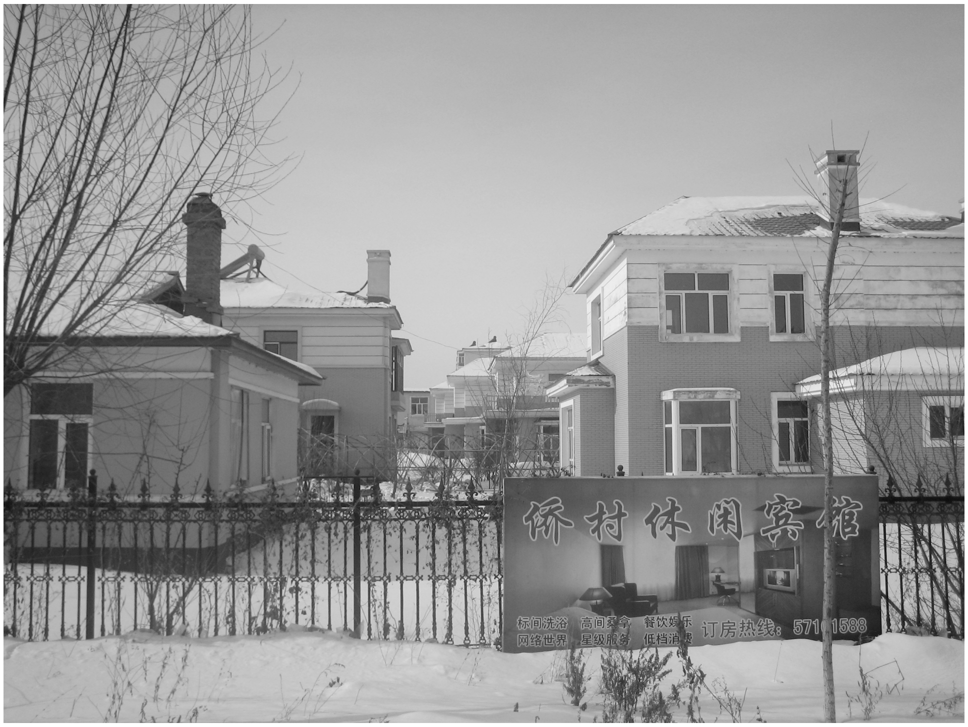

FIGURE 5 Unoccupied houses in Xinghai

use of Japanese language in Xinghai was not a new phenomenon. When I was in a car passing through one of the nearby villages, the locals pointed out the sign of the local village and said, “Look, you see it says “*er ban*” (Group 2) there? The name and sign were originally made during the period of Japanese colonialism to group households in the village (figure 6). But people still use this name today.” Here, the Japanese names created by Japanese colonizers were still used and displayed for the Chinese locals. Nonetheless, the more recent displays of Japanese signage had different connotations. These were made by the locals themselves. They were not simply for Japanese tourists. Rather, these signs played a role in creating certain values for mobility and familiarity with Japan.

A seeming familiarity with Japan was not only evident in the store signs. There

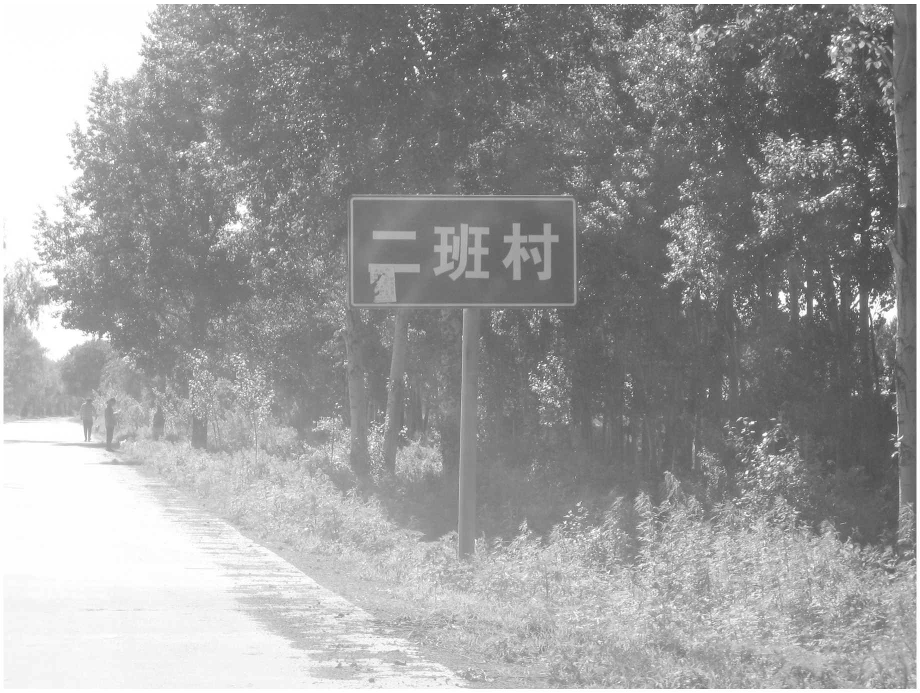

FIGURE 6 The sign of Group 2 in Xinghai

were also many people who were studying Japanese. In a small town that I could walk completely around in under twenty minutes, there were more than six or seven Japanese language schools. I visited four of them, and each school had more than forty to fifty students. All were hoping to go to Japan, either to work, study, marry, or reunite with their families. More interestingly, the Japanese yen was also part of many residents' daily life. When I visited a local bank with a friend, there were not only several people who were at the counter depositing Japanese yen, but also there was a handwritten sign stating the rate of yen-renminibi conversion that was updated daily. Those who received Japanese yen in cash were waiting to exchange at the best rate possible.

However, in a town that sought to display familiarity with Japan, what was significant was a simultaneous lack thereof. The displays indicated an interesting contradiction in that seeming familiarity ("Japan" was everywhere) and unfamiliarity (mistranslations, misinformation, and odd appropriations) coexisted. Where one out of four families claimed to have relatives living in Japan, many locals told me that they had lived in Japan, worked in Japan, or studied in Japan, or if not themselves, their friends or relatives had done so. However, it seemed that many of them had not had a chance to personally interact in much depth with a Japanese person. Those who claimed that they had lived in Japan did not want to talk to me in Japanese and said that their Japanese was not good. Even those brides who were waiting for spousal visas never personally asked me to practice Japanese. Furthermore, many locals had seen Japanese men visiting on matchmaking tours, but few had actually seen Japanese women like myself. In terms of my research, this was an advantage. When I met a new local friend, he or she wanted to introduce me to other friends as his or her "Japanese friend." Sometimes, I was called to join their dinner only so that they could show me to their friends. When being introduced, I was described as "pure Japanese" (*Ch: chun riben ren*), a contrast with those who were naturalized Japanese. In such a local context, what did it mean to go to or not to go to Japan?

Mobility as a Locally Embedded Value

As the broker in Dongyang warned me, the brokerage systems in Xinghai were more complex, unstructured, and underground than those in Dongyang. Although there were many agencies listed on the Internet, few brokers were willing to meet with me to be interviewed. Some brokers responded to my emails, but when I told them that I was in Xinghai, they stopped replying to me. I visited some of the addresses for branch offices according to the agencies' websites but found no actual agencies at these locations. Those brokers who did agree to meet me were carrying out relatively structured brokerage services, such as managing actual offices where recruitments took place and setting up reasonable fees for the women. Consequently, I had difficulty locating Chinese brides during the initial stage of my research in Xinghai. Nonetheless, whenever I met locals and talked to them about marriages with Japanese men, almost all of them knew someone who was married to a Japanese man, confirming that many matchmakings (*Ch: xiangqin*) were occurring in the town.

After not being able to find any brides for several weeks, I decided to regularly visit local Japanese language schools instead of relying on brokers. There I easily found brides. Interestingly, once I located several brides at the schools, it became much easier to find more. Some brides asked me to translate phone calls with their Japanese husbands; some asked me exactly what their husband's business cards said or where exactly their husbands lived. I visited two schools on a daily basis. Despite the fact that the president of each school insisted that they had more "hard working" (*Ch: nuli de*) students preparing to study abroad than brides, both schools had a considerable number of brides.

I also met a number of locals who were planning to go to Japan for other reasons. One female student had recently graduated from high school and was intending to study abroad in Japan. After listening to what other students who married Japanese men had to say, she said, "I still don't want to marry, I want to go to Japan as a student." She had relatives living in Japan, and she was hoping to stay with them while she studied. She spent several weeks preparing to study abroad. She took the standardized Japanese exam and applied to a vocational school in Japan. Although the vocational school accepted her,

her application for a student visa was declined. She then stopped coming to the school. The school principal informed me that once a student's application for a student visa is declined, there is no process of appeal or opportunity to reapply. Therefore, the only way for this student to go to Japan would be for her to marry a Japanese man. Unlike this student, many of the women I met did not even have the option to apply to study abroad because they did not have a high school diploma. For them, marriage was truly the only way to Japan.

My encounter with Sun Hua also came about in an unexpected way. I met Sun Hua, who was married to a Japanese man, when she just happened to rent a room in the three-bedroom apartment where I was living. Although she seemed to be relatively old compared to the other Chinese brides I had met thus far, especially in Dongyang, her experience turned out to be a common one for marriage migration in Xinghai. Indeed, the brides in cross-border marriages with Japanese men in Xinghai were not limited to young women. Based on what I knew from Dongyang, I once asked a Xinghai local, "Not any woman can marry a Japanese man, right?"

She replied, "Well, anyone can. Even if you are old and ugly, you can. But you have to pay a lot of brokerage fees and find an old man."

Skeptical, I prodded her further, asking, "Really? Anyone?"

She answered, "I think so. All of my friends and acquaintances who wanted to go to Japan went to Japan sooner or later." Apparently, there were significant differences between cross-border marriages in Dongyang and Xinghai.

Sun Hua was a 49-year-old widow with a 20-year-old son who lived and worked in a neighboring town. Her Chinese husband had passed away two years ago. Since then, she moved from her village (*Ch: xiang*) to the town (*Ch: xian*) of Xinghai and had taken up a number of temporary jobs at restaurants, hotels, and public showers. Sun Hua married a Japanese man in December 2009 through the introduction of a broker. Although she had given her picture to friends, the invitation to a matchmaking meeting was unexpected. Mr. Kanai, Sun Hua's potential husband, was in his 60s, lived in Nigata, and worked as a driver at that time. The broker was supposed to introduce another woman to Kanai in Harbin. When the woman, for some reason, did not show up, the broker called Sun Hua to come to Harbin as soon as possible as a substitute. Sun Hua got on a bus, and after a three-hour bus ride, she arrived in Harbin and met Kanai. They agreed to marry the following day. They spent a few days together in Harbin before Kanai left for Japan to register their marriage and apply for Sun Hua's spousal visa. When I met Sun Hua, she was still waiting for her visa while studying Japanese in town.

She said, "When my [Chinese] husband died, it was really hard. It was so hard that my hair turned white. So, I just wanted to change my environment and sought a Japanese husband. Living alone is just so hard. I just want someone whom I can depend on. I just wanted to leave the country (*Ch: chuguo*). My son agreed with me, as long as I was happy with a transnational marriage. My son also said that living alone is really difficult. My brother also agreed. My parents at first disagreed with me. They asked what I would do in Japan at the age of 50. They thought that a 50-year-old woman couldn't find a job there." She claimed, "I am so pitiable (*Ch: kelian de*)." When Kanai left China, he gave 30,000 yen ($330 at that time) to Sun Hua. Yet, at the time that I met her, she had almost used up all of this money on school fees. She started working as a waitress for almost 10 hours per day, earning a daily wage of approximately 30 RMB ($5). Soon she would need to move out of the apartment because she could no longer afford the monthly rent.

Tang Xiaoli was another bride whom I met at a language school. After class, she asked me to go with her and her friend, also a recent bride, to an Internet café to check the status of their spousal visa applications. Both women had married at almost the same time. Xiaoli was in her late twenties. Hanging out with Xiaoli also gave me various, often contradictory, pictures of brides in Xinghai. She was a divorcee with an 8-year-old son. Yet she still lived with her ex-husband, and he and she often worked and ate together. One day, she invited me and two other friends from the language school over for dinner. They were also married to Japanese men and waiting for spousal visas. Xiaoli's ex-husband also joined us. Furthermore, Xiaoli told me that one of her friends would bring her husband (*Ch: laogong*). I assumed that her Japanese husband was visiting her. However, she came with a Chinese man, which totally confused me, yet I thought it was inappropriate to ask her who the man was. Later, in private, I asked Xiaoli. She said, "He was her husband (*Ch: laogong*)."

I asked, "But didn't she marry a Japanese man? What do you mean by *laogong*?"

Xiaoli laughed and said, "Fake husband (*Ch: jia laogong*)!"

I was further confused and asked again, "So, why didn't she just marry him?"

This time, Xiaoli sighed, "How can she marry him? He does not have money!"

After that, I began referring to her ex-Chinese husband as her "*laogong*" and to her Japanese husband by his last name. Her visa was approved shortly thereafter. A few days before her departure, she was working in the market, selling fish. I spent a day sitting with her in front of the fish pot. She asked, "Do you think I can find a job in

Japan?"

I answered, "Well, if you learned the language, there might be some jobs."

She said, "I am so scared (*Ch: kepa*)! Promise to come to see me when you are back in Japan."

While interacting with the locals and women like Xiaoli or Sun Hua, what struck me was that, for them, the question was not why they wanted to go to Japan, but rather how and when they would go. Sun Hua's idea of going to Japan did not exist in a vacuum. The idea that hope for a "new life" lay in going to Japan was already embedded within Xinghai. The exact motivation for going to Japan was not really a topic of discussion among the locals. Whenever I asked, many residents responded to me by saying, "People can make 700 RMB a day in Japan."[78] Whether making money, seeking an improved standard of living, acquiring a better education, or escaping from loneliness was the goal, "Japan" was always already there. Many locals explained to me that they were not willing to move to a new place if they did not already have a social network there. In Xinghai, transnational mobility, i.e., going to Japan, seemed more feasible than other options, including relocating to other larger cities in China, where the residents of Xinghai did not know anyone. However, ironically, those who married Japanese men were those who did not have a network but simply depended on commercial brokers.

Destinations of migration are locally specific (cf. Chu 2010; Sun 2002; Freeman 2011). In the case of Xinghai, the idea of going to Japan did not necessarily require exhaustive decision-making.[79] Everyone seemed to take the notion of going to Japan for granted. Nonetheless, the aspiration to go to Japan was not always evenly distributed among locals. For instance, the only male student in my small group at the Xinghai Japanese school repeatedly told me that he did not want to go to Japan. Yet, he came every day to study Japanese.

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[78] Julie Chu also has noted that when she asked why Fuzhonese are willing to risk being smuggled into the U.S., they explained to her that U.S. dollars are "simply bigger (*bijiao da*) and better (*bijiao hao*) than Chinese RMB" (Chu 2010, 166).

Once, in response to his insistence that he did not want to go to Japan, I said, "Then don't go" (*Ch*: *bu qu ba*).

He then explained, "But my parents want me to go because I have relatives living in Japan; yet, I actually don't want to go."

In analyzing the ways in which mobility creates a transnational imagination in a certain local context, Wanning Sun (2002) observes that locals experience desires, fears, and ambiguity about mobility. Regarding the media, Sun shows that for urban Chinese in the 1990s, going abroad, in particular to go to America, was the "only game in town" (51). Going abroad became a social expectation. When an individual had such an opportunity, he or she became the object of envy. However, Sun also showed that given a pragmatic chance to go aboard, the person in question's "decision has been somewhat made by someone else on his behalf, not by himself. Social pressure is one factor" (51). In a similar manner, not going to Japan for the male student was to go against his parents' wishes or, more generally, against social expectations.

How can we understand such desires and hopes for mobility as embedded in the practices and values attached to border-crossing in Xinghai? Although the ideal of "going to Japan" was prevalent in Xinghai, the means to go to Japan were, in practice, limited.

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[79] For the women in Dongyang and Xinghai, going to South Korea is sometimes an option, but many women expressed that going to Korea is only considered an option when an attempt to go to Japan fails.

For instance, it was nearly impossible for locals to obtain a tourist visa. Obtaining a trainee visa was becoming more and more difficult. Obtaining a student visa required at least a high school diploma, but often a college diploma was preferred. Marriage migration was not considered an ideal strategy, but it offered a chance for mobility for those without direct relatives, a social network, or education.

As Lila Abu-Lughod (2000) argues, the power of social ideology is that it frames norms as "values" so that seeking or expressing certain desires becomes a form of confirming one's ethics or morals rather than an obligation. In such contexts, an individual's actions serve as a "means to perpetuate a system of power relations" (238). Saba Mahmood further argues, "norms are not only consolidated and/or subverted, I would suggest, but performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways" (2005, 22). Drawing upon the work of Judith Butler, Mahmood maintains that norms are not social impositions but instead constitute intimate interiority.[80]

When a chance for mobility was seen as not only available, but also as taken for granted, not taking this chance was seen as contrary to social expectations or values. When mobility symbolized a better life, it was assumed that those who had the opportunity should act upon it. Desire and hope for mobility became socially expected practices, to some extent an "ordinary" life path for locals. "Not wanting to go to Japan" became an act of in defiance of local values.

Acting upon a chance for mobility, in the form of marriage migration, was an option, and this option had deeply penetrated the values of locals. The abstract and sometimes ambiguous idea of "better life" and mobility were already intertwined. Even though marriage migration constituted only one of several options, if given, the idea of "going to Japan" embodied a means of seeking and realizing a better life. How, then, did women enact mobility in such local context? The next section further complicates the idea of marriage as a strategy. While it might be a tool, I examine how such strategy still depends on marital norms and the very practice of marriage itself.

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[80] Although Mahmood focuses on the bodily performative aspects of inhabiting norms—regular praying, or what she calls the cultivation of pious subject—I draw up on her idea of norms as inhabiting individual practices.

How Much Is Your Marriage?

As I became familiar with the women in China, I soon realized that one of the things with which many Chinese brides were preoccupied was payment. The women had to pay brokerage fees (*Ch: zhongjie fei*) to Chinese brokers for their marriages. Japanese men's payments went to Japanese brokers, whereas Chinese women's payment went to Chinese brokers. The exact meanings and burden involved with the payments varied from place to place. In the following section, I explore how the women understood and enacted the relationship between fees and marital mobility. How did their engagement with payments shape their prospective as well as pragmatic experience of mobility? What did they think they were paying for?

Brokerage businesses that charge for arranging marriages in China are technically illegal. However, unofficial brokerage work can be conducted by calling it "help with introducing" marriage partners. As shown in Chapter 3, the payment for Japanese men is usually clearly described on agencies' websites; the payment structure for women is more vague. Moreover, usually those who act as brokers are friends, acquaintances, or relatives who rarely identify as professional brokers, regardless of even having business cards. Due to this system, it was difficult to locate local brokers for interviews. When I asked so-called "brokers" about their work, they often said, "I am just helping my friend to find a partner."

The brokerage fees greatly varied depending on the place. Although the women in Dongyang also paid brokerage fees, there they were seen as reasonable, and usually, women did not have to incur debt to pay them. During my fieldwork in 2009-2011 in Dongyang, the average cost ranged from 20,000 to 40,000 RMB (approximately $3,000 to $6,000), while in Xinghai, it ranged from 80,000 to 130,000 RMB (approximately $12,000 to $20,000).[81] As locals in Xinghai told me, the amount of the payment had been increasing every year along with the increase in local commodity prices. The Chinese women usually paid part of the brokerage fees as a down payment. When the status of residency in Japan was issued and the women were ready to leave, they paid the remainder of the fee. I witnessed that some women claimed a refund when their visa was declined and when their marriage ended in a divorce without a departure to Japan. Thus, the brokerage fees were interpreted as a payment not simply for marriage, but also for migration.

The women I met in Dongyang also paid fees. Some women complained about the unequal payment calculations of but not about the actual payment itself. One woman said, "I am not complaining about the fee itself. I think we should pay something for their work. But I am just upset about how the broker charged me a little more than the other brides. Probably, I am older than other brides, so the broker thinks I should pay more."

In Xinghai, I came to know who paid how much by listening to the conversations among brides. Usually, when Chinese brides meet each other for the first time, the first question they asked each other was, “how much?” (*Ch: duoshao qian*). I learned that Tang Xiaoli paid 110,000 RMB ($17,000) and that Sun Hua paid 130,000 RMB ($20,000) when they met each other in my room. I also found out that Xie Hui paid 70,000 RMB ($11,000) when her acquaintance asked her on the street how much she paid.

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[81] First Love in Xinghai charges women 40,000 RMB, yet the broker admitted that the women might be paying extra fees to other brokers who "introduced" First Love to them.

When married, the Chinese women often received betrothal money called *yuinoukin* from Japanese men, ranging from 300,000 to 500,000 yen ($3,600 to $6,000); yet, all this money made its way to the Chinese brokers eventually. When women married through brokers who were friends, some did not receive any betrothal money. Ironically, the so-called “official” brokerage services (listed on the websites in Japan, such as China Bride, First Love, and Wedding China) offer women a safer path to departure than introduction through “friends.” Those friends might be new brokers who do not know the procedures for applying for a visa.

Many women also recognized that the brokerage system was complicated due to the existence of multiple brokers beyond the broker with whom they had a relationship. When a woman I met at the Xinghai Japanese school came to visit my room and asked me to call her Japanese husband in Japan, she expressed how she was frustrated by this brokerage system. She had paid 130,000 RMB ($20,000) to her broker, yet she told me angrily that multiple brokers whom she does not know would split her money; each broker would take 30,000 to 40,000 RMB. She said that she has money because she had just sold her house. But instead of using her money for brokerage fees, she wanted to take it to Japan. She asked me call her husband in Japan and explain what was going on. Informing on the brokers, of course, could have jeopardized her situation. If her brokers knew about this, they might have stopped helping her with the application process. When I called her husband, he did not answer the phone, which gave me a mixed feeling of relief and sympathy for her situation.

Importantly, Chinese women were not supposed to tell their Japanese husbands about their payment until they arrived in Japan, as stipulated by their contracts with their Chinese brokers. Many women also knew that if their husbands learned that the brides were indebted, they might terminate their marriages. If they found out that the women had paid money, the locals explained, the men would not want to assume the remaining debt and would think that the women married only for money. But some women decided to tell them after they arrived in Japan. When I was teaching a Japanese class at the Xinghai Japanese school, I was stunned to find in the supplied textbook sentences such as “Please give me money,” “when I married, I also paid money,” “I had to give all the money you gave me to the Chinese brokers,” “I did not receive the money you sent me,” “please believe me,” “my father is sick, I need money,” “I want to build a house for my family,” “my brother is getting married, he needs money,” “I have to find a job because I have debt” and so on. As a volunteer teacher at the school, I read aloud these sentences in Japanese to the students. Yet, no one made any comments or even laughed at these sentences. They just repeated after me. The textbook was written by some teachers in Xinghai several years ago and was widely distributed in several other Japanese schools in Xinghai. Sun Hua, who went to another school, also owned the same textbook.

Nonetheless, regardless of the expensive brokerage fees that women had to pay, many women also estimated that they could repay these fees once they arrived in Japan. For instance, Xiaoli repeatedly told me that according to her friends living in Japan, "People could make 10,000 yen per day in Japan"; therefore, Xiaoli estimated she would be earning 310,000 yen (approximately $3,700) per month, almost the equivalent of an annual income in Xinghai. I was concerned about the truth of such rumors because given Japan's current economic situation, even a person with fluent Japanese could not find such a lucrative job. Moreover, people do not usually work 31 days per month, and the cost of living in Japan was much higher. However, Xiaoli was not convinced by my warnings. Her sister's daughter lived in Japan, and the rumors from her relatives and friends in Japan sounded more believable to her. As discussed in Chapter 1, such rumors were not totally false for the Japan of the 1980s and 1990s. Sun Hua was less ambitious than Xiaoli. She sometimes claimed that if she had a place to live and food to eat, that would be enough for her. Yet, other times, she also stated that if she could send 50,000 yen per month to her son, it would be enough.

Marriage and a job in Japan were almost always linked. When I revisited Xinghai in the fall of 2010, a female school principal at the Taiyang School explained, "There are fewer students marrying Japanese men lately. This is because the Japanese economy is not really good, and many brides cannot find a job there." When I visited her again in the summer of 2011, she told me that the March 11 earthquake had negatively influenced women's marriage migration to Japan. Many women were concerned not only about the earthquake, but also about its effects on the economy.

Gendered Investment in Mobility

Women's marrying into so-called economically advanced countries has been criticized as a placing of them in the role of "mail-order brides" (Glodava and Onizuka

1994). Such critics claim that the women involved are duped into the sex industry, or that women sacrifice themselves to support their poor families. Moreover, concerns about cross-border marriages extend to how the women may be objectified in the process. Critics perceive the brides to be portrayed as if they are "commodities" and thus alienated from their own bodies or labor (Marx 1867). This interpretation stems from the fact that the women are presented as if they were objects that men can choose, compare, and acquire in exchange for money. Thus, following this logic, women are voiceless and have no right to choose men.

The anthropological discussion of marriage also has looked at gendered mobility, under rubrics such as "patrilocality," "the exchange of women" (Lévi-Strauss 1969), or "trafficking in women" (Rubin 2006 [1975]).[82] Rubin argued that Lévi-Strauss provided "conceptual tools with which one can build descriptions of the part of social life which is the locus of the oppression of women, or sexual minorities, and of certain aspects of human personality within individuals" (1975, 159). She continued that the exchange of women suggests that men have certain rights that their female kin as women do not have. In short, men have full control over the sexual destinies of their female kin.

Nevertheless, recent scholarship has offered critical insights into the ways in which women also take advantage of such gendered mobility, choose one option over others, and express their agency even within power inequalities and uneven access to advanced places (Schein 2005; Chao 2005; Fan 2008). For instance, Schein critically argues that patrilocality can mean certain advantages for women who are able to transcend class status and geographical boundaries and, furthermore, achieve an improved standard of life (2005, 59). Cindy Fan (2008) similarly argues that marrying up can be part of women's agentic practices to advance their own well-being (139). Likewise, Xin Liu's (1997) work shows that mobility is the key, such that "mobility and imagination of new social-spatial hierarchies have become important sources in the negotiation of power in everyday life" (92). In particular, "mate choice has become part of a new strategy to link up with a more progressive social and economic environment" (98). Therefore, marital strategies seeking upward mobility are not solely based on economic motives, but also crucially evoke more abstract hopes for a better life.

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[82] Marilyn Strathern argues that even if women are "exchanged" between groups, as Lévi-Strauss describes, it does not mean they are "things" or less than persons. She reminds us that what is being exchanged is the sign they represent (1990, 164). Strathern uses the term "detachability," which means something that can be detached, like an object, yet it is also a personal possession. Importantly, this detachability is often symbolized by women (168; see also Sham 2000; Grant 2009). Usually, women are more detachable; yet, they are not alienated from their groups or practices but rather "mediate between the two" (169).

In general, mobility through marriage is more available for women than for men. As far as I knew, there were no agencies for introducing Japanese women to Chinese men. When both men and women in Xinghai were seeking mobility, women seemed to have more opportunities for mobility due to the practice of patrilocality. Indeed, it was taken for granted that it is Chinese women who relocate to Japan, not vice versa.[83] Although marrying a Japanese man was described as "finding a partner" (*Ch: zhao duixiang*), the phrase "given away to a Japanese man" (*Ch: jia gei riben ren*) was also frequently used by both the brides themselves and other locals (cf. Schein 2005, 57). How is the idea of marrying out complicated by the involvement of women's marriage payments?

Scholars rarely discuss women's payments as part of the processes of marriage migration. Whereas studies on migration or smuggling often involve stories of an initial financial investment (Coutin 2005), marriage migration has not been part of those studies. When marriages involve payments, they are seen as "counterfeit marriages" and thus designated as smugglings or illegal migration instead of marriage migration per se. This designation is also based on the social assumption that marriage and money should be separated (Hochschild 2003; Giddens 1992).[84] Thus, marrying "with money," for both men and women, is hardly seen as marriage for the sake of marriage. How, then, do women's payments make us rethink the meaning of women's border crossings? Do the Chinese women's payments alter the dynamics of these marriage practices? How can we understand Chinese women's marriage migration as distinct from the notions of "mail-order brides" or "gold-diggers' fake marriages"?

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[83] During my fieldwork in Xinghai, I also witnessed Chinse men visiting Vietnam to find a Vietnamese bride. These cases also expected that it was Vietnamese women who relocated to China.

Chinese women were indeed listed in online catalogues at transnational marriage agencies. I argue, however, that being objectified in some way does not mean that the women are totally alienated from marriage practices. The matchmaking practice is not a total practice in which all the participants share the same rules or systems; rather, many different practices and meanings are involved in making these pairings come into existence. For instance, although the women gave their own pictures to the brokers, many of them did not know that their pictures were posted online. The Japanese men did not know that when Chinese women married younger Japanese men, the women were charged higher brokerage fees. In these contexts, the women paid money as an investment in their future economic opportunities, transnational links, social ties, mobile livelihoods, and the potential for a new and good life in Japan. In this sense, they were brides as well as migrants (cf. Agustín 2006).[85]

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[84] For instance, Hochschild (2003) describes how the "commodity frontier" is janus-faced, one side facing the market-place, and the other side facing the family. She states, "On the market side it is a frontier for companies as they expand the number of market niches for goods and services covering activities that, in yesteryear, formed part of unpaid 'family life.' On the other side, it is a frontier for families that feel the need or desire to consume such goods and service" (2003, 35-36).

Importantly, women's opportunities for mobility are created by and also create gendered capacities and constraints—marriage becomes a gendered site for investment. The payment as a form of investment gives them future-oriented links and a subjectivity that expects a larger return in the future.[86] Mobility and migration offer the potential that the return might be much larger than the investment, that is, not only allowing the women to repay their debts, but also creating transnational links, jobs, money, better lives, status, and, possibly, a good marital relationship as well. Yet, the return is neither immediate nor guaranteed. The women might obtain some of these things but not all of them. This is not simply an advancement strategy for financial goals (Brennan 2004); investment, as a strategy, entails abstract and ambiguous notions of expansion with time lags and risk.[87]

Whereas the Japanese male customers engaged in such "good faith economy" by stressing the “introduction” instead of “purchase” of Chinese brides through additional visits and gifts to the brokers (Chapter 3), the Chinese women openly talked about the payment and the potential returns that it entailed. Put differently, the Japanese men engaged in an “invisible” contract, whereas the Chinese women engaged in a “visible contract” (Gustav 2010, 229).[88] The Chinese women I met rarely talked about their Japanese husbands. They often talked about their own payment and where they are going in Japan, imagining that it is easier to find a job in urban areas. Ironically, through the eyes of some Chinese brides, Japanese men were seen as objects—vehicles for seeking a better standard of life. Moreover, such gendered border-crossing gave the women a possible (not guaranteed) forthcoming subjectivity in exchange for payment. Numerous transactions and individuals were embedded within multiple gendered, national, and transnational structures (Ortner 1997) within which the women were not either solely subject or object.[89] The next section, nonetheless, further demonstrates that women’s sense of subjectivity was unstable and not completely under their control due to the dependent nature of their mobility.

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[85] Laura Agustín's "migration category" (2006) is also pertinent to Chinese brides. Agustín shows that migrant women who sell sex disappear in migration studies and reappear only as trafficking in women in criminology and feminist studies. According to the above logic, selling sex is not viewed as a proper job and thus not part of labor migration. Agustín argues that women's selling sex (although not all cases) should also be seen as "migration," not only as "exploitation" (31). By doing so, the migration category also gives women ethical capacities for their practices, means to achieve their financial and social goals, and their preference for one option over others, including the option that "marriage may be part of the deal" (35).

[86] The object of investment is often intangible. For instance, as Julie Livingston (2009) demonstrates, relationships can be objects of social and economic investment. She argues that in contemporary Botswana, where intimate relationships are more and more capitalized, new forms of social investment produce "future markets" in which "people attempt to parlay debt and the illusion of wealth in the present to actual wealth in the future" (656). She notes that people invest in many relationships in order to sustain and animate them; yet, such capitalized relationships also involve risks. Social investment, importantly, entails "new temporalities and risks orienting social life" (675). Such new temporalities, which are future-oriented in search of happiness, may mask the present risks.

[87] Chu (2010) uses the notion of "credit" to demonstrate the domain for producing value among the Fuzhonese in China. The credit signifies "confidence or approval of an action of another, as deferred payment and the flip side of debt, and positive balance of account" (7).

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[88] The expansion of economic or symbolic values by giving and returning (credit/debt) involves a future orientation with “particular temporal regimes as people labor to build the increment demanded by the future in exchange for actions in the past” (Gustav 2010: 230). Gustav argues, “With credit/debt relations, then, the projection toward the future is critical” (230).

[89] In order to capture practices that embody agency, Ortner offers a mode she calls the “serious game” (1997,12). She states, “Social life is culturally organized and constructed, in terms of defining categories of actors, rules, and goals of the games, and so forth; that social life is precisely social, consisting of webs of relationship and interaction between multiple, shifting interrelated subject positions, none of which can be extracted as autonomous ‘agent’; and yet at the same time there is ‘agency,’ that is, a actor play with skill, intention, wit, knowledge, intelligence” (1997,12). Importantly, the game that is played out is never only one game but rather “multiple” games (1997, 19). Within these games, Ortner suggests that we can find the reproduction of social structures but also look for the slippages in reproduction and the erosion of longstanding patterns, the moments of disorder, and of outright resistance as a basis for what she calls “subaltern practice theory” (1997, 17). According to Ortner, within games, there are always sites of alternative practices and perspectives available since hegemonies are always partial and thus can be challenged (1997, 18).

When Departure Becomes an Obligation

Departure supposedly should be a location for the fulfillment of hopes for mobility and a new life. By departing, a person acquires actual mobility and the possibility of return. Marriage itself is only the start of that process. What I want to highlight here is that while marriage was a tool or "a part of the deal," as in Agustín's words (2006, 35), it was not solely a means. That is, in order to make marriage a feasible strategy, the women involved had to depend on and reinforce the very practices of marriage. Since it was a marriage, in particular one guided by the norms of patrilocality, women not only were given the opportunity to leave their own community, they had to, and realizing this mobility remained dependent on outside forces.

Contrary to the women I met in Dongyang, once married, some women in Xinghai were desperate to leave. The length of waiting varies and is unpredictable. For instance, some women received a certificate of residency within two weeks. It is impossible to explain why; many locals argued that going to the countryside is faster, whereas going to big cities, such as Tokyo, is really difficult and takes a long time. Xiaoli, who married a man in Yamagata, received a certificate of residency in three months. Although Sun Hua married a man in Nigata, unfortunately for her, the certificate of residency for Nigata is issued in Tokyo, the strictest immigration bureau.

Importantly, immobility signifies dissimilar meanings for those who have partially acquired it (by paying brokerage fees), yet somehow have failed to realize departure. When departure fails or even is suspended, the desired mobility is not what one lacks, but rather what one has lost. The failure to depart means losing one's supposedly possessed possibility.

One afternoon, I was hanging out with Xie Hui on the shopping street in Xinghai. Like Sun Hua, Xie Hui also encountered many acquaintances.

When we passed by one of her acquaintances, the latter asked, "You haven't left yet (*Ch: hai mei zou*)? When are you leaving?"

Xie Hui just answered, "Not yet."

After her acquaintance left, Xie Hui told me, "She just asked the same question a couple days ago. Things do not change so soon. But I know she will still ask me again." It was a common practice for acquaintances to ask the Chinese brides when they were leaving. When they were newly married, they could simply respond to such questions by saying "not yet." However, when they were waiting for more than three months or even a year, such questions became really difficult to tolerate. Brides themselves do not know when or even if they could depart.

When Sun Hua paid money to Chinese brokers, she borrowed 60,000 RMB, half of the brokerage fees, from her brother. Sun Hua's departure thus also became an issue for him as well. When I met her in the fall of 2010, she told me that because her brother kept asking her when she was leaving, she did not want to visit her old house where her brother lived. The question of "When are you leaving?" became a burden for those whose departure was pending. In light of their inability to leave even though they had gained the potential for mobility, departure took on a different meaning. When departure becomes a public affair, immobility also implies a public display of suspension. In this sense, the Chinese brides occupy what Turner (1974) called the "betwixt-between" state. Such a state is also called "liminality," where "there is the state of outsiderhood, referring to the condition of being either permanently and by ascription set outside the structural arrangements of a given social system, or being situationally or temporarily set apart, or voluntarily setting oneself apart from the behavior of status-occupying, role-playing members of that system" (Turner 1988 [1974], 504). The state of liminality is a temporal status from which individuals move symbolically to an often higher status.[90] In liminality, individuals can become more critical of the structures to which they used to belong.

The Chinese women who were ready to leave symbolically, although not physically, possess a transnational, but liminal livelihood. Once their paperwork was in process, they often quit their job, did not look for a new job, and often only attended Japanese school. Yet, the irony of such liminality for the women was that even if they wanted to look for a job or decided not to go to Japan, it was harder to return to their pre-liminal life. They can only surpass the liminal state by moving forward. That also means that if they cannot move forward, they can remain in liminality indefinitely. Therefore, they also lost their standing in their own community.

On one afternoon in April, I was chatting with Sun Hua in my room and mentioned that I had heard at the school that day that 30 people's visa applications, not only for marriage but also for studying abroad, were declined. I immediately realized that I should not have told her about this. Sun Hua suddenly started crying, saying,

> My (former) husband passed away, and then I remarried, but if I have to get divorced again, I would completely regret remarrying. I am just so scared (*kepa*) everyday. I am so worried and so scared. If my visa is not issued and I cannot go to Japan, I would totally regret marrying at all. When my (former) husband died, I just wanted to change my environment. I just wanted to leave the country (*chuguo*). If I could just leave, anything would be fine. My parents opposed this marriage as I am old and they did not see what I could do in Japan. Yet, I made a

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[90] Following van Gennep (1960), Takeyuki (Gaku) Tsuda (2003) observes that transnational migrants are in a state of liminality, where migrants are between two societies and not truly part of either. Tsuda examines Japanese Brazilians' return migration to Japan. Japanese Brazilians are socially marginalized in Japan, and their dissimilar social status from Brazil is suspended. They all became unskilled factory workers in Japan.

> decision myself and married. Yet, if this does not work and I cannot go to Japan, it would be really hard for me. I don't have a job here now, no money for living. I already gave money to the broker. It is just extremely stressful (*yali henda*), I am very scared everyday.

I totally regretted telling her such stories, and I tried to cheer her up. I told her that we should wait a little longer. I tried to tell her that her visa should be okay and that she should not worry too much. Yet, Sun Hua again started crying. She said, "I cannot even find a job here. Who wants to hire someone who might leave soon?" The only option for her to get out of her current situation was to depart. The women who are just waiting were in a really difficult position. They could not find a stable job, and, if they did not receive any living expenses from their Japanese husbands, their lives were quite difficult. If the men did not contact their wives, the women had little means of reaching them. Some men did not even pick up the phone. The women were just waiting, and this was a terrifying daily reality. (A discussion of waiting is detailed in Chapter 6).

One afternoon, I met Sun Hua, and we were hanging out on the shopping street. We again encountered Sun Hua's acquaintance. She, in her twenties, had married a Japanese man, and, because her Japanese husband was in his forties and had a high position in his company, her visa was issued sooner, she said. She told us that she had paid 110,000 RMB. Now, she was ready to leave Xinghai and relocate to Japan. As we walked along the shopping street, we again passed by some women talking to each other: "It has been a while, did you just come back from Japan?" Sun Hua looked at them and said, "Everyone came back from Japan." She looked a little angry, disgusted and scornful, yet sad.

Ironically, the pressure to leave was produced by the opportunity for mobility and the women's investment in mobility. When the women aspired to go to Japan, departure was the object of desire. Although it was not always the case, the women could seek out a marriage by sending their pictures and accepting proposals. Yet, once they were married and had paid the associated fees, the departure became obligatory. The most unfortunate cases that I witnessed were those in which the women had paid money, but the brokers disappeared and they lost contact with their Japanese husbands (Chapter 6). Losing the supposedly already-gained opportunity for mobility was more difficult to deal with than lacking mobility in the first place. Departure evolved from hope for mobility to obligation. If they stuck in a failed marriage, it was also impossible to marry another man. They needed to first get divorced. Moreover, as a broker explained, because many women wanted to try to marry another Japanese man, they need to take care of their current marriages to Japanese men first. Sometimes, the certificate of divorce could be issued with money and *guanxi*; but it would be an extra financial burden for the women.

When I visited Xinghai in the summer of 2011, while Sun Hua's visa application was still pending, Xie Hui told me that her visa had finally been issued after waiting for 16 months. When we hung out on the shopping street, some acquaintances again asked her when she was leaving. This time, she had an answer. She said, "I am leaving on the 26th."

Uncompleted Mobility

When I went back to Japan in June 2010, Xiaoli was still in Yamagata Prefecture. Yet, she did not even know where she lived. I asked her where the closest station was and what the main buildings around her area were. She just knew that there was a public library near her house. She went there everyday to use the Internet. I used Google Maps and located the library to which she referred. It was not too difficult, because there was only one library among the large rice fields. Taking a 12-hour overnight bus ride from Tokyo, I met her in the almost empty public library.

For the two days that I was there, Xiaoli had a couple of urgent tasks. She asked me to help her open a bank account, buy a cell phone, and find a job. First, we opened her bank account. Unfortunately, the cell phone store was closed that day. Finding her a job proved to be the most difficult. There were not many stores in her town. In addition, she did not speak Japanese well. Because we did not have a car, we used bicycles to inquire in the local shops whether there were any job openings and then took a train to find more. It was the first time that Xiaoli had been on a local train. We visited several places, yet we found no jobs for her. We had lunch together, and I treated her. She said, "you visited me and I don't even have money to treat you to lunch." After searching all day for job opportunities, we were exhausted. When I left Xiaoli at the train station, she looked so sad and was almost crying.

A month later, in July, Xiaoli called me and said, "I am in Tokyo now."

"What? How did you get here?" I asked surprised.

"I just took a blue train."

"Did you have money? Were you able to buy a ticket?"

"I just said 'Tokyo' at the ticket counter and gave them some money that I borrowed from my friend." Apparently, after we had opened her bank account a month ago, she asked her friend to send some money to her bank account.

I was astounded and said, "Wow, you are amazing *(Ch: hen lihai*)." I also learned at this time that she had a relative (her sister's daughter) who was married to a Japanese man and lived in Tokyo. She was staying with her temporarily.

I then asked, "Does your husband know about this?"

"I just left without saying anything. So, I just called him and said that I am in Tokyo."

"And?" I asked.

"He asked me when I was coming back, and I said I don't know."

"That's it?"

"Yep, but I am not sure if I understood him correctly."

I was astonished and did not know how to respond to her. I told her that I would come to see her as soon as I could. Meeting her was again difficult. She first suggested that we meet at Tokyo station. I tried to explain that Tokyo station is huge and that it was almost impossible to meet there unless we precisely specified the location. We thought about several possible places to meet and ended up meeting in a Korean supermarket in Shinjuku.

It was already hot and humid in July. When we finally met at the supermarket, I was sweating profusely. We walked to a nearby McDonald's to talk about what was going on and what she would be doing. At that time, she had already left her sister's daughter's house and had found a "temporary" job at a massage place. She did not have a massage license. When I asked her about her massage job, she just told me that it involved "normal" massages. She also lived at the massage parlor where she worked.

Xiaoli's main concern was to find a job in Tokyo as soon as possible. We went through several free newspapers for Chinese speakers in Japan to see whether there were any good job openings. We visited one agency advertising jobs specifically for Chinese people. Finding a job for someone who does not have the requisite skills and accommodations was extremely difficult. After visiting a couple of agencies, we found a potential job for Xiaoli. The job was to stock items in a supermarket, which did not require Japanese language skills. The job also offered accommodations. But the location was a little far outside Tokyo, and the hourly wage was 800 yen ($9), the average hourly payment in Tokyo. We estimated that Xiaoli could make at least 150,000 yen ($1700) per month. After walking outside in the extremely hot July weather, I felt relieved and hoped that things would work out for her. Nonetheless, Xiaoli declined this job. She explained that it was not convenient and not enough. She thought that she would make more money at her current "massage job." Although she was not proud of her massage job, because it did not sound reputable (literally, she said "it sounded bad" -- *bu hao ting*), she still preferred that option to a daytime job in a supermarket.

Extremely exhausted, we went back to Xiaoli's workplace/room. Located in a room in an apartment, the sign on the door said, "Welcome to Tropical Massage!" Xiaoli worked from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. in the morning. She received half the price of each massage she performed. She said, "sometimes bad customers try to touch our bodies, but usually they are nice." When I left, she promised, "next time we meet, I will have a job and will treat you to dinner and a drink."

A year later, when I visited her in the summer of 2011, Xiaoli had changed. Her former boss had fired her from her original job because "she was too fat." She was now working at another massage parlor. Yet, this time, she had a new iPhone, new hairstyle, and money. As promised, she treated me to lunch at a Chinese restaurant. Xiaoli told me that she visited her Japanese husband once every three months. When she last visited her husband, she had to give him some money, because her husband no longer had a job. Last time, she spent 100,000 yen visiting him, eating out, and giving him and his son some money. I thought that this arrangement sounded like a so-called “fake marriage.”

I asked, “Have you ever thought about getting divorced?”

She quickly responded, “No, I never thought about getting divorced. Getting divorced is troublesome (*Ch: mafan*).”

Indeed, she needed him in order to renew her spousal visa in several months. She said that her situation was easier and better because she could have her own time for working and hanging out with her Chinese friends in Tokyo. She said that her husband also preferred this option because she could make more money in the city. Thus, neither of them was eager to get divorced. Her husband even asked when she wanted to have a child. Xiaoli answered him with, “maybe several years later.”

She ordered several dishes and beer for us. Xiaoli said, “When I just came here, I thought that a 10,000 yen bill was really valuable and it would be hard to spend it all at once. Yet, now, I spend it so easily and quickly and do not think this is that valuable anymore. I just spent 50,000 yen for my new iPhone.” She was constantly on the phone talking with her friends in China.

I asked, “How is your son doing?”

“Okay,” she answered.

“What about your *laogong*?” I asked.

She looked at me and said, “He already remarried in Xinghai. I cannot believe it.”

Her ex-Chinese husband had left for Shandong for work right after Xiaoli had left Xinghai. Yet, he had already returned to Xinghai and found a woman to remarry. She expressed anger and said, “I cannot believe it, it has been only a year, and he is already remarried.” Then, she got a call from someone and started talking, laughing, and seemed to be enjoying the conversation.

I asked, “Who is it?”

She smiled, “my friend (*Ch: pengyou*).”

“Man or woman?” I asked.

“What do you think?” she laughed. After finishing lunch and drinks in mid-afternoon, she left for work, and I left for home. We promised that we would meet again when I returned to Japan, possibly the following summer.

Was she a “runaway” bride? Although she had run away from her husband’s house, she did not have any intention of getting divorced. Eventually, she was planning to go back to her Japanese husband. For her, mobility was not over when she arrived in Japan. Her mobility to Japan was realized, but in order to pay back the debt she had acquired, she still had to move to Tokyo to make money. This time, she utilized her networks in Japan to find a way to Tokyo. Although she had discovered a way to make money, it, ironically, made her Japanese husband financially dependent on her. In order to continue working on her upward mobility, she had to take care of not only those left behind in Xinghai, but also those in Japan, her husband and his son. At the same time, she also had to depend on her Japanese husband to maintain her spousal status in Japan.

Because the locals in Xinghai expected that if women migrated to Japan they could automatically send their family remittances, the notion that women would struggle to find a job in Japan was unimaginable. Brides themselves also did not want to worry their families. Some women did not want to tell their families what they did, such as working in massage parlors, but not finding a job seemed worse for these women. For women, mobility was never over. While locals in Xinghai might perceive the women's mobility as accomplished and complete once they successfully left for Japan, many of the women involved found they were not yet done. They had to continue seeking mobility while concealing their struggles from those remaining behind. The women who were still in Xinghai kept hoping for a "better" life in Japan based on their stories.

Mobility as Taken for Granted

As compared with the women in Dongyang (Chapter 4), the women in Xinghai actively sought cross-border marriages and aspired for mobility. Instead of viewing transnational marriages as challenging or transgressing local norms, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which transnational practices historically and socially had become local norms and practices. When the local community at large became invested in transnational linkages with Japan, the questions locals asked were not "why do they want to go to Japan?" but rather "why wouldn't they want to go to Japan?" When the idea of going to Japan became embedded in local values, marriage became an advantageous strategy for women to relocate themselves to Japan. Many women made the decision themselves, sometime even by getting divorced in China. I argue that patrilocality can also render women subjects in migration. The internalized hope for mobility and the prevailing idea of "Japan" rendered marriage a gendered site worth investing in. However, women were not in charge of the flow (Massey 1994). Mobility gave them hope, but it also placed pressure on them to leave. Once married, a woman needed to leave her own community and enter a new community. Yet, with marriage, not only did women become dependents, their mobility also became dependent. At the time of departure, it was hard to see what actually drove them to leave for Japan: the aspiration for mobility or the pressure created by mobility. Moreover, because it was an investment, crossing national borders was not the end of the project. Nonetheless, struggles in Japan were rarely reported back to Xinghai. Whereas women's motive for marriage migration was not for marriage itself, they still had to rely on local marital norms, practices, and the potential return to their investment. Such local practices shaped and reshaped the global flow of brides.

Chapter 6

Crafting Legitimate Marital Relations

"Let's call him again," said Sun Hua. I was dialing for the ninth--possibly even tenth-- time since the day before. After several rings, the phone again said, "this is a voice mail service…" and I hung up.

"What is he doing? Why doesn't he pick up the phone?" Sun Hua was extremely frustrated. It had been almost six months since Sun Hua married Mr. Kanai, who she had met when the latter had come to China on a three-day matchmaking tour. Other brides who married at the same time had already left Xinghai. But Sun Hua was still waiting to hear about the results of her spousal visa application. To make matters worse, her Japanese husband did not at all keep at her informed. So, she asked me to call him again and again, because she did have the Japanese language ability. Nonetheless, Kanai did not often pick up his phone. We wondered: was he avoiding his Chinese wife? Or, was he busy working due to the debt he incurred marrying her? Buying an international phone card was a financial burden for her. Whenever possible, I suggested using my Skype Call account to save her money. When I first met Sun Hua in early March 2010, we assumed that she would leave for Japan before I would, so I promised to visit her the next time I returned to Japan. However, come mid-June, I ended up being the first of us to arrive in Japan.

When I left Xinghai to go to Tokyo, Sun Hua asked me to meet Kanai in person and ask him about her application process. I kept calling him whenever I had a chance. After a month and half, fortunately, in August, I was able to make an appointment with

Kanai when he and another Japanese man visited the immigration office in Tokyo. The reason for their visit to the immigration office was to ask why their spousal visa applications had been denied. After his visit with the immigration bureau, we met in the lobby. With Mr. Kanai was Mr. Hara. Both had married Chinese women in Xinghai last December while on the same matchmaking tour; both of their new spouses had their applications declined a couple of months later.

We went to a cafeteria nearby and had lunch. Hara said, "What a trouble! They are not going to tell us exactly what was wrong with our application forms." For Hara, it was his third attempt at applying for a certificate of residency for his Chinese wife. Hara showed me his rejected application. I quickly took note. It stated:

> I have been living alone for a long time and have been feeling lonely. Then I saw that my neighbor married a Chinese woman and was living a happy life. I thought that I also want to live like them. So I asked them if they could introduce me to a friend of his wife. I first talked to my wife over the Internet. I had a good impression of her and I decided to go to China in order to see her in person. In China, I found that we got along well, so we decided to marry. I would like to spend time together with my wife, and my wife is also willing to take care of me, so I hope that you could give my wife a visa.

Hara said, the officer claimed his paperwork was not sufficient. When he asked the officer for further explanation, the officer pointed out that his wife did not speak Japanese. The reason the officer gave him was not convincing for the three of us, since we knew that many brides usually did not know the Japanese language when they came to Japan. Another women who married at the same time in Xinghai had already received a visa and arrived in Japan – all without any Japanese ability. Kanai and Hara said that if they knew what was wrong with their declined paperwork, they could take another try at revising it. But without knowing the precise reason, they had little chance of being successful. They would again have to wait for several months, probably only to be declined. Hara now started to think about getting divorced—all before experiencing married life with his wife in Japan.

Applicants are often confused by the immigration process. Although the immigration officers might have a particular reason for rejecting an application, as Hara complained, they did not always tell the applicants what was missing or "unreasonable." Their cases were not unique, for I witnessed many suspended and declined applications. And yet, some brides received a visa within a month. In other words, some brides could cross the border more easily than others. Even when couples are already "legally" married both in China and Japan, certain types of marital relations are still not deemed legitimate enough to justify the wife moving to Japan. What facilitates and eases certain border crossings, and who can be included in Japanese society? Moreover, what kinds of "relationships" are admissible into Japanese society?

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This chapter explores border practices and the crafting of "legitimate" relationships. I examine the ways in which certain marriages are authorized and legitimated at the border. In particular, by tracing suspended and declined marital relationships, I explore a key site where the membership politics of the nation-state and the ideology of marriage intersect. The state control of migration plays a crucial role in the membership politics. It often influences the ways in which different races, genders, ethnicities, sexualities, or classes have dissimilar access to entry (Mae Ngai 2003; Luibhéid 2005, 2002; Gardner 2009). Migration and citizenship control may delimit the boundaries of the nation state, while simultaneously reconstituting its boundaries, and disciplining citizens and would-be citizens (Ong 2003; Pratt 2005; Kim 2010; Lan 2008;

Newendorp 2008). As Mae M. Ngai observes, the politics of inclusion and exclusion articulates a desired individual, or "a desired composition—imagined if not necessarily realized—of the nation" (2003, 5).

Cross-border marriages have been one of the growing means of mobility under the heading of "family reunions."[91] The immigration processes for Chinese brides relocating to Japan constitute control regimes of inclusion and exclusion. Nonetheless, those who inhabit the racial and gendered category of "Chinese women" are not equally treated at the borders. Some brides gained permission for entry within a month, while others were never admitted. While many forms of migration depend on relatives as sponsors, and others rely on employers, one's "skills," or qualifications, marriage migration requires a different way of validating a legitimate entry. Certificates of residency and spousal visas are not simply issued based on an individual's status or quality. In order to gain a spousal visa, what is important for the immigration officers is to inspect the *kind of relationship* presented in paperwork. In other words, it is not merely a question of "whether or not this person is desired, or suitable for the entry." Instead, it is a question of legitimate relationality, that is, whether or not an individual has a legitimate relationship or a reasonable explanation for their marriage. The relationship becomes a site of regulation.

This does not mean that racial or gendered categories are irrelevant. As Aihwa Ong observes, "Culture (or "race," "ethnicity," or "gender) is not the automatic or even the most important analytical domain in which to understand how citizenship is constituted. Rather, what matters is to identify the various domains in which these preexisting racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural forms are problematized, and become absorbed and recast by social technologies of government that define the modern subject" (2003, 6). Thus, what is important is to ask how certain relations in which multiple categories are embedded are problematized, and how legitimate marital relations are re-inscribed by state regulation. In other words, immigration control is policing not simply individual bodies, but how individuals (including citizens) are perceived as located in a certain bond.

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[91] For instance, in 2011, among those (non-Japanese) residents in Japan, spouses of Japanese citizens occupied the second largest group (18%), following by permanent residents (which also include those who married Japanese citizens and naturalized (61%). Ministry of Justice 2012 Report.

Consequently, ideological apparatuses work to produce multiple levels of exclusion, not simply exclusions of bride migrants but also certain relationships and marital lives. Not being able to cross borders also means certain marital relationships do not materialize. More specifically, when the entry of the Chinese women was denied or suspended, it is not only that their mobility was delayed, but also their marital lives were deferred. Furthermore, even those who have membership in a society (Japanese male citizens) can face having their marital lives denied. Therefore, immigration control works to both exclude undesired individuals and reinforce normative marriages, thereby rejecting "inappropriate" marital relationships. Ngai observes that a crime such as driving while drunk, which a Mexican man committed twenty years ago, can result in his deportation regardless of his familial connection to a wife and two children who are U.S. citizens (2003, 1). This chapter further asks how a desired composition of the nation works to exclude certain individuals not "regardless of" their familial or marital relations to citizens, but "because of" them.

Thus, discussion in this chapter goes beyond the boundaries between "legal" or "illegal" and "fake" or "genuine" marriages. Although these categories are the criteria that immigration officers try to map and separate, what is revealed in the process is more than such dichotomies. My aim is to highlight how relationships become sites for the state regulation and reproduction of social norms, which has to be more "ideal" and normative than pragmatic. Thus, instead of inquiring into demarcations between two types of marriage ("fake" and "genuine"), I ask how the very categories of "genuine" and "appropriate" relations are created at the borders. These process do not simply draw upon or depend on local customs, but rather reproduce normative relations.

Cultural Practices of Bureaucracy

For those whose paperwork was declined, like the two Japanese men described earlier, what was confusing was the ambiguity in the explanations given for rejection. Most of the couples I met first married in China, registered in Japan, and then applied for a certificate of residency for the wife to come to Japan.[92] Thus, those who were waiting to join their husbands in Japan already possessed a legal marital status in both countries.[93] When the Chinese women receive a certificate of residency from Japan, they go to the Japanese embassy in China in order to receive a spousal visa. It usually takes one to three weeks, and as far as I know, few cases were declined subsequent to this stage. I never heard that of brides being rejected when entering Japan through airport immigration checks. What was difficult and time-consuming was first obtaining a certificate of residency in Japan. This paperwork, including both required documents and additional voluntary documents, was the key to having their marital relationship approved.

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[92] Although it is not impossible to marry first in Japan, some complications are involved in this process. All the couples I met married first in China and then registered in Japan.

[93] This is different from the K-1 (fiancé) visa of the US.

Michael Herzfeld (1993) observes that, regardless of Weber's notions of bureaucracy, which views it as constituted by rational, disinterested, and formal regulations, bureaucratic practices are actually rooted in cultural symbols, ideology, and everyday values. Furthermore, the ambiguity of symbolism can be used in rhetoric justifying inconsistent bureaucratic decisions. Drawing upon Mary Douglas's statement that "dirt is matter out of place," Herzfeld claims that "Even this happy formalism has been too often and too easily treated as a sort of static axiom, allowing us to forget that the boundaries of place itself are contestable. Those who actually do the job of delineating the contours and extent of place also get to say what is dirty, what is holy, and who is reassuringly and familiarly clean. They, not nature, define the ordinary; and like all human actors, they may have to defend their choice" (1993, 45).

Following Herzfeld, my aim is to highlight not the systematic or total control of the state, but rather the ways in which intangible notions of legitimate and reasonable marital relations are negotiated. In the process, I inquire what kinds of values and ideologies are not simply exposed, but also simultaneously reproduced. Thus, legitimacy is not simply determined in a legal sense. Although gaining a certificate of residency is a legal process, legal and cultural values are not totally separate. For instance, Mark D. West (2011) observes that judges in Japan play a crucial role as arbiters of emotions and intimate relationships, highlighting "the illusory nature of the line between what we think of as 'law' and what we think as 'nonlaw in an area that is central to being human" (2011, 9). By tracing experiences of couples in the immigration process, this chapter demonstrates how legally and socially legitimate relations are constructed.

In the remainder of this chapter, I ethnographically elaborate three issues. First, I focus on how the relationship becomes a site of regulation and ask what kinds of relationality gain legitimate entry. Second, I explore the ways in which legitimate relations are crafted through expert knowledge and resources. Third, by examining how individuals experience, maneuver, or fail within bureaucratic systems, I highlight that border practices are not simply about individual struggles against the state or social norms. Rather, individuals are also embedded within cultural and social values and norms. This chapter is not an analysis of actual declined or approved documents. Unfortunately, I did not have access to those documents. Rather, my focus is on people's experiences and interactions during the paperwork process.

For the purposes of this chapter, I will use the "term membership in society" instead of "citizenship." It is important not to equate the first admission with citizenship. Entry does imply acquiring citizenship in the future; however, they are neither equal nor equally sought by the Chinese brides I met. Indeed, not all migrants wish to gain citizenship in their receiving countries in the first place. Although entry as a spouse is on a citizenship track, the assumption that they are seeking citizenship sooner or later reinforces the idea that Chinese brides want to escape from China for good. For many Chinese brides, they might in fact eventually decide to become naturalized Japanese citizens, especially after they have had children and settled down. However, for many who are waiting to depart to Japan, citizenship is not a priority or even preferred. When I would ask female participants if they would be interested in gaining citizenship, many of them expressed hesitation. Since the Japanese and Chinese governments do not allow dual citizenship, gaining Japanese citizenship means that they need to renounce their Chinese citizenship. Numerous women expressed that if they became Japanese citizens, they would have to apply for a visa to visit their family in China, which they thought troublesome (*Ch: mafan*). What many women hoped to gain was “mobile livelihood,” so that they could freely move between Japan and China. Thus, many women told me that permanent residency (*Ch: yongzhu*) would be the best. I do not mean to neglect the ways in which citizenship offers different treatment for the members of a society; nonetheless, I want to stress that attaining citizenship is not always everyone’s goal, especially when it may involve the dilemma of abandoning one’s original citizenship. Citizen and non-citizen are not dichotomous categories, there are gray areas between them, and some migrants prefer such grey areas. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on first entry instead of assimilation and naturalization processes after the entry.

Relation as a Site of Regulation

In both Xinghai and Dongyang, marriage was considered an easier path into Japan than other forms of migration. This is not unique to Japan-China cases. Other scholars working on transnational migration have also observed that family reunions are more privileged forms of border-crossing than, for instance, labor migration or smuggling (Constable 2003, Eng 2006, Anagnost 2000, 2004). However, not all family reunions are treated equally. This issue becomes particularly complex when we view family, kin, or marital relations as not simply legal or objective entities, but as historically, culturally, and symbolically constructed and validated. For instance, Constable contrasts two different forms of family reunions: transnational adoption and marriage. Transnational adoptees are not only seen as innocent but also as enabling white middle-class parenthood (Anagnost 2000, 2004). Moreover, Constable claims, whereas transnational adoption evokes sympathy toward those who are unable to have children, such sympathy is not provoked for those who are unable to find local wives. Since babies are seen as innocent and thus devoid of agency, adoption from developing countries carries the connotation of a heroic rescue story. Brides, on the other hand, are seen as far from innocent. Thus, the motives of brides are often under suspicion. In analyzing Asian brides in Japan, Nakamatsu also observes that while Asian brides are portrayed as victims of poverty, they are also seen as calculating actors (2005, 406). Thus, creating a family with migrant brides provokes more complex and skeptical reactions from Japanese society. Furthermore, even among transnational marriages, certain marriages have longer wait periods and more restrictions even after relocation (cf. Friedman 2010a, 2010b). In particular, some cross-border marriages face suspicions not only concerning their authenticity, but also their feasibility and even morality. Simply, legal marital status alone is not sufficient to claim the right to enter a country.

Existing studies have critically analyzed the ways that individual bodies are disciplined at the border (Garner 2009; Magñara 2003; Fassin 2011). Mark B. Salter (2006), for instance, argues, “the bordering process constituted by the decision to include/exclude is a dialogue between body and body politic requiring the confession of all manner of bodily, economic, and social information” (2006, 170). Desired bodies and undesired bodies are separated so that undesired bodies are excluded. In analyzing immigration control in the United States, Eithne Luibhéid (2002) similarly observes that immigration control is a “key site for the production and reproduction of sexual categories, identities, and norms within relations of inequality” (2002, x).

Nonetheless, what has received less attention is the “relations” in which individual bodies are located when crossing borders. The importance of the relationality of bodies is not limited to marriage migration. Other forms of migration also inspect the "appropriateness" of relations between and among different bodies. Here, however, I am interested in how the immigration policies and controls in Japan have situated non-members in relation to Japanese nationals. By reviewing other forms of migration means to Japan, my intent is to highlight how individuals' "proper" relations to Japanese nationals play a key role in making crossing borders feasible.[94]

Authorization of admission is deeply rooted in the membership politics of the nation state. Since WWII, Japanese immigration policy has undergone several transformations. In particular, during the period of economic growth in the late 1970s and 1980s, the shortage of labor force had an impact migration flows to Japan. The Japanese bubble economy (1986-91) created the labor shortage in particular for 3D (Dirty, Dangerous and Demeaning) jobs (in Japanese called 3K: *Kitsui, Kitanai, Kiken*). This also made Japan an appealing destination for migrant labor (Chung 2010). A 1990 policy revision, however, decreed that only four categories of visas were allowed to engage in unrestricted economic activities. "Spouse or child of a Japanese national" was one of them.[95] This means that marriage migration offers the right of immediate, unrestricted economic activity. While the state officially allowed only skilled labor migrants, in reality, a large number of unskilled migrants were also temporarily employed on trainee visas. These labor migrants were temporary residents, and thus, not members of Japanese society. In other words, their bodies were deployed only for physical labor, which while crucial for the Japanese economy did not mean that they became valued as important members of the society.

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[94] Such relations might shift after crossing borders. Lieba Faier (2009) shows that Filipina entertainers came to be seen as "*ii oyomesan*" (an ideal, traditional Japanese bride and daughter-in-law (2009, 3).

[95] Another visa category is "trainee" (*kenshu*) which allows one-year work permit as skills training, yet, in reality, many trainees work as low-wage labors.

The case of return migration of Brazilian-Japanese provides an interesting site for understanding how the Japanese state regulates membership inclusion and exclusion (Lesser 2003). During the period of the 1900s-1940s, a number of ethnic Japanese migrated to South America, primarily Peru and Brazil (Roth 2002). This group is called “Nikkei.” Starting in 1989, the Japanese government began providing a preferred visa status for the Nikkei to visit Japan, including permission (with unlimited renewal) for them to engage in unrestricted economic activities for up to three years.

Although the Nikkei were not granted automatic citizenship, the exceptional treatment of this group revealed not only how the Japanese state sought a solution to its labor shortage, but also the *jus sanguinis* nature of membership in Japan (Tsuda 2003; Roth 2004). Roth (2002) observes that Japanese immigration policy demonstrates how the degree of perceived “Japanese-ness” determines the length of one’s visa status. Second generation Nikkei received a three-year visa, while the third generation only a one-year visa. He notes, “Japanese immigration policy implied that the “Japanese-ness” of Nikkeijin diminished with each generation” (2002, 26).[96] Therefore, legitimate entry as well as status of residency was granted based on the proximity of their relationship with Japanese nationals, whether in the present or the past. Interestingly, Roth notes that few Nikkeijin ever visited their Japanese relatives in Japan, in part because many Japanese felt embarrassed to have Japanese Brazilian relatives (4). In this sense, genealogy and relation to ancestry was more important than one's present relationship with Japanese citizens.

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[96] Roth (2002) also notes that in the late 1992, the Japanese government became suspicious concerning the authenticity of application documents from Peruvian Nikkeijin. Thus, approval of visa also provided a site where the state validates Nikkei identity (26-27).

Labor migrants to Japan are not simply men. While unskilled physical labor is primarily the domain with male workers, female migrants often work in other fields. For instance, since the late 1970s and 1980s, women from the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, and Taiwan have migrated to Japan to work in the so-called "entertainment" or sex industry (Allison 1994, Parreñas 2011; Faier 2008; Suzuki 2000; Douglass 2000). The "entertainment visa" was originally granted to dancers or singers, nonetheless, many women with this type of visa work as hostesses in pubs, clubs, or in the sex industry. Mike Douglass argues that "marriage and labor recruitment are intermingled as foreign women are brought not only for their reproductive function of bearing children for rural households, but, are also taking on many agricultural duties as rural Japan continues to be depopulated of its prime-age labor force" (Douglass 2000, 112-113). Female migrants were viewed as engaging in reproductive work not only as wives of Japanese families, but, also for the nation (cf. Kim 2010). Nonetheless, here again, regardless of the importance of their roles in the Japanese society, they are not permitted full membership.

Parreñas (2011) observes that marrying or giving birth to a Japanese citizen conditions the integration of long-term residents in Japan. Thus, she refers to the Filipino migrant community as "sexual citizens not only to underscore sex as a primary condition of their belonging but also to acknowledge that their citizenship, that is, their terms of belonging in Japanese society, involves sexual relations with Japanese citizens" (2011, 179). Although she also notes that we are to some extent all sexual citizens, as reproducing population is the responsibility of citizens, the status of wives or mothers of

Japanese citizens as a path to citizenship magnifies this notion of sexual citizens.

What I want to highlight here is that in order to be a “sexual citizen” or engage in reproductive labor, one enters into a relation requiring a counterpart. If migrant women are sexual citizens engaging in a marital relationship, Japanese husbands are also becoming sexual citizens by marrying and pursuing married life. If reproducing populations is the responsibility of citizens, unmarried persons do not have full social membership even if legally residing in Japan. This also means that denying entry of certain bodies, in this case, brides, also means the denial of married life and full social membership to waiting husbands in Japan. There are multiple levels of exclusion. This of course does not mean that exclusionary processes apply equally to the brides and grooms involved. Those who are physically excluded from society certainly experience more uncertainty and anxiety. Still, the denial of brides is not solely about brides’ entry, but also marital future of the brides and grooms. In short, marriage involves two counterparts; if one of them cannot enter society both lose their chance at married life together.

Natural Coupling, Legitimate Motives

After accompanying two newly wed couples and their marriage brokers in November 2009 to visit the office of international marriage registration in Harbin, on a day when I saw fifteen couples, I paused and realized that I honestly could not tell who was married to whom. Most of the couples were escorted by several others individuals (probably brokers). Since the couples did not talk to or even look at each other, I could not really tell who were the brides, grooms, or brokers. One man, seemingly in his seventies, was sitting next to a woman, seemingly in her twenties. When I realized that they were a couple, I somehow almost felt embarrassed to see them. Were they really married? Can she really receive a spousal visa? Then, I asked myself, “Why do I feel embarrassed and awkward, looking at seemingly “unmatched” couples? What did I want to find in those couples? What would have convinced me that their marriages made sense?

The criteria involved in the visa paperwork were not independent from social expectations and norms. They were rooted in cultural values and norms. Building on Foucault, Sara Friedman observes that immigration interviews, which require truth, demand that immigrants speak about their intimate relationships with citizens. In analyzing Chinese marriage migrants to Taiwan, Friedman argues, “the demand for truth and the expectation that statements take a certain form are already embedded in power relations that deny to those who speak the truth the ability to define the content of the categories themselves” (2010, 172). Though the task of immigration officers is to separate “authentic” and “fake” marriages, Friedman also shows that the “sign” of authenticity is not simply to disclose intention, but “index shared social understandings about what constitutes conventional marriage practices (how one courts and decides to marry) and proper deportment and appearance for a married woman” (2010, 174). Thus, interviews “draw on and reproduce a deeper level of shared social knowledge about what a real marriage should look like” (174).

Importantly, “what a real marriage should look like” is not simply an expectation concerning the certain roles a wife should occupy, but also includes what constitute “appropriately” matched couples. That is, individuals are not simply judged on their own qualities, but also in relation to another person, a citizen. The status or validity of individuals is relationally created. Furthermore, the social understandings for judging such relations complicate commercially brokered cross-border marriages. Indeed, the couples I met did not really have "relations" except for their status as a legal married pair and a very short period of personal encounters.

My conversations with brokers and others outside these relationships also revealed the ideal of what marriage should look like and what count as "normal" (*Ja: futū*) and "natural" (*Ja: shizen*) couplings. During an interview, one domestic marriage broker expressed a slight hostility toward cross-border marriages. She had once considered establishing a network of connections with transnational marriage agencies. She thought that introducing transnational marriage agencies to her clients might help in reducing the large number of perpetually unmarried male customers at her agency. As a result, she met with a number of transnational marriage brokers and Japanese-Chinese couples. One agency even invited her on a matchmaking tour to China. Ultimately, she decided not to establish any relationship with the transnational agencies. She said, "I saw a number of couples. They don't look like married couples. They just look like a father and a daughter." And she further continued, "I don't understand why such a young pretty woman can love an old man. I don't think they are real marriages after all (*Ja: honto no kekkon jya nai*)." The domestic broker's comments reveal, first, that love should be the basis for marriage, and second, that there are limits to the types people who certain individuals can or should love. "Love" appears only in a certain relation, according to her, and definitely not between a "young pretty woman" and an "old man."

Those who were involved in the brokering businesses also did not always have positive perceptions of the couples they brokered. A local staff member told me, “Often Japanese men choose a young and pretty woman, without considering their own status (*Ja: mibun*). I don’t know why they think they can psychologically and financially support those pretty women. If they really want to have a stable marital life, they should choose a relatively old and plain (*Ja: jimi*) woman.” When she witnessed a couple (a man in his 60s, and a woman in her late 20s) that was in the process of getting divorced, regardless of the fact that she also had assisted brokering their marriage, she stated, “Undoubtedly, they wouldn’t do well. He should have chosen an older and uglier woman.”

During another interview with a broker, he told me that he was getting tired of his job and was about to quit. He had worked as a broker for ten years, but he said that when he started the brokerage work, it was different. Both the quality of male and female customers and the nature of the marriages he brokered were different. He recalled, “At that time, Japanese men were those from the countryside. They were good people, yet somehow, could not find any brides in Japan. Women were also relatively old women who just missed a chance to marry in China. So, it used to be that unmarriageable men in the countryside married unmarriageable women in China.” Yet, he continued, “In recent years, the customers have changed. Now, men are so picky, stingy, and “*roku de mo nai”*; and they want to marry someone twenty years younger than themselves.” He added, “The women are also becoming more arrogant. They are just thinking about making money.” According to him, it was acceptable and even ethical that two unmarriageable persons marry. Yet, marriage between an old picky man and a young pretty woman who seeks money was not acceptable.

Such comments implied a certain notion of "appropriate matches," the idea of who can love whom, or where intimate relations can emerge. Not confirming to such models would create suspicion, and it was assumed that the individuals involved must be marrying for something else, either, money (or with money), citizenship, or the purposes of exploitation. Thus, these marriages were not for the goal of marriage itself. But then, what is marriage for the goal of marriage itself? How is love relevant or irreverent in making marriage legitimate?

In analyzing Japanese courts and legal cases, Mark D. West observes that the Japanese courts define marriage as a "mental and physical union of a man and a woman that in the eyes of society can generally be thought of as a marital relationship" (2011, 89). West highlights that according to the judicial definition of marriage, marriage requires a mental union, physical and sexual union, and importantly, "society must view the relationship as 'marital'"(91). This social appearance of marriage also includes cohabitation, cooperation, and mutual aid (Civil Code art. 752; West 93). Importantly, although love marriages became the norm (Yuzawa 2003; Hashimoto and Traphagan 2008), love in marriage is not included in such legal definition. What is noteworthy here is that marriage has to be represented as such "in the eyes of society." Such a definition makes it more difficult for applicants, since they have no sure means to demonstrate their relationship is indeed legitimate and they have to navigate the assumed yet unstated commonsensical expectations that apply to marriage. Notably, not all commercially brokered cross-border marriages were denied visas. Regardless of their lack of a common language, sustained courtship, or knowledge about each other, some brides were bestowed a spousal visa. On the other hand, there were those who were denied, and in many cases these were the couples who did not “look like they should be married.”

Cultural values of coupling are often unstated. Upon marriage, many domestic couples usual enjoy the social celebration of their union. Questions such as “do they really love each other?” are rarely asked and certainly not appropriate to ask. However, whether or not the majority of domestic couples belong in the category of the “normal marriage” is another question. For example, according to a survey conducted by a research institution in Japan,[97] when answering the question of why they want to marry, the main three answers among Japanese are: Wanting to have psychological stability (59.7%), wanting to live with someone they love (59.2%), and not wanting to be lonely in their old age (49.9%). While “love” is one of the reasons, avoiding potential loneliness (which was not seen as an appropriate reason for the transnational marriage cited above!) nevertheless was a frequent answer for why people sought marriage in the domestic context. Nonetheless, domestic couples do not have to explain why they are marrying when they register their union. Conversely, transnational couples have to explain and convince the government officers as well as others that their marriage is legitimate and somehow normal. In order to overcome such suspicions, cross-border couples have to be more “ideal” than pragmatic. Such an ideal model also includes love as the basis of marital relations. If couples do not match what is seen as normal in “the eyes of society,” they have to publicly demonstrate their love in a manner that overcomes social suspicions.

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[97] (http://www.macromill.com/r_data/20090224konkatsu/090224konkatsu.pdf, accessed on 01/2010)

Crafting “Legitimate” Marital Relations on Paper

Even after marrying Chinese women in China, many Japanese men kept returning to visit the agencies. Assisting with the application for a spousal visa was an important part of brokerage work. Among the male clientele were also those who had never possessed passports. Thus, while brokerage work starts before the men visit China, it also continues after marriage. This section looks at how “legitimate” relations are crafted on paper.

Caren Freeman (2011) offers an excellent ethnography of how kinship relations are verified based on the minute details of documents. Chosŏnjok labor migration from northeast China to South Korea entails paperwork that proves applicants’ kinship relations to South Korean citizens. In the process of proving kinship relations, small mistakes or unintended errors can prove devastating. By providing the required documents, such as a letter of invitation or a genealogy of kinship, Freeman paradoxically demonstrates how carefully crafted “falsified” documents may have a better chance of being accepted than genuine documents based on unadulterated kinship connections. In a different context, Julie Chu (2010) also observes how different boundaries between “smuggling” and “legal” migrations are drawn. For would be migrants in Fuzhou, China, fake marriages are perfectly legal because the documents are real. Thus state documents distinguish legal and illegal exits (117). The authenticity of a relation is based on the apparent authenticity of the documents, not necessarily a relation itself.

If validating kinship relations involves accurate genealogies and genuine letters of invitation from receiving relatives, how can marital relations be verified based on documents? If validating kinship is thought of as confirming an already established link (although in reality it is not always the case), verifying marital relations is a different matter. Genealogy does not say anything about the authenticity of marital relations. Moreover, a certificate of marriage only demonstrates legal marital status, but not "authenticity" of the relationship. Here again, there are double standards for domestic and cross-border marriages. Legal status is not sufficient to validate the relationship. They need something more. What, then, exactly authenticates a cross-border marital relationship?

Here, I look at the processes of paperwork and the contexts in which "legitimate relations" are crafted. Legitimate relations are created by expert knowledge and resources. Such knowledge makes non-customary practices into materials for presentation. Once couples marry, the first part of the paperwork process is conducted in Japan. Assistance with paperwork is frequently part of the brokerage package. Staff members often exchange phone calls and emails with male clientele in order to make sure everything is written properly. Some men were very concerned about the instructions, and even made overnight trips to visit the agency in order to receive instruction in person.

In addition to the many forms and documents that applicants have to submit, one of the most important documents is called a written inquiry (*Ja: shitsumon sho*). After providing an applicant's personal information, including one's occupational information, the applicant is supposed to provide a detailed explanation of how the relationship started. The first question concerns when and where an applicant and his or her spouse first met, including the specific day and place. The next question asks under what circumstances the couple married after meeting for the first time. This section needs to be explained with a precise timeline. It also suggests that if more space is necessary, the applicant can also add more supporting evidence, including photos, letters, and a record of international calls as proof of the explanation provided.

The form also asks whether or not there were any persons involved in introducing the couple. If the introducing party was a marriage broker, the applicant is supposed to provide information about the agency. The exact day, place, and means (photos, phones, in person, email, or others) also need to be specified. The relationship between brokers, the applicant, and his or her spouse also requires explanation. The form specifies that simply stating that the introducing party was a "friend" or "acquaintance" is not sufficient.[98]

A further set of questions address how the couple communicates. One question is about the language that the married couple uses in daily life. Then, other questions ask the native languages of both, to what extent the couple understands each other's mother tongue, and if the applicant's spouse understands Japanese, how he or she learned it. Finally, a question asks when they cannot converse due to linguistic difficulties, how they communicate with each other.

The form further asks questions regarding the wedding ceremony, if there was any. It asks the specific day, place, and attendees (which members of each family attended). Other questions include the couple's marital history, history of residency in Japan (if already living in Japan), history of visiting the spouse's country, history of deportation, if any, and family member's information (including which members of family know about the marriage). Some versions of the written inquiry form also ask to provide a map of their house, which might be used for immigration officers to visit their house for inspection.[99]

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[98] Some brokers told me that their agencies already established good reputations of brokerage work so that their names will smooth the process.

There have been numerous books published to guide applicants through the immigration processes. For instance, Fukuda, et al, (2008) advise potential applicants that every fact should be written down correctly. If there are even a few inconsistencies or deviations from the facts, the document might be judged as false. They maintain that it is also important to specify when someone introduced the couple, whether it was one person or two persons. A false report on brokers can influence the outcome of an application. It may depend on whether or not the introducing parties were professional brokers or acquaintances or friends acting out of "natural goodwill" (*Ja: shizen na zeni*). They also advise that obtaining a certificate of residency for Chinese wives is often not easy, and thus, an applicant should visit China at least 2-3 times before marrying and at least 1-2 times after marrying to visit their Chinese wife.

Marriage brokers I met also provide similar advice to their clientele. Although they offer one-time matchmaking/wedding tours, they usually recommend two-visit packages (with matchmaking and wedding tours conducted separately). During matchmaking and wedding tours, brokers often asked couples not only to take photos together, but also requested for, and even urged, them to hold each other's hands, kiss each one another's cheeks, and so on. In addition to wedding photos taken professionally by photo studios, photos in "natural settings" were important. When couples went out for a walk or to eat, it was seen as good for a photographer constantly accompany them. Brokers further advised their male client to keep all the records of communication with their Chinese wives. For instance, one man proudly spoke about accumulating more than fifty pages of records containing emails and international calls.

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[99] During an interview with a public notary, he noted that few immigration officers actually visit couples in person nowadays due to there being too many marriages.

Even when marriages occur between Japanese men and Chinese women living in Japan, the couple still needs to submit paperwork in order to apply for a spousal visa. Although such a procedure is easier than in the case of marriage with a Chinese woman from China, the brokers always make sure to take pictures together of couples that are engaged in matchmaking meetings. The brokers usually said, "Let's take a picture together, it might be a good memory (*Ja: omoide*) in the future if you happen to have a fate (*Ja: en*) and marry." By doing this, the agency was able to keep a picture of "the day they first met."

The manual books written by lawyers, public notaries, and other "experts" suggest that the most determinant factor is the continuity (*Ja: jizokusei*) and stability (*Ja: anteisei*) of marital relations (Fukuda et al 2008; Nishimura, et al 2009). They advise that an applicant's occupation, income, and ability to financially support dependents may influence perceptions of the continuity and stability of marital relations. In particular, whether or not marital relations are seen as "normal" (*Ja: seijyo na kankei*) can also shape whether a marriage is classified as stable. Furthermore, even if already married, the couples who convey a feeling of incongruity (*Ja: iwakan*), or give off the impression (*Ja: youso*) that they might divorce within a half year will be seen as having problems for maintaining their marriage (Fukuda et al 2008, 158). Kishimoto (2009) suggests that an applicant also provides pictures of their future home as proof that they will live together, including photos of the entrance, bedroom, living room, and kitchen, even pictures capturing his and her toothbrushes or coffee mugs. In addition, an applicant can also offer proof of remittances to his wife to show that he already financially supports her. In order to demonstrate financial stability, which is crucial for maintaining marital relations, it is best that applicants have a monthly income of more than 200,000 yen. Finally, he suggests that love letters can also be proof of love. Although submitting these documents is a voluntary option, without these documents, it is quite difficult to obtain a spouse visa. Thus, these documents are not legally mandatory, but rather, normatively required as means to differentiate one's marriage from so-called fake marriages.

Again, legal and immigration experts repeatedly stress that "continuity" and "stability" are key terms. The continuity and stability of marital relations is seen as manifesting the "substance" (*Ja: jisshitsu*) of these relations. As Sha et al (2008) argue, marital relationships are not simply matters of law, but also are constituted by substantive relations based on cohabitation, mutual cooperation and shared living (Sha et al, 2008, 99). Others suggest that to obtain the status of spouse of a Japanese citizen, the relationship should not only be lawfully valid, but the couple must also engage in appropriate activities based on socially accepted ideas (*Ja: shakai tsunen jo*) (2008, 108). Interestingly, the notions of continuity and stability are not simply about the past history of the couples, which most of the couples do not have. Rather, it is about a presumed future: whether or not they will maintain their marital relations.[100]

Unlike those who seek to define what constitutes substantial marital relations in the eyes of immigration officials, my interest here is to explore how the "substance" of marital relations is not simply "proved" but rather crafted by accumulating information, files and records. The act of accumulating information about relations and courtship is not necessarily a function of conducting a finding a marriage partner. However, such practices were made possible with assistance from the marriage agencies. Thus, participants often crafted their paperwork based on the brokers' knowledge and experience. Marriage brokers were seen as "experts" who were acquainted with the "know-how" necessary to smoothly navigate the process. Creating valid documents was also important for agencies because it further produced the agencies as credible vis-a-vis prospective customers. The broker at China Bride often proudly told me that his agency had not arranged any marriages that were permanently declined.

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[100] In analyzing cross-border marriages between Taiwanese men and Mainland Chinese women, Pei-Chia Lan (2008) observes that the immigration interviews go beyond examining the authenticity of marital relations, but also whether or not couples are "happy" and will be able to maintain and manage relationships in the future.

During an interview with a public notary who often provided support for spousal visas, he informed me that "loneliness" does not qualify as a legitimate justification for marriage. I asked him what then is needed in order to persuade the officers. The public notary said, "they have to convince the officers that their marriage is legitimate by showing, for example, the record of their telephone calls, email correspondence, proof of visiting China more than once, and pictures of them together." He added that while their pictures are important, if they do not match well, they might face difficulties, and in general, couples who look alike are more likely to receive a visa sooner. Also, "gentle looking" (*Ja: yasashisouna*) persons would have more of an advantage. He further continued, "Although the immigration officers know that they are not normal marriages, applicants still have to show proof of intimacy and love."

Hara's application, as noted above, was declined; his loneliness obviously did not validate the legitimacy of his marital relations. Neither did the fact that he had visited China three times authenticate their relations. Hara was 67 years old and already retired.

His Chinese wife was in her mid-forties and lacked any Japanese language skills. What else could he do? Ironically, Hara and Kanai did not have support from their "brokers." They told me that their brokers were also just Japanese-Chinese couples who lived in their neighborhood. These neighbors had started acting as go-betweens and were not professional marriage brokers. These unofficial brokers believed that they had provided a significant service by introducing wives from China. Nonetheless, their relationship with these "friend-like" neighbors/brokers became quite problematic when the latter disappeared with their money. Neither Hara nor Kanai had computers at home. Whenever they called China, they used pre-paid phone cards and did not know how to keep a record of their phone calls. Simply visiting China several times was apparently not sufficient as proof of the stability of their marital relations.

At China Brides, emails in Japanese from Japanese husbands to their brides go to local staff members first. The staff translated it into Chinese before sending it to the bride, and, at the same time, could keep a record of all email correspondence. However, not everyone can successfully accumulate such a data trail due to lack of knowledge and resources. Keeping records of personal communications and interactions is not a natural habit for many people. In order to craft a complete, tangible pile of proof of legitimate relations, they have to know from the first day they met and throughout their long-distance courtship what they have to record and keep.

For example, Wang Lijuan married a Japanese man in September of 2009 (Chapter 4). Her first attempt to apply for a visa application was declined. When I saw her in Dongyang in late winter of 2010, she was really depressed about the news. She was upset not only because her paperwork was declined, but also because her husband, Noguchi, did not tell her immediately. When he called her and told the result of the application, it was already almost two weeks after he had received the letter from the immigration office. Wang Lijuan felt that her application had not been taken seriously.

At the same time, Noguchi also called the agency about the declined paperwork. Their case was, of course, not the first declined case that the broker encountered. Yet, they knew what to do next. The broker's subsequent instructions were prompt. The broker asked Noguchi to visit Dongyang one more time to see Wang Lijuan and make sure to take a lot of pictures together. The broker immediately contacted local staff regarding Noguchi's visit, so that there would be someone waiting to pick him up at the airport. Also, the broker asked Noguchi to call his wife as much as possible and keep a record of the calls. After Noguchi visited her in China, the broker instructed him to submit proof of the visit--including photos and a copy of his passport stamp--to the immigration office again. According to the broker, visiting more than once, ideally at least three times, was crucial to getting her visa approved.

Noguchi visited her two weeks later. Ironically, this time, Wang Lijuan did not have a good experience. Later she told me that when Noguchi visited her, he was not nice. They spent the majority of his visit at a hotel watching television in order to kill time and save money. Sometimes he did not even talk to her. A local staff member had to intervene when Lijuan started crying after Noguchi refused to go on a walk with her. After he left, Lijuan started feeling that something was wrong with their relationship. Regardless of his behavior in China, Noguchi continued to follow the broker's instructions and called her a number of times. Yet, Wang Lijuan later confessed that whenever he called her, he was just complaining about how hard his life is and how little money he had, and so she did not enjoy the conversations at all. It was at this time that Lijuan was becoming more and more concerned about going to Japan. Yet, his third visit paid off and became a crucial addition to his paperwork. The certificate for Lijuan was approved within three weeks after resubmission. Lijuan received a spousal visa and arrived in Japan several days before I was planning to go back to the US.

A couple of weeks later, the broker at the Tokyo office updated me on her situation. Noguchi and Lijuan had visited China Bride. While sitting in the lounge, he suddenly claimed that he did not love her anymore and wished to get divorced. Lijuan fainted. After a week of back-and-forth discussions, Lijuan assented in return for 1,000,000 yen ($13000). The broker told her that even if she might want to get more compensation, considering his job situation, asking for more than 1,000,000 yen might hurt even her chances to receive that amount. So, the broker convinced her to take what she could get at that point.

When I visited her in the summer of 2011, she was in Shizuoka, working at a factory on a short contract. Her spouse visa would soon expire, as would her work contract. She was desperate to find other ways to maintain her legal status in Japan. I asked if the agency was willing to help her find another opportunity to stay in Japan. Yet, she was not willing to ask for help. She expressed that the agency was not nice to her at all. The broker said that they would charge her 30,000 yen for introducing her to another Japanese man. Lijuan also told me that she could not even participate in the monthly matchmaking party because she was too old as compared with other female participants.

She did not tell her family about her divorce. She said, “If I told them that I already got divorced, they would be worried about me. So I just told them that I am still in Tokyo and working during the days. I won't tell them my cell phone number. When I need to contact them, I just Skype them. If they ask me about my situation here, I just tell them a couple of words, and say I am busy and hang up the phone." She expressed that if she had to go back to China, it would be really embarrassing. Thus, she needed to find another legitimate way to stay in Japan.

So while Lijuan's entry was approved, her relationship failed quite rapidly. Although their marriage was never described as based on love during the matchmaking process, a lack of love was the reason cited by Noguchi for terminating their marriage. Brokers knew how to make marriages appear stable on paper, but they could not help couples stay together.

"I Don't Really Know My Wife …"

Importantly, it is not simply the state, bureaucrats, or non-participants in these marriages who were suspicious of cross-border marriages. Those who were personally involved in these marriages could also express doubts. Such suspicions of one's own marital relationship could also slowdown or even damage the process. The participants are not simply outside of social norms of "appropriate" or "legitimate" relationships. In other words, it is not simply a battle between the state and applicants. Applicants are also embedded within the processes in which cultural values shape appropriate relations.

Existing work focuses on how bureaucrats are also actors who struggle to make decisions based on norms and ideology (Becker and Clark 2001). However, what is understudied is how applicants also struggle in a process that was influenced by cultural values. The participants showed contradictory attitudes toward the migration process: the applicants were desperate to obtain a certificate of residency, and yet simultaneously suspicious of each other's motivations.

When I met Sun Hua for the first time in March, she told me that Kanai would visit her in two weeks. She asked me to accompany them to translate, and we also planned which restaurants to go and so forth. However, the next time he called her, his plan had changed. He told her that he would possibly visit her the following month. Kanai kept telling Sun Hua that he would visit her as soon as he had time and money. Kanai's schedule kept changing, and when I left Xinghai in June, I missed the chance to see him in China. Sun Hua originally rented an apartment in town for Kanai, as she thought that he would not like to stay in a house without running water or an inside toilet. As Kanai's plan was postponed a number of times, Sun Hua, also could not financially maintain her stay in the apartment. While still waiting for him, she moved out of the apartment and temporarily went back to her village. She also stopped attending Japanese school since she did not have enough money to continue.

While waiting, she also learned how other brides were able to accelerate their visa approval. For instance, she heard that a record of remittances would also prove the authenticity of their relationship, because it would demonstrate she was already financially dependent. If they were "fake" couples, husbands would not send money before their wives came to Japan. So, she sent Kanai her bank account number by mail. I accompanied her to the post office. She also included pictures of herself, their wedding, and her son. Sending an international express package was not financially easy for her. Yet, she used the express package so she could track it. Kanai did receive her package. He said that he went to a bank in his neighborhood. Yet, he said, somehow he could not send any money because the local bank did not know how to set up a transfer. This explanation made Sun Hua suspicious, but she tried to show understanding, rationalizing "maybe it was a small local bank" or "maybe he is too old to handle these international transactions."

Nonetheless, as Kanai changed his plans a number of times, Sun Hua gradually became distrustful of Kanai. Becoming frustrated about the whole process, Sun Hua started saying "he is deceiving me (*Ch: pian wo*)." She claimed that it should be taken for granted that a husband financially supports his wife. If he is not willing to do so, he must be deceiving her. She repeatedly asked, "Why don't Japanese pick up the phone? We Chinese always pick up the phone immediately." Her mistrust toward him grew when Kanai did not answer her calls a number of times. Sun Hua guessed that he might be avoiding her for some reason. She suggested that we use someone else's phone so that he would not know it is her who is calling and might pick up the phone. This strategy did not work either. In the last several weeks of my stay, I spent a lot of time with her, just calling him again and again. Sometimes, we left a message, but he did not call us back.

Such waiting is not a unique experience for migrants. Whether legal or illegal, waiting is often a part of migration procedures (cf. Contin 2003, Chu 2011, Newendorp 2008).[101] Yet, waiting experiences vary. For example, Constable (2003) observes that during the waiting periods, the American husbands expressed more frustration and anger toward the bureaucratic process than their wives from China or the Philippines. She explains that the women from China and the Philippines expressed less frustration, anxiety, and anger in part because they were more used to dealing with inefficient bureaucratic systems, and thus had low expectations. She adds, "women were simply less involved with the U.S. side of the bureaucratic process" (189).

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[101] Newendorp (2008) observes that during the waiting period to reunite with husbands in Hong Kong, the women from the Mainland China often experience paradoxical upward and downward mobility in a shifting economic context. While some women who married Hong Kongese husbands waited where they grew up, others moved to nearby cities, such as Shenzhen. In such cities, the women had access to people, goods, services, and ideologies, as well as comfortable standards of living. With the economic growth of the Mainland China and the economic recession of Hong Kong, some wives then experienced "downward mobility" when they migrated to Hong Kong.

Unlike the women Constable (2003) studied, the Chinese women I met did express frustration and anger. Their frustration was directed not only at the Japanese bureaucracy but also toward their Japanese husbands. For the women I met, not being personally involved was not the source of less frustration, but rather, the cause of their frustration. Not being able to communicate directly due to linguistic issues, the women's frustration was also due to their inability to know what was going on. Some women complained about the system, but others also complained about how their husbands did not work hard to get through the system. Moreover, the women in Dongyang and Xinghai experienced the waiting period differently. In general, the women in Dongyang received a certificate of residency sooner than the women in Xinghai. Professional brokers usually assisted the women in Dongyang while not all the women in Xinghai had such support. Furthermore, Xinghai was viewed as a "notorious" place for runaway brides and fake documents.

After I left in June 2010, the situation did not change much. I called Sun Hua from time to time to learn about her situation. Most of the time, she was just waiting. So, I also kept calling Kanai and left a couple of messages so that Kanai could call me when he had a chance. In late September, Kanai called my cell phone in Japan. He tried to explain his situation. He said "Actually, a bride who married at the same time as us already arrived in Japan. But I heard that she already ran away. Because of that, people around her told me not to send my wife any money until she really comes to Japan. I do not really know my wife yet since we just met once. If she really can come to Japan and support me and live together, I am willing to send her living expenses, but if not, I am a little hesitant to do that. You seem to spend more time with my wife, so you might know more about her than me. I am not sure if she is coming to Japan because she likes me. Other women marry Japanese men only as a step toward upward mobility and run away as soon as they arrive in Japan. If my wife is that kind of person, I am wondering if I should send her living expenses now. If she is really willing to devote herself to me, I could send her 10,000-yen or so even though my life is not that affluent. I have also been asking in many places how I can receive a visa sooner. But it seems that it is really difficult. Someone told me that if I pay money like 3, 000,000 yen for services, I could get more support for paperwork. But, when a man's income is around 3,000,000 yen per year, it is really difficult. I am trying hard. If she is serious (*Ja: honki*), I will also be serious. So, please tell her that."

Sun Hua also knew that another bride already ran away. She stressed, "I am not that kind of person. I would not run away!" As an anthropologist, assisting the paperwork process was a tricky line. I was not there for either promoting or hindering cross-border marriages. While I did not want to completely reject any requests from those who really needed help, such as translating or calling, I simultaneously realized that what I could do was so little.

In early October 2010, Kanai called me and said "I just got a call from Sun Hua's sister who is in Yamagata prefecture. She asked me if I am thinking about her seriously.

She said if I were serious, she would also help us." I was worried about losing contact with him again, and told him that I would call her immediately and call him back soon after. I called Sun Hua and let her know that her "sister" called Kanai. I asked if she has anything that she wants to tell him. She said, "If he does not come to China sometime soon, I want to get divorced. My friend already got divorced and received a refund. I am the only one who has not received a refund because my husband has not agreed to get divorced yet. I want to get divorced and get a refund as soon as possible." When I called Kanai back, I carefully and politely told him what she said. Kanai responded, "well, if she does not like me anymore, there is no way, but if not, I think I still love her even if I cannot call her often as I am busy with work. But, I think I want to hang in there a little bit and want to live with her. Now, the broker who helped me is missing, and so things are messy here. But I am also trying to save money to visit China. It might take time, but I hope that she could be patient and wait for me."

I called Sun Hua back immediately. She this time screamed, "I also still love him! I know he also loves me! But if he does not come to China, we cannot move on! He even does not send me any money. I just want to get divorced as soon as possible!" Ironically, it was my first time to hear the word "love" from them. When Sun Hua was ready to move on to a next opportunity, "love" hindered her from doing so. She still had to wait for another several months or possibly forever. Was it better for Kanai not to love her - so that he would be willing to get divorced? Indeed, love would not do anything; they needed legitimate proof. Although both seemed to be willing to live together, they were also mutually suspicious about each other. They met only once for a couple of days when they married. Their mutual suspicion prevented them from effectively accumulating proof of their relations.

Their situation did not get better. I visited Xinghai in the summer of 2011. When a couple of locals picked me up at the airport, she also came with them. This time, she was working at a public power plant affiliated with the hotel I was staying at and was still waiting. This time, she did not even know if Kanai had reapplied for the paperwork. She looked frustrated and said, “I still have to leave the country (*Ch: chuguo*).” Her goal at that time was not to go to Japan, but to get divorced and get a refund from the brokers. Sometime later after I left, I heard from other locals that Sun Hua had gone to Beijing to work. When I was in Xinghai in the summer of 2011, she had been talking about going to Beijing to work as an alternative option. She met someone in Xinghai who might introduce her to a job in Beijing. At that time, she also told me that there were many old men living alone in Beijing, so she can also work as a helper. Then, she recalled her still married status and said, “But, I am still married, I cannot even marry an old man in Beijing!”

While paper work was regulated and examined at immigration desks, the marital couples themselves also scrutinized their counterparts and relationships. Sometimes, it was difficult to build a trusting relationship only after meeting once or twice. Ironically, the longer the process took, the more suspicious the couples became about their counterparts. Some women became worried that their husbands had deceived them. On the other hand, the husbands also became anxious that their wives might run away once they arrived in Japan. While waiting, the men were also embedded within public discourses and gossip about runaway brides.

Sun Hua was not alone in her experience of these processes. When I was invited to make dumplings for lunch at one of Sun Hua's friends' house, I met three other women there. They were also brides married to Japanese men, and yet they too were still waiting for a certificate of residency. Like Sun Hua, these other three women had lost contact with their Japanese husbands. They all did not know what happened to their husbands. The three of them asked me to call their Japanese husbands. While making dumplings, I called the husbands a number of times. No one answered their phone that day. They were all trapped between marriage and divorce. Unless their Japanese husbands agree to get divorced, their brokers would not refund their down payments. Unless they were officially divorced, they cannot even find another husband. They were suspicious not only of the paperwork process, but also their brokers and their husbands.

Another day, during lunch, I met a Chinese man who was a second-generation descendant of Japanese war orphans and had run a Chinese restaurant in Japan. He had recently divorced his Chinese wife, who already gained permanent residency in Japan with this marriage. Now, he had come back to Xinghai on a short trip to find a new wife. The locals later told me that usually it is much easier and faster for a Chinese bride who marries a Chinese husband living in Japan because marriage between co-nationals who speak the same language and shared the same culture appeared more real (*zhen de*). The man was in his mid-forties, around the same age as the Japanese men who visited Xinghai to find a bride. He also was trying to find a bride in her early twenties; this age gap was also about the same as that between most the Japanese husbands and the Chinese brides. Nonetheless, his marriage was likely to be seen as more authentic, natural, and legitimate.

More Suitable and Lovable than "Normal"

One of the Japanese men who married a Chinese bride, Kato, confessed, "Retrospectively, it was like gambling because I married someone I barely knew. But I was really lucky. I can now say with confidence that my wife has a really nice personality." His wife, Song, also later told me that marrying someone whom you barely know is risky. Yet, both expressed to me individually that they were doing well and satisfied with their marriage. Still, Kato was concerned about other couples he met during his matchmaking tours. He mentioned two other couples and said they are still not stable and (*Ja: abunai*) that their relationships were at risk. He also mentioned it to the staff members that "they (the other two couples) are not well suited (*Ja: tsuri atte nai*), I think they still have a risk of divorce." For him, the success and stability of marital relationships was to be judged not only based on actual married life, but also on the suitability of the two partners.

This chapter has explored the ways in which relations become a site of state and social suspicion and regulation. I argued that denied or suspended marriage migration produced multiple levels of exclusion of, not only undesired individual bodies, but also inappropriate relations and marital lives. Hardship and the experiences of such denials or suspensions varied. Brides and grooms also had different frustrations and anxieties. Although I pointed out that the exclusion of marital relations involved hardship for grooms, it is also important to note that those who depended on others for legal entry and status faced more uncertainty and anxiety than the citizen residents. While anxiously waiting, many Japanese men continued in the routines of their daily lives, but many Chinese women could not maintain such an everyday. Some Japanese husbands were also concerned about the process and carefully followed the instructions by brokers. Others were themselves suspicious of their wives, and sometimes even stopped contacting their wives in order to terminate relations. Yet, since they were married, simply not communicating would not end their relationship. They still had to take legal action to become divorced. Those women who were trapped between marriage and divorce had the most difficult time finding a way out.

Couples in a domestic context may also face similar, suspicious gazes. Nevertheless, the "unsuitability" or "unnaturalness" of their pairing does not prevent domestic couples from experiencing married life. Giving off the impression of being likely to divorce does not delay their marital lives. Cross-border marriages face not only social inspection, but also state examination of their marital motives, suitability, and sustainability. They were tested to ensure that they were pursuing "marriage for marriage itself." This notion, however, was not simply a derivative of local marital practices. In order to cross borders, they had to be more ideal and more normatively defensible than local marriages. In that process, the idea of what marriage should look like was reproduced and reinforced at the borders.

This chapter also revealed the contradictory and ambiguous meanings of love in relation to marriage in Japan. While social conceptions of marital relations centered more on "natural" or "suitable" matching, love was not totally absent from these assumptions. Sometimes, love was seen as naturally emerging if couples "fit." If couples were not perceived as suitable, their relations were seen as holding the potential for love. While love was not used as a basis for marriage, a lack of love was seen as a collapse of marriage. In other words, love was not seen as a sole basis for marriage, but without out the appearance of love, cross-border marriages had difficulty proving their legitimacy. In particular, display of love was required more of “unsuitable” couples, and thus cross-border marriages between Japan and China faced a more difficult task; they had to present more legitimate and more loving relations than those married domestically.

Conclusion

Cross Border Marriage Rethought

I met Lili in the earlier stages of my fieldwork in China. A local staff member thought that she and I might get along and introduced her to me. From then on, we met on a regular basis to chat and catch up. Lili had been a client of the transnational marriage agency for almost a year and was also one of the broker's favorite candidates. She was in her late twenties and several years earlier had worked for a year in Japan on a trainee visa. Since returning to China, she had been employed by a Japanese-owned company in Dongyang. Since she spoke good Japanese, and the broker thought that she would make a great potential bride for a number of his Japanese clients. Whenever the broker visited China with a matchmaking tour, he also met Lili and took some pictures to update her profile on the website. She had a number of matchmaking meetings with Japanese men, a few of which I attended. For approximately four months, she even had a long-distance courtship (after meeting on the Internet) with one of the male customers. During our dinner together, she seemed excited about receiving a call from him. However, when he visited her in person on a matchmaking tour, he did not choose her. Instead, he chose another Chinese woman for marriage. When I left the field in the fall of 2010, Lili was still single. It was in the summer of 2011 when I heard from the local staff member that Lili was married. She ended up marrying a Chinese man who worked at the same office. Soon after, she became pregnant. The local staff member who was close to Lili informed me that Lili was happy. Lili, conveyed to the staff member, "Marriage is, after all, about fate (*Ch*: *yuanfen*)."

During the course of my fieldwork, fate (*yuanfen/en*) was an expression I frequently encountered both in Japan and China. At many different times and places, fate was used to explain marriage. For example, some Japanese men showed their gratitude toward the broker saying “thank you for knotting our fates.” Fate was also used to make sense of marriages that failed by saying “we were not fated to be together after all.” The use of fate in the context of domestic marriage is also quite common both in Japan and China. Saying “We were not fated to be together” or more literally translated, “we did not have fate” (*Ja: en ga nakatta*) is a phrase, even a cliché, deployed when breaking off a relationship without providing an actual reason. On the other hand, successful matchmaking was often attributed to having good fate (*Ja: yoi en*).

A broker at a Tokyo office told me that marriage between Japanese men and Chinese women should not be based on “*yen*” (Japanese money), but on “*en*” (fate). Both Japanese words, *yen* and *en*, have the same pronunciation and are represented with the same character, even though they have totally different meanings.[102] While brokers certainly knew that Chinese women were not really marrying for love, but for various other things including a secure future, upward mobility, and a possible return on their investment, this broker still maintained that these marriages should not be guided by material motives alone. She said that those marriages based purely on a material foundation would not last. At the same time, the broker stated that marital relations without financial stability are also untenable. She said that if they did not love each other initially, at the very least the couple would need financial security in the beginning for their relationship to persist. Thus, yen was also necessary.

A local staff member in China once told me that many Japanese men often used the word “en,” saying, for instance, they had “good fate” (*Ja: yoi en*) with their Chinese bride. However, she sarcastically claimed, “they said it was a fate, but they had chosen the women by themselves based on their pictures and profiles, and they had come to China by paying brokerage fees to marry them.” She continued, “Perhaps they feel guilty about finding a bride through commercial matchmaking services and they do not want to believe that the women marry them for their money. So they want to believe that it was *en*, even if it was actually their *yen.*”

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[102] The Japanese word *en* and the first half of the Chinese word *yuanfen* are the same character.

These plays upon the words *yen* and *en* (or *yuanfen*in Chinese) reveal the contradictions, ambivalences, and attempts to make sense of such contradictions that surround participants in transnational marriage practices. Cross-border marriages were in no small part rendered feasible due to the economic status of Japan in the global economy and due to the commercial brokerage services that took Japanese men to China to find a bride. Nonetheless, economics alone do not help us to fully understand the struggles, compromises, hopes and aspirations that participants experienced through engaging in these practices. Men and women attempted to comprehend and legitimize their own experiences through appropriating and navigating locally embedded conceptions. Such local conceptions also played an important role in the negotiations, imaginings, and attempts to expand marriageable communities on a transnational scale.

By examining local-transnational dynamics, this concluding chapter comes back to my first question: What makes others marriageable? In order to answer this question, I have examined multiple yet related aspects of transnational Japanese-Chinese marriages, including the colonial legacies of Manchuria, local notions of marriageability and marriage “markets,” the dynamic interaction of local norms with global migration flows, aspirations for mobility, and legitimacy of marital relations. I have argued that for those involved in the processes of marriage migration between China and Japan, it was the tactical deployment of socially and historically created conceptions of *proximity* that rendered their partners marriageable. Such notions of proximity were locally created and shaped by deeper regional histories, but they also played important roles in mobilizing individuals to further partake in transnational flows.

I also highlighted the roles of formative local marital norms and ideologies--such as those of endogamy, exogamy, and patrilocality--that moved women across borders and helped them make sense of such mobility. These concepts were not fixed "rules" that everyone in the communities shared and understood in the same way, but rather flexible and shifting. I used the notion of marriageability as a central key concept in this dissertation. For earlier anthropological studies on marriage, marriage was a window through which to theorize societies at large. I have also tried to theorize the larger implications of marital practices by analyzing the ways in which participants attempted to locate marriageable communities. Studying marriageability provides us with understandings of how community boundaries are flexible and historically negotiated, with alternative or additional ways in which to comprehend flows of people, and with attention to the construction of personhood and appropriate and legitimate relations.

Throughout my dissertation, I tried to bring discussion of marriage back to the analysis of cross-border marriages. As I came to know more and more grooms, brides, and couples, and interacted with them in person, I came to realize that cross-border marriages were also about "marriage." This seems so obvious. However, looking at their experiences, not simply in terms of transnational practices, but also in terms of marriage is what helped me to better understand their struggles. Many of them struggled to find a marriage partner, a married life, and a life by marrying. Various different aspects of marital norms played an imperative role in shaping Japanese-Chinese cross-border matchmaking and marriages. Importantly, marriageability and proximity were intricately intertwined here. While conceptions of proximity were differently interpreted by Japanese men and Chinese women, they both deployed ideas of proximity in negotiating marriageability, boundaries, and borders.

"Normal" Marriage Rethought

What does the analysis of cross-border marriages tell us about marriage? While making marital relations across borders legitimate and natural, participants both relied on and stretched taken-for-granted meanings of marriage. In different ways, those who were suspicious about these relations also indexed and reproduced unexamined, self-evident notions of "regular" marriages. In the process, their behavior revealed beliefs that marriage was not only between two similar fellows, but also between two fellows with appropriate differences (sex and gender differences). Practices of patrilocality and marrying up also depended on and necessitated such disparities. Moreover, their discourses and practices reinforced the assumption that marriage itself was the normalized path for individuals to pursue in crafting a life and creating and completing their personhood. It was not that the rest of the members of society necessarily conformed to the ideal of marital relations. However, participants and other members of society, when stigmatizing or destigmatizing cross-border practices, repeatedly invoked the idea of what regular marriage should look like.

Studies of cross-border marriages tend to focus on what is perceived to make cross-border relations somehow different from domestic relations. Indeed, when marital relations are created across national borders, multiple inequalities—including gender, racial, sexual, or national—at manifold scales are produced and reproduced. We cannot underestimate such disparities. Nonetheless, such inequalities are not limited to cross-border marriages. What is often forgotten is that "regular" marriage itself is often constituted based on differences and inequalities. While investigating how cross-border marital relations are constructed, this dissertation also aimed to demonstrate how conceptions of normal marriages were simultaneously deployed, indexed, and reproduced by participants as well as other members of societies. Attempts to locate marriageable communities were also efforts to conform to marriage normativity. By becoming marriageable and making others marriageable, the centrality and normalcy of being married was fortified.

Future Research

Whereas my dissertation primarily focused on matchmaking practices and marriage moments, the findings of this project open up further potential research. One important question is what happened to these couples afterwards? How do they deal with the seeming "stigmatized" ways in which they were initially brokered? One Japanese man who married a Chinese bride several years earlier regularly visited the agency to greet the brokers. His wife and their child sometimes came with him. The broker often presented them as a great model to those who were interested in marrying a Chinese bride at the agency. Nonetheless, the husband confessed to me, "I have a beautiful wife and child. Things are going well. But I still don't know how to tell others how we met." Regardless of their fulfilling marital life, the matchmaking process was still something he was not willing to reveal to others. Further questions include how couples continue negotiating meaning of their marriage and present it to society.

Moreover, how do couples experience their perceived similarities and differences after experiencing actual married life? How do their lived marital experiences change or reinforce their images of Japan and China? Some ethnographic data (Chapter 3, 4, 5) has shown that in the course of married life, various forms of difference emerge. Some couples solved their problems by themselves or with the help of brokers. Others ended up divorced. Although the divorce rate among the couples that were brokered via agencies is not certain, the broker estimated that approximately 50% of couples remained together. When I went through pictures of wedding ceremonies with a local staff member, she also told me about half the couples she assisted already were divorced. As far as she knew, few went back to China. A couple of brokers also explained to me that once a couple had a child, they were far less likely to get divorced.

Permanent residency is usually granted after several renewals of spousal visas. This usually takes 3-5 years. After gaining permanent residency, immigrants brides can decide whether or not to become naturalized Japanese. As stated in Chapter 6, many brides were initially unwilling to obtain Japanese citizenship and thus renounce their Chinese citizenship after marrying. Nonetheless, many women changed their mind when they had children. One Chinese woman I met at the agency told me, "I did not care about citizenship myself but if I do not have Japanese citizenship, my children would be disadvantaged." The disadvantages she assumed included not only social welfare programs, but also the possibility that her children might be made fun of for having a Chinese mother at school.

Accordingly, another crucial issue concerns the trajectories of the potential children of transnational couples. During my research, I met a number of children ranging in age from infants to six-year-olds. As far as I knew, all of them had Japanese names. Some couples were enthusiastic about teaching them Chinese, so that their children would be able to work in an international environment. Conversely, some Chinese women complained that their husbands did not want their children to speak Chinese. For those husbands, the children should be raised as Japanese, not as Chinese or even as a mix of the two. Future research questions include how these children are perceived in society, how they see themselves, and what kinds of racial and phenotypical descriptions are applied to them.

It is also significant to follow how couples and their families experience and enact the transnational links created by these marriages. Most of the Chinese women wished to help in some way the parents they left behind in China. Do these marriages create transnational affinities (Dumont 1983) between families? To what extent do Chinese families come to depend on their daughters? How does a family's status in the local community change when its daughter migrates to Japan? How much do they know about their daughter's lives in Japan? In addition to money, what other kinds of items, ideas, and imaginings circulate between Japan and NortheastChina as a result? Brides' return trips to visit their families can also be an important site for analysis. What stories, ideas, and items do they bring back or not bring back? I suspect these trajectories will further reveal continuous negotiations of mobility. Mobility does not end when marriage migration is completed.

In the remainder of what follows in this conclusion, I want to end by sharing two stories of events that occurred after my fieldwork. Since I last visited the field in the summer of 2010, many things have changed. Such changes, however, further demonstrate how Japanese-Chinese cross-border marriages are situated within shifting local, national, and transnational dynamics. The first story I wish to share demonstrates how shifting national relationships between Japan and China, in particular China's increasing economic power, influence perceptions of the "unique" relations that Xinghai created with Japan. The second story demonstrates that whereas Japanese-Chinese cross-border matchmaking practices have recently been in decline, other forms of flows are emerging in different parts of the world.

A Further Wrinkle: National-Local Disconnect

In early August 2011, a couple of weeks after I left for the United States, I encountered a Japanese newspaper article about Xinghai. It stated that the local government in Xinghai had established the monument for Japanese pioneer groups in late July 2011. They also held a ceremonial event, inviting people from Japan. The symbolic representation of "friendship" with Japan was severely criticized by people in other parts of China, particularly on the web. These critics argued that the establishment of the monument opposed China's basic national principles and values. Consequently the local government demolished the monument only ten days later. The Japanese newspaper article editorialized that, "This incident showed that the generation who received anti-Japan education during the Jiang Zemin era remain a dominant population in Chinese society, and at the same time, it also revealed one aspect of Chinese society, which prioritizes national/ethnic emotion over laws."[103]

This incident also was featured in Chinese media. One Chinese media source ran an article entitled, "Xinghai: For the Japanese Pioneer Groups, [It] Embodied Chinese National Generosity." Under this almost sarcastic title, the article continued with criticism of the memorial: "The Xinghai government built a memorial for the Japanese military invaders, in order to attract investment from Japan by spending 700,000 RMB." The article also cited attack from the web: "Why do we need them (Japan) for the GDP?", "For investment, what are we begging for?" and "For little Japan's dirty money, are generous Chinese nationals shaking their tail and begging for pity while forgetting national humiliation and discarding dignity?" The local officials in Xinghai responded to such criticism by stating that the monument was not for economic purposes but for promoting peace and war remembrance. On the whole, however, the Xinghai government did not mount much of a challenge to their detractors and demolished the monument almost immediately.

The local narrative in Xinghai was engaging in what James V. Wertsch calls a "dialogic relationship" (2000, 525) with the national historical account. Wertsch argues that historical narratives are dialogic responses to other narratives, and responses might be clarification, rebuttals, friendly extensions, and so forth (2000, 525). Dissimilar historical narratives between people in Xinghai and Japan existed simultaneously, each seemingly in ignorance of the other, yet interacting through the space created by surface similarities. However, the local historical narratives also remained in dialogue with another narrative, namely the national historical narrative. As Ted Swedenburg states, mainstream nationalism has imprinted specific national histories in people's minds; however, many local versions of the past may exist "as long as they do not directly contradict the official story" (Swedenburg 1991, 175). The local narrative of Chinese people's generosity towards Japanese war orphans did not challenge national discourses of the wartime past. It highlighted Chinese munificence as the basis for current ties to Japan. Yet, when the surface similarities between this and the Japanese discourse of benevolent colonialism became visible on the national level, thus introducing a third audience, it became unsustainable.

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[103] In order to protect the privacy of the town, I have decided not to reveal the original newspaper source.

Wither Cross-Border Matchmaking? Other Global Flows?

Since I left the field, three major marriage agencies I had interacted with have closed their doors. Although brokers I interacted with had stated that their business would not be their lifelong work, the actual closure of their businesses was a surprise for me. If I had gone to the field a couple of years later, I would probably have had quite different findings. The peak years were around 2005 for Dongyang and around 2008 for Xinghai. My fieldwork witnessed the gradual decline of these practices, but brokers were still busy communicating with their customers. During my research, I repeatedly heard from these brokers how tiring and frustrating the business was. They also told me that their frustrations had increased in the past couple of years. For instance, a broker from one agency complained about the attitudes of Japanese male customers--that although their quality (*Ja: shitsu*) was worse, they had became more demanding. He continued, "but since they paid money, they felt like they should get what they paid for." Another broker was also tired of caring for married couples. He complained, “sometimes, Japanese men treated their Chinese wife like a ‘defective product’ (*Ja: furyo hin*) since she was different from what he had originally expected.” Such frustrations led him to think that the amount of stress he suffered from this work was not worth the money he was making. Consequently, by the end of 2012, one broker completely quit his brokerage business and sought different opportunities elsewhere. Before ending his brokerage work in Xinghai, he traveled to Vietnam to explore another site to recruit brides for Japanese men. Yet, he confessed, “Vietnam is too different, there is no way I can do brokerage work there.” I asked what was different. He said, the brokerage practices were different, women were different, and “things are completely different there” (*Ja: mattaku chigau*). He gave up on that idea and currently he is involved in the business of assisting study abroad in the United States. Another broker, while still maintaining his website, also posted a note stating that he would not be accepting new customers. He, however, also stated that he would be willing to assist those who were already married through his agency if they had any problems or needed some help. While working as a broker, he was based in Xinghai. However, he had already returned to Japan and was helping with his parents’ business at home.

While other factors also influenced these brokers’ decisions to end their businesses, one of their complaints was ironically the “commercial” aspect of their work. They labeled women by numbers; created policies, processes, and websites; and participated in making Chinese women look like “commodities.” They also treated Japanese men as “customers” and if they paid more, they provided better services. However, when their interactions with customers and the relations between brides and grooms became too commercialized, they started thinking that this was not what they wanted to continue doing.

China Bride was one of the few surviving agencies. Nonetheless, their main work had shifted toward marriages between Japanese men and Chinese women who already lived in Japan. Not only were brokerage fees were cheaper for these marriages, but also Japanese men did not have to cross national borders to meet Chinese brides.

Local staff members in China also found other business opportunities. Since matchmaking practices had declined in 2009, a local broker in Dongyang started exploring other opportunities to make a living. For the time being, he was engaged in a business that sent Chinese locals to work in Singapore temporarily. By 2012, he had further expanded his operations to include matchmaking services between local men in China and women in Cambodia. His targets were rural Chinese men near Dongyang. He claimed, "Cambodian women are much harder workers than Chinese women." In Xinghai, while I was there, I had already heard about matchmaking services that paired rural Chinese men with brides from Vietnam. While I did not have a chance to encounter a Vietnamese bride, I met brokers who were dealing with multiple matchmaking services, including Japanese men and Chinese women, Korean men and Chinese women, and Chinese men and Vietnamese women. A local staff member in Dongyang once asked me, "Where do you think is the next potential bride sending community? I think it would be North Korea. If they open up, North Korean women certainly would be exported to Japan and South Korea, and possibly all over the world!" While certain gendered flows of brides had decreased, different flows had increased in different parts of the world. Such flows are never without their own meanings.

Glossary

Japanese

anteisei	安定性
chiiki kekkon	地域結婚
chuka kei	中華系
dairi	代理
doutoku	道徳
en	円/縁
funniki	雰囲気
furyo hin	不良品
futu	普通
gaikokujin mitaina nihongo	外国人みたいな日本語
gakusei-san	学生さん
genchi	現地
hannichi kanjo	反日感情
hen	変
hen na kuse	変な癖
honki	本気
honnin	本人
honto no kekkon jya nai	本当の結婚じゃない
ichinin mae	一人前
ii oyomesan	良いお嫁さん
irairasuru	イライラする
ireru	入れる
issho ni kyoryoku	一緒に協力
iwakan	違和感
jimi	地味
jisshitsu	実質的
jittaiken	実体験
kaigai	海外
kanchigai	勘違い
kanji	漢字
kateiteki	家庭的
katsudou	活動
kekkon dekinai hito	結婚できない人
kekkon nan	結婚難
kiga aisou	気が合いそう
kimochi warui	気持ち悪い
kin no tamago	金の卵

kirei	きれい
kitsui, kitanai, kiken	きつい，汚い，危険
kokusaikekkon shokaijo	国際結婚紹介所
kokyo	故郷
konkatsu jidai	婚活時代
machigai	間違い
majime	真面目
man mou kaitakudan	満蒙開拓団
mattaku chigau	全く違う
mekka	メッカ
mibun	身分
nakoudo	仲人
nikkei	日系
ningensei	人間性
noukou minzoku	農耕民族
obasan	おばさん
omiai	お見合い
omoide	思い出
onaji you na hit	同じような人
oreru	折れる
renai	恋愛
ryukougo	流行語
sangyo	産業
seijitsu	誠実
seijyo na kankei	正常な関係
sewa nin	世話人
shakai tsunen jo	社会通念上
shin nichi	親日
shinkinkan	親近感
shitsu	質
shitsumon sho	質問書
shizen	自然
shizen na deai	自然な出会い
shobu	勝負
shogai mikon ritsu	生涯未婚率
shohin	商品
shouganai no kyokai sen	しょうがないの境界線
shujin	主人
shukatsu	就活
soko made wa dakyo shitaku nai	そこまでは妥協したくない
sugata katachi	姿形

suteji	ステージ
tekireiki	適齢期
tokusanbutsu	特産物
toushindai	等身大
tsuriawanai	釣り合わない
ukeru	受ける
ushiro metai	後ろめたい
wagashi	和菓子
yasashisouna	優しそうな
yukouteki	友好的
yutakana	豊かな
yuuai seishin	友愛精神
zainichi	在日
zairyu kyoka	在留許可
zanryukoji	残留孤児
zen i	善意

Chinese

an ding	安定
bi xianzai hao	比现在好
bu dong ganqing	不懂感情
bu hao ting	不好听
bu haokan	不好看
bu qu ba	不去吧
changye bianlidian	长野便利店
chuguo	出国
chun riben ren	纯日本人
da nanzi zhuyi	大男子主义
dagong mei	打工妹
dongjing chaoshi	东京超市
douzoule	都走了
duoshao qian	多少钱
er ban	二班
fangbian	方便
gongsi de ren	公司的人
guoqu de shi	过去的事
hai mei zou	还没走
haokan	好看

hen lihai	很厉害
hen piaoliang	很漂亮
heshi de	合适的
hua qiao	华侨
hukou	户口
Jia	假
jia gei riben ren	嫁给日本人
jianfei	减肥
jin	近
jingji	经济
jiu shi yige zi : qian	就是一个字：钱
kelian	可怜
kepa	可怕
langman	浪漫
laogong	老公
laojia	老家
ma fan	麻烦
meiyou quanli	没有权利
mingan	敏感
miqie	密切
nuli de	努力的
nvhaier ziji laide	女孩儿自己来的
pai chu suo	派出所
pang	胖
peng you	朋友
pianwo	骗我
piaoliang de nvhaier	漂亮的女孩儿
ping an	平安
qiaocun	桥村
qinqie	亲切
qinqie de ganjue	亲切的感觉
rendao zhuyi	人道主义
ribenyigu	日本遗孤
shenhuo xiguan	生活习惯
shoubuliao	受不了
shouxu xialaile	手续下来了
ta bu tongyi	她不同意
teshu	特殊
tiaojian	条件
waiguo ren	外国人
wo haimei xinli zhubei hao	我还没心里准备好

xian	县
xiang	乡
xiangqin	相亲
xiao riben guizi	小日本鬼子
xueyuan guanxi	血缘关系
yang fumu	养父母
yiban de	一般的
yuanfei	缘分
zhao duixiang	找对象
zhaoji	着急
zhen de	真的
zhongjie fei	中介费
zhuren	主人

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