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Interregime Marriage and Mobility: The Case of Mainland China and Taiwan

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Abstract

The recent increasing socioeconomic and political interactions between mainland China and Taiwan have resulted in a significant number of marriages between the two societies. Why do people cross the Strait to look for a marriage partner? What are the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of such marriages? And what impact do these marriages have on the society as well as on the individuals involved? These are the issues we explore in this paper.

Analyzing a survey on cross-Strait marriages conducted by the authors, this paper concludes that the interregime marriages between these two societies predominately involve older Taiwanese males and younger mainland females. The general pattern in these marriages represents an exchange between the intrinsic attributes (age, appearance) of the mainland women and the extrinsic attributes (financial status) of the Taiwanese men. In addition, the interregime marriages provide a means for mainland women to attain geographic and eventually social mobility.

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Mainland China and Taiwan

The Evolution of mainland China - Taiwan Relations

The evolution of socioeconomic and political interactions between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait in recent years has drawn considerable attention. Taiwan began to initiate its mainland policies through the establishment of several government organizations: the Mainland Affairs Task Force of the Executive Yuan (August 1988), the National Unification Council of the President's Office (October 1990), and the Mainland Affairs Council of the Executive Yuan (October 1990), which replaced the earlier task force. China's Taiwan policies were institutionalized with the establishment of the Taiwan Office under the State Council in the early 1970s. In June 1991 the Politburo's Taiwan Works Committee was replaced by the Taiwan Works Task Force. Since China has refused government-to-government negotiations with Taiwan, both sides have established semi-official organizations to discuss nonpolitical issues. In November 1990, Taiwan established the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) which began operations in March 1991. Two months later members of the SEF paid a first visit to China to discuss commercial disputes and communication channels. In December 1991 China organized the SEF's

counterpart, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS). In April 1993 Mr. C. F. Koo (Chairman of the Board) of Taipei's SEF and Mr. Wang Daohan of Beijing's ARATS met in Singapore and agreed to regular consultations, registered mail transactions, and document verification. However, the limited interaction between China and Taiwan at the national level has not had much impact on the active contacts between the Taiwanese and the Chinese people at the local level. In the year 1996 alone, there were 1.53 million visits from Taiwan to the mainland (Mainland Affairs Council 1997), aided by the belated (1987) permission to travel to China from the Taiwan authorities. Numerous nonofficial delegations from Taiwan have been received by Beijing officials. Telephone communication has also become possible in recent years, with the result that the two parts of China are no longer insulated from each other.

As the atmosphere in the Taiwan Strait relaxed, economic relations developed. Despite initial opposition in Taiwan and a slow start, transit trade between the two sides has grown at a rapid pace. The value of transit trade between the mainland and Taiwan increased from US\$46.8 million in 1978 to US\$11.5 billion in 1995 (Ministry of Economic Affairs 1997). Despite worldwide sanctions against China in the wake of the Tiananmen suppression, the value of transit trade across the Strait in 1990 exceeded US\$4 billion, and in 1991 this trend continued with trade reaching US\$5.8 billion (Ministry of Economic Affairs 1997), 43 percent

above the previous year. Following the trade boom, investment from Taiwan began to pour into the mainland. Taiwan businessmen in 1995 alone invested US\$1.1 billion on the mainland (Ministry of Economic Affairs 1997). By late 1996, Taiwanese investments on the mainland were estimated at over US\$30 billion despite Beijing's harsh response to the visit of Taiwan's president to Cornell University in June 1995 and the subsequent "missile crisis" which occurred that summer and again during the Taiwan presidential campaign in March 1996. Most Taiwanese projects are concentrated in the southeastern coastal areas of the mainland, with those in Fujian province, which faces Taiwan across the Strait, accounting for over 50 percent of the total. Fujian has emerged as the front runner in attracting Taiwanese capital in the mainland. It has close historical, economic, social, and lineage ties with Taiwan; Taiwanese and southern Fujianese speak the same dialect (*Minnanhua*), share the same culture and customs, and have been linked in many ways in Chinese history. In view of Taiwan's new trade liberalization measures regarding the mainland and the favorable factor input on the mainland, this growth trend will probably continue and expand to other parts of the country.

In spite of the increase in interactions, contacts between the two have been largely indirect. Only recently did the Taiwan authorities officially allow communication services with the mainland, and its ban on direct air and shipping

services has hindered travel across the Strait. Taiwanese visiting Fujian province, for example, have to travel via Hong Kong or other countries. Due to the Taiwan authorities' tight restrictions on mainland people visiting Taiwan, interactions between the two sides are largely one-way and unofficial. During the 1988 - 1996 period, the total numerical visits from Taiwan to the mainland were around 9.9 million (Mainland Affairs Council 1997). Taiwan authorities officially opened the door for mainlanders to visit Taiwan in 1988. By the end of 1996, there were approximately 150,000 visits from the mainland to Taiwan (*Singtao Daily* July 9, 1997). Social interactions of such a magnitude across the Strait have exhibited more integrative rather than disintegrative trends, with mainland-bound movements far exceeding the reverse. Growing contacts between the two sides have also resulted in an increase in marriages between Taiwanese⁽¹⁾ and mainland Chinese.

Interregime Marriages between Mainland China and Taiwan

Before the economic reform and the open-door policy took place in the late 1980s, there were few intermarriages between mainland Chinese and outside people. Men with a better education, and from a higher class backgrounds, and wealthier locales (e.g., villages) easily found brides with better qualifications either poor or rich locales, while men with fewer qualifications had great difficulties in finding wives and as a result many remained single for life. However, with the post-Mao economic reforms, China has generated rapid and sustained economic growth,

unprecedented rises in real income and living standards, and has become a major trading nation as it has opened its doors to the outside world. Consequently, many out-marriages have taken place not only with overseas Chinese, but also with foreigners. For instance, in 1979, the year when the economic reform and open policy began, there were only 8,460 marriages involving overseas Chinese, including residents of Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and foreigners. By 1993 this number had increased to 32,970 couples - four times higher than 15 years earlier. Almost 60 percent of such marriages occurred in Fujian, Guangdong, and Shanghai (Ye and Lin 1996). For the country as a whole, 86 percent of such marriages occurred with residents of Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese in 1996. Fujianese tend to marry Taiwanese and overseas Chinese, especially those from Southeast Asia; Cantonese prefer residents of Hong Kong, Macau, and Chinese with foreign citizenships; while Shanghai people choose foreigners as their partners. It appears that the geographic location of nations plays a significant role in the process of selecting marriage partners. With the consideration of both marriage and migration, mainlanders tend to view Western nations as their first choice, Australia and New Zealand second, and Asian nations third. However, because of cultural differences and language barriers, their first choice are Chinese with foreign citizenships, followed by residents of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan (Ye and Lin 1996).

According to our survey, the number of intermarriages between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese has been increasing since the late 1980s, which can be seen in Table 1.

(Table 1 is here)

In September 1992 the Taipei government passed a set of ordinances to regulate all relationships, including marriages, between residents of the Taiwan area and the mainland. Several articles deal directly with issues of visits, relocation, permanent residence, and quotas for mainland spouses and relatives. With regard to relocation due to marriage, priority is based on the date of marriage. Those who were married before December 31, 1949, and were separated because of the civil war have the highest priority to be relocated to Taiwan and to be granted permanent residence after staying in Taiwan for at least two years if they are younger than 70 years old. Spouses older than 70 are granted permanent residence immediately after they arrive in Taiwan. The second category, including those who were married after January 1, 1950 with at least a two-year marriage duration and children, is subject to a quota set by the Mainland Affairs Council. The quota was 240 spouses in 1992 and increased to 300 in 1993 and eventually to 1800 in 1997.

However, the total number of applications in 1992 was 2,053, but only 540 cases were approved in the two-year period of 1992 and 1993. The average time interval from the filing of the application to processing and final approval is about

two years. By late 1996, total applications had cumulated to over 18,000 cases (Mainland Affairs Council 1997). This means that these applicants will not be reunited in Taiwan until March 2004. The average waiting time is now 7 years and two months. Given this lengthy application process, the Taiwan government allows applicants, before being granted relocation permission, to visit their spouses in Taiwan once a year. Each visit is limited to two months. Under special circumstances, the applicants may have permission to stay one extra month.

By June 1997 there were 18,738 Taiwan residents who filed applications on behalf of their mainland spouses requesting relocation in Taiwan (Mainland Affairs Council 1997). Among them, 82 percent were mainland Chinese who had migrated to Taiwan sometime around 1949 and only 18 percent were native Taiwanese. Specifically, 42 percent were from Fujian province, 13 percent from Guangdong province (including Guangzhou city), 12 percent from Zhejiang province and Shanghai city, comprising 67 percent of the total applications. If applicants from Jiangsu, Shandong, and Sichuan provinces are included, the percentage rises to 82 percent. This implies that spouse-selection of mainland Chinese by Taiwanese residents is limited by certain considerations; most significant of which is the place of birth on the mainland of their fathers or grandfathers (*tongxiang*, people from the same hometown) . Nearly 67 percent of the total applicants are from the same

province as their Taiwanese spouses. Almost 55 percent of these couples are from the same county.

Why do people cross the Strait to look for marriage partners? What are the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of these marriages? And what impact do these marriages have both on the society as well as on the individuals involved? These issues will be discussed below in this paper. In the following section, we review some theoretical considerations about intermarriages.

Theoretical Considerations about Intermarriages

Traditionally, marriage in China is regarded as an opportunity to maximize the resources of the household or kin group through the negotiation of a suitable alliance. Empirical studies show that both parents and young people today continue to view marriage as a means of social mobility today. They seek partners who are considered to have a “future” by parents, relatives, friends, and all immediate reference groups. Chinese women explicitly consider the occupation, income, the standard of living, and the extent of the family burden of their future spouses (Croll 1984).

The mate-selection process can be examined from a marriage-mobility point of view. Each side involved in marriage bargaining tends to act rationally to maximize his/her welfare. In the case of China, due to its unique household registration system (*hukou*), it is very difficult to get official approval to move from

rural to urban areas. Therefore, spatial localities per se become part of social stratification (Lavelly 1991). Residence is an important determinant of economic success in rural China and females try to move to a higher level in the spatial hierarchy through marriage. For males, place of residence is a resource that, along with other attributes, influences their degree of success in the marriage market.

Marriage is still patrilocal. While women change residence at marriage, men seldom do. Women tend to move up through the spatial hierarchy via marriage. As indicated by Lavelly (1991), "...the mate-selection process sorts women into upwardly or downwardly mobile streams that tend to reinforce the relationship between location and status."

Therefore, the mate-selection process itself is a means of mobility. Eventually, marriage, especially intermarriage, leads to both physical and social mobility. The ultimate goal is to secure and improve one's social status, as well as one's economic and political position in the society. In this sense, marriage can be seen as a subset of behavior, or strategies, designed to achieve this goal.

Li and Tu (1997) propose a theory of intrinsic and extrinsic marriage attributes which are appropriate to analyze marriages between Taiwan and the mainland. When people choose marriage partners, they will evaluate the "worth" of the prospective partner. The "worth" is determined by the attributes of the prospect. There are two types of attributes. The first are the intrinsic attributes, which include

the internal properties of the person, such as physiological attributes (age, body, and appearance) and psychological attributes (intelligence, emotion, and character). The second are extrinsic attributes, which include socioeconomic status and social experience, such as occupation, income, living conditions, social network, and marital history.

The intrinsic attributes are not only visible and hard to change, but also to a great extent they determine the extrinsic attributes. Changes in extrinsic attributes are determined by the intrinsic attributes and by the social environment. In general, men tend to attach more weight to intrinsic attributes when selecting partners and women tend to emphasize extrinsic attributes. This tendency has been reported in a number of studies (e.g., Harrison and Saeed 1977). Individuals with poor attributes of one set tend to compensate by marrying people with better attributes of the other set, thus facilitating social mobility via marriage.

This paper contributes to an understanding of this marriage-mobility process and its implications by describing recent marriage patterns between Taiwanese and mainland Chinese and the role of this process in social, economic and political relations between the two societies. At a minimum, such marriages represent the linkage of two persons living in different political and economic systems that have existed for the last 50 years, but also share the same culture and ethnicity. Such interregime marriages not only have implications for the couples themselves, but also

have an impact on the linkage between larger family and lineage groups. By studying the nature and dynamics of the marriage-mobility relationship between Taiwanese and mainlanders we provide insights into an understanding of intergroup relationships as they operate within and between societies. An Examination of interregime marriages between Taiwan and mainland China may also shed light on how political and economic institutions operate at the micro-level.

Data and Methods

In 1992, the authors conducted a survey on interregime marriages between Taiwan and mainland China. In the survey, we interviewed 312 couples who were involved in interregime marriages. The nature of the survey does not allow a probability sampling because the interregime marriage population is unknown and thus a probabilistic sampling frame is unavailable. We used a list provided by the Taiwanese government and the snow balling method (Babbie 1992: 292) to complete the survey. For purposes of comparison, an additional probabilistic sample of Taiwanese residents (380 couples) who were not involved in such marriages was drawn and they were also interviewed. The field work was conducted in Taiwan and mainland China, mainly in Fujian and Guangdong, during the fall and winter of 1992. Information obtained during the interview included each couple's date of birth and marriage, residence, educational attainment, occupation, number of children,

type of relation before marriage, length of dating before marriage, reasons for intended residence after marriage, and reasons for marriage.

We analyze the survey results using descriptive statistics and compare the patterns of interregime marriages between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese with intra-marriages between Taiwanese along selected social and demographic characteristics.

Findings

In this section we discuss the findings from our analysis of the survey data with reference to existing and possibly new theoretical explanations. In general, among the factors that may affect the spouse-selection process, age, network, education, socioeconomic status, and opportunities to meet in such settings as the work place are considered to be the most important. Under the two different socioeconomic and political systems, the spouse-selection process between Taiwan and mainland China tends to be hypergamous, which means that mainland women have a stronger inclination to marry up the socioeconomic ladder, including marrying overseas Chinese, Taiwanese, and foreign nationals.

Gender distribution. Our samples reveal that the main feature of Taiwan-mainland interregime marriage is the predominance of Taiwanese husband-mainland wife marriages (299 couples) over mainland husband-Taiwanese wife couples (10 couples only). (Note: Three cases contain missing information and

were discarded.) Taiwanese women are much less likely to out-marry mainland Chinese, partly because for them travel to the mainland is still less frequent. A more important reason may be that Taiwanese women, in general, do not gain much status by marrying mainland Chinese men at the present time. Both theory (e.g., Li and Tu 1997) and evidence (e.g., Harrison and Saeed 1977) show that women tend to look for men with higher extrinsic values, such as wealth, which mainland men tend to lack. Therefore, marriage to mainland men is unlikely to help Taiwanese women achieve upward mobility. If the social, economic, and political distances between Taiwanese and mainland Chinese become narrower in the future, such marriages will increase, since they will provide more opportunities for Taiwanese women in the sense that they will have a much larger pool of available men to choose from as compared to the intra-marriage market in Taiwan.

Among 309 Taiwanese who married mainland Chinese, only ten are females. This appears to support that the hypotheses that mainland females are primarily interested in socioeconomic status (extrinsic attributes) of their prospective Taiwanese spouses and Taiwanese men are interested in non-socioeconomic attributes of their mainland spouses, i.e. perhaps their physical attractiveness (intrinsic attributes). Based on Li and Tu's theory (1997), men consider the intrinsic attributes of their prospective wives while the wives tend to consider extrinsic attributes: since, in general, Taiwanese men possess better extrinsic attributes than

mainland women, the marriage pattern between them is dominated by Taiwanese-men and mainland women.

Age of marriage. Previous studies indicate that marriage out of his/her own group is more likely to occur among younger age cohorts, an association that is related to generational differences in marriage and other behavior. We expect more out-married individuals in the younger age groups for both Taiwanese and mainland Chinese. This pattern is generally confirmed for mainland women. Table 2 (top panel) contains the age distributions of Taiwanese husbands who married mainland Chinese.

(Table 2 is here)

Nearly 51 percent of the out-married Taiwanese husbands are 30-39 years of age, followed by 15 percent in the 20-29 years age group. Over 67 percent of mainland wives are 20-29 years of age, followed by 18 percent who are 30-39 years old. However, slightly over 12 percent of out-married Taiwanese husbands are 60-69 years of age. Most are probably veterans who were in the military and followed the Nationalist government to Taiwan in 1949. The Mainland Affairs Council indicates in its 1989 report that of the 237,000 applicants who made trips to China for family visits, most were over 50 years of age, 70 percent were males and 30 percent were females, and 80 percent had no education above junior high school. These statistics are similarly reflected in our survey. The age distribution pattern

between Taiwanese husbands and mainland wives is quite different from the pattern of Taiwanese husbands and wives. Table 2 (bottom panel) shows that the majority of native Taiwanese husbands and wives are 40-49 and 50-59 years of age. Most are married to spouses from similar age groups. The age distribution of native Taiwanese wives tends to center around the older groups. Almost 47 percent of married native Taiwanese wives are 40-49 years of age. Forty-one percent of married native Taiwanese wives are 50-59 years of age. Only 37 (9.7 percent) of the native Taiwanese wives are in the 30-39 years age group.

The age differences between husbands and wives is much greater for those Taiwanese men who marry female mainland Chinese (excluding those who married before 1949) than that between mainland males and female Taiwanese. For the interregime marriages, the mean age difference (husband's age - wife's age) is 8.5 years. For the intra-Taiwan marriages, the difference is 4.3. Twenty percent of interregime marriages have an age difference of 15 years or more, whereas the figure is only 2 percent for intra-Taiwan marriages (Table 3). Thus, on average, Taiwan males tend to have younger wives if they marry mainland women. Age is an important intrinsic attribute. Younger ages have a higher positive value, especially for women (Li and Tu 1997).

(Table 3 is here)

Education. The educational status of husbands and wives in both intra-marriages and interregime marriages clearly shows that couples with similar educational levels tend to marry, confirming findings elsewhere (Harrison and Saeed 1977). The pattern of intra-marriages is also consistent with previous findings that Taiwanese women tend to marry husbands with higher educational levels. What is surprising is that, in general, out-married mainland wives tend to have more years of schooling than their Taiwanese husbands. For instance, almost 38 percent of out-married mainland wives completed junior high school, whereas only 33 percent of Taiwanese husbands had attained the same educational level. Thirty-two percent of mainland wives completed senior high school, while only 30 percent of Taiwanese husbands had. Thus, from the husband's perspective, they tend to marry mainland brides with higher educational levels than those in intra-marriages. For example, for Taiwanese men with thirteen or more years of school, 45 percent in inter-regime marriages will marry a woman with the same level of education, as compared to 37 percent if they choose a wife in Taiwan (calculations based on Table 4).

In many traditional cultures, especially in Chinese culture, it is inappropriate for women to marry men who have a lower educational level than they because this is considered unbecoming and constitutes downward mobility. Then, why do mainland women marry Taiwanese men with lower educational levels?

(Table 4 is here)

Our interpretation is that it is for economic reasons that mainland women with higher educational levels are willing to marry down. In other words, they are exchanging their high education level, which is a socially desired attribute, for financial security . Thus it can be said that Taiwanese males with lower educational levels tend to be better off when they cross the Strait to search for brides with higher educational attainment. In the case of inter-regime marriages between Taiwanese husbands and mainland wives, well-educated mainland women may be much sought after by Taiwanese men, who, by such marriages, can further their own material aspirations when they move back to Taiwan. Clearly, many factors come into play in spouse-selection, but it appears that many better-educated mainland women tend to sacrifice their careers and lifestyles for overseas marriages.

Occupation. The majority of Taiwanese husbands marrying either Taiwanese or mainland women are professionals, administrators, business associates, or in the service sectors. However, compared to intra-Taiwan marriages, the mainland wives of interregime marriages tend to have lower occupational statuses; 60 percent of mainland wives are housewives or peasants; whereas 48 percent of Taiwanese wives fall into these categories (calculations based on Table 5). Taiwanese males attach much less weight to the woman's occupation if they go to the mainland to choose a spouse as opposed to those who choose mates in Taiwan. It can be concluded that

Taiwanese men do not choose mainland wives due to their high occupational status (a major extrinsic attribute).

(Table 5 is here)

Geographic distribution. Where do Taiwanese men go in China to find their brides? Over two-thirds of out-married mainland wives are residents of Fujian province across the Strait from Taiwan (68 percent, Table 6). Fujian is not only the closest province to Taiwan, but also it has blood ties, and shares the same culture and local dialect with Taiwan. Many Taiwanese maintain frequent contacts with their relatives in Fujian. Therefore, it is more attractive for Taiwanese to travel to Fujian for spouse-selection. As Henry (1972) has indicated, marriage usually is a result of meeting within certain circles based on relations of family, friendship, or occupation in a population. Marriage occurs possible only if marriageable men and women both already belong to the same circle. The most obvious circle in our study is the one in which both the men and women are from the same province, or even the same village.

(Table 6 is here)

Marital history. Marital status (never married, widowed, or divorced) before the current marriage was collected in our survey (Table 7). Over 80 percent of Taiwanese husbands have never married before. Nearly 14 percent of Taiwanese husbands are divorced. All Taiwanese wives of interregime marriages (ten only)

have never married. Their mainland spouses display a similar marital status pattern before this current interregime marriage. Seventy-one percent of 299 couples involved in such intermarriages have never married before. Nineteen percent of Taiwanese husbands are either divorced or widowed as are the mainland wives. The chance of a never-married Taiwanese male marrying a mainland widow is 2.2 times greater than a never married mainland female marrying a Taiwanese widower; while the chance of a divorced Taiwanese male marrying a never married female mainland Chinese is 1.8 times greater than a divorced female mainland Chinese marrying a never married male Taiwanese. In general, having never married is deemed to have a higher value in the marital history attribute. It appears that Taiwanese males tend to marry down and Chinese females tend to marry up in terms of this extrinsic attribute when they cross the Taiwan Strait.

(Table 7 is here)

Length of time in China for Taiwanese men before marriage. How long had the Taiwanese men been in China before they married their mainland brides? This is related to how long they can stay in China. The Taiwan government limits its residents to one annual family visit, of no more than three months' duration. This policy is reflected in the results of our survey which show over 60 percent of out-married Taiwanese husbands in the mainland for less than 3 months before their marriages. About 19 percent were in the mainland for 3 to 12 months (Table 8).

(Table 8 is here)

Ways of meeting prospective spouses. Over 60 percent of these couples were introduced by relatives or friends in their home towns or villages during their visits. The second most popular way of meeting spouses is through business relationships, or by working in the same branch offices of Taiwan firms. This pattern confirms Henry's (1972) hypothesis about endogamous circles as a melting pot in which interactions leading to marriage take place.

(Table 9 is here)

Dating time. Once they have been introduced to each other, it usually takes less than a year for these couples to marry (76 percent). Very few (4.2 percent) will wait for more than two years to marry. In comparison, only 47 percent of the 380 native Taiwanese couples get married within a year from the time when they are introduced to one another. About 30 percent wait for more than two years before they are married.

(Table 10 is here)

Intended residences. Nearly 90 percent of mainland wives intend to establish their permanent residence in Taiwan, either for a better life (68 percent) or for better employment opportunities (44 percent). Among the ten mainland men marrying Taiwanese women, nine thought the social conditions in terms of modernization are more favorable in Taiwan. Seven were willing to move to Taiwan to be reunited

with family, only two to find better employment opportunities or better educational opportunities for their children. It appears that mainland wives are more interested in a better life, while mainland husbands are more interested in better social settings as the main reason for moving to Taiwan. Very few consider better educational opportunities for their children as a major reason for moving to Taiwan, simply because many of the newly married couples do not yet have any children.

Other characteristics. Most (82 percent) of the spouses do not have any regular jobs or businesses on the mainland. Like most intermarriages, intermarried couples in our survey tend to have very low fertility rates. The majority (74 percent) do not yet have any children. It is not clear whether the major reason for the low fertility rate has anything to do with the very strict one-child policy implemented in Fujian or whether it is simply a result of waiting for permission from the Taiwan authority to migrate to Taiwan before giving.

Discussion and Conclusions

The empirical evidence from our survey provides strong support for Li and Tu's theory (1997) of intrinsic and extrinsic attributes in marriage. Our analysis of the survey data shows that these interregime marriages tend to involve men with better extrinsic attributes marrying women with better intrinsic attributes, a "hypergamous" phenomenon, whereby women tend to marry up the socioeconomic ladder. In addition, the fact that mainland women with higher educational levels

marry Taiwanese men with lower educational levels, a choice viewed negatively by Chinese culture, may indicate that socioeconomic status gains in interregime marriages are predominately economic and social, providing monetary benefits, prestige in the community, a comfortable life style, or access to social and cultural capital. This is in agreement with the notion of marriage mobility traditionally applied to women (Tyree & Treas, 1974). As long as mainland China continues to practice the residence control (*hukou*) system which especially restricts geographic mobility of rural people and thus hinders the social mobility, plus the lack of social resources in China, interregime marriage across the Strait will be a means for mainland women to achieve upward social mobility by capitalizing on their high intrinsic attributes in exchange for the higher extrinsic attributes of Taiwanese men and a better social environment.

Our analysis reveals a number of important features of interregime marriage. Perhaps the most critical one is that smaller societies have higher rates of intermarriage than larger ones when preferences for in-group marriage are the same (Blau, Blum, and Schwartz 1982), especially when government policy regarding travel to the larger society is more encouraging than that for travel from the larger society to the smaller one. A second important factor is the distance between *tongxiang* (people from the same province, county, or village). We find clear tendencies for marriages to take place between individuals of *tongxiang*-related, or

overlapping, backgrounds; these tendencies are stronger in proportion to the degree of relatedness (Merton 1941). The third influence is that of status hypergamy.

Mainland Chinese, especially females, tend to have a strong incentive to gain status through marriage, by marrying overseas Chinese, foreign nationals, or more recently Taiwanese.

Our findings have implications for the political, social, economic, and demographic interactions between the two societies. From Taiwan's perspective, over forty-five years of separation have not diminished the affection and yearning of people in Taiwan for the vast Chinese mainland. This feeling is especially strong among those who moved to Taiwan in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Family reunions and the settlement of newly formed families are one of the main issues in Taiwan's mainland policy. Currently, mainland residents who married Taiwan residents before 1949 are allowed to join them and immediately become legal residents of Taiwan. However, for those Taiwan residents who married in the mainland during the last few years, the Taiwan authorities have established a quota system that admits no more than 1,800 mainland partners to join their spouses and become permanent residents in Taiwan per year. For reasons of national security and national interest, Taiwan's mainland immigration policy at present is extremely cautious and conservative. But the economic restructuring in Taiwan has created labor shortages in certain sectors. In addition, expansion of secondary,

trade/technical, and tertiary education has resulted in sector-specific shortages of labor. The supply of transferable labor from agriculture to either industry or the service sector has been depleted. The decline in fertility and the aging of the population means that fewer workers are entering the labor force. Given these considerations, further relaxations on mainland immigration policy may relieve structural shortages in labor and resolve the increasingly troublesome problem of allowing foreign workers to enter a society that has a high degree of ethnic and social uniformity. The Taiwan authorities need to pay attention to both the short-term and long-term demographic, economic, and social consequences of their policies, especially when the consequences are foreseeable. It seems necessary for Taiwan to conduct a demographic and social impact study on interregime population movement. Such an impact study would permit the government to evaluate alternative approaches to new conditions resulting from economic changes.

As we know, the political division of China in 1949 profoundly disrupted normal contacts within Chinese society around the world, just as it prevented the exercise of normal commercial contacts. The official ideology of the People's Republic generally has viewed overseas Chinese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong Chinese as being contaminated with bourgeois values; the Nationalist government on Taiwan cut off all cultural and humanitarian exchanges with the mainland. Although both Taiwan and the mainland have maintained ties with Hong Kong and with

groups of sympathetic Chinese abroad, the level of interaction within the international Chinese community is far lower than it would normally have been without such ideological differences.

Under such a situation, at the macro-level, interregime marriages may well serve as a catalyst to mitigate confrontations across the Strait and to bring the two people closer. At the micro-level, as we have demonstrated in the above analysis, the exchanges of attributes in such interregime marriages are complementary and both parties are likely to be better off from the bonding.

Our study, however, is limited due to the time span (the phenomenon is only a decade old) and the one-time data collection. More studies are needed to understand better this phenomenon and its impact on the society and on the individuals involved.

A follow-up study should be conducted to examine the outcome of such marriages. It should investigate how many of these marriages have been dissolved, the time of the dissolution, and the reasons for dissolution. An area of strong theoretical interest is to test the intrinsic-extrinsic attributes exchange. If we were to speculate now: since the women who cross the Strait to marry Taiwanese men tend to have higher intrinsic attributes, which provide them with a good foundation and potential to improve their extrinsic attributes, whereas their Taiwanese husbands, who do not possess good intrinsic attributes and have little potential to further improve their extrinsic potential, there is likely to be disequilibrium in many of these

marriages. It is likely that, when the wives more fully realize their potential extrinsic attributes, they may leave their husbands.

Footnotes

(1) In this paper Taiwanese refers to all residents on Taiwan, including those who moved to the island before the early 1950s and those who were born on Taiwan.

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Table 1. The Number of Taiwanese Husband/Mainland Wife Marriages
by Year of Marriage

Year of Marriage	Number	Percentage
Before 1987	7	2.4
1987	6	2.1
1988	6	2.1
1989	10	3.5
1990	38	13.2
1991	85	29.5
1992	136	47.2
Total	288*	100.0

*Limited to those Taiwanese men marrying mainland Chinese women.

Source: Authors' survey.

Table 2. Age Distribution Between Taiwanese Husbands and Mainland Wives

Husband's Age	Mainland Wife's Age						Total	Percentage
	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69		
15-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
20-29	0	42	4	0	0	0	46	15.4
30-39	1	131	23	0	0	0	155	51.8
40-49	0	24	14	2	0	0	40	13.4
50-59	0	1	5	5	0	0	11	3.7
60-69	0	3	8	19	5	3	38	12.7
70+	0	0	1	2	5	1	9	3.0
Total	1	201	55	28	10	4	299	100.0
Percentage	0.0	67.2	18.4	9.4	3.3	1.3	100.0	

Husband's Age	Taiwanese Wife's Age						Total	Percentage
	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69		
15-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
20-29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
30-39	0	0	13	4	0	0	17	4.5
40-49	0	0	23	111	3	0	137	36.1
50-59	0	0	1	60	102	1	164	43.2
60-69	0	0	0	2	45	7	54	14.2
70+	0	0	0	0	6	2	8	2.1
Total	0	0	37	177	156	10	380	100.0
Percentage	0.0	0.0	9.7	46.6	41.1	2.6	100.0	

Source: Authors' survey.

Table 3. Age Difference Between Husbands and Wives
of Taiwanese/Taiwanese and Taiwanese/Mainland Marriages

Age Difference	Intra-Taiwan marriages	Inter-regime marriages
< 0	11.7	9.5
0 - 4	57.7	36.5
5 - 9	24.1	24.1
10 - 14	4.2	9.8
15 +	2.3	20.1

Note: Age difference = husband's age - wife's age

Source: 1990 population census of Taiwan area, Ministry of Interior, Executive Yuan, R.O.C.; and authors' survey.

Table 4. Educational Distribution (in percentage) of
Taiwanese/Taiwanese and
Taiwanese/Mainland Marriages

Husband's Education	Taiwanese Wife's Education			Mainland Wife's Education		
	< 6	7-12	13+	< 6	7-12	13+
< 6 yrs	13.6	14.8	1.4	10.0	10.4	1.1
6-12 yrs	15.2	41.0	4.6	11.4	50.0	5.4
13+ yrs	1.0	5.0	3.5	0.0	6.4	5.3
Total	29.8	60.8	9.4	21.4	66.8	11.8

Source: Authors' survey.

Table 5. Occupational Distribution of Intra- and Interregime Marriages

Taiwanese Husband's Occupation	Mainland Wife's Occupation						Taiwanese Wife's Occupation					
	A	B	C	D	E	T	A	B	C	D	E	T
A	10	18	9	2	23	62	19	31	5	0	48	103
B	7	22	9	7	53	98	15	45	14	0	69	143
C	6	5	19	6	48	84	0	18	37	1	55	111
D	0	0	1	5	10	16	0	1	1	0	3	5
E	3	7	5	3	21	39	0	2	3	0	2	7
F							2	2	2	0	5	11
Total	26	52	33	23	155	299	36	99	62	1	182	380

Source: Authors' survey.

Note: A = professional and administrator
 B = business associate
 C = services and labor
 D = agriculture, forestry, fishery, etc.
 E = housewife
 F = military personnel and police
 T = total

Table 6. Residence of Mainland Chinese Spouses in Interregime Marriages

Province	Number		Percentage	
	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband
Taiwan	37	4	12.8	40.0
Fujian	197	2	68.4	20.0
Guangdong	13	1	4.5	10.0
Other	41	3	13.9	30.0
Total	288*	10	100.0	100.0

*Limited to those Taiwanese men marrying mainland women.

Source: Authors' survey.

Table 7. Distribution of Marital Status of Taiwanese Husbands/
Mainland Wives before Present Marriage

Husband's Marital Status	Mainland Wife's Marital Status			
	Never Married	Divorced	Widowed	Total
Never Married	21.8	4.6	6.9	33.3
Divorced	8.4	16.3	8.7	33.3
Widowed	3.1	12.5	17.8	33.3
Total	33.3	33.3	33.3	100.0

Source: Authors' survey.

Table 8. Length of Stay in the Mainland before Marriage

Length (in month)	Number Husband	Number Wife	Percentage Husband	Percentage Wife
< 3 months	173	5	60.1	50.0
3-6 months	38	1	13.2	10.0
7-12 months	16	0	5.6	0.0
>12 months	33	1	11.5	10.0
Never been there	12	2	4.2	20.0
Other	13	1	4.5	10.0
Unknown	3	0	1.0	0.0
Total	288*	10	100.0	100.0

*Limited to those Taiwanese men marrying mainland women

Source: Authors' survey.

Table 9. Methods of Meeting Each Other

	Number	Percentage
Match-Makers	34	11.8
Relatives	175	60.8
Co-Workers	44	15.3
Travel Agents	7	2.4
By Chance	20	6.9
Other	2	0.7
Unknown	4	1.4
Total	288*	100.0

*Limited to those Taiwanese men marrying mainland women

Source: Authors' survey.

Table 10. Length of Time between the Date of Meeting One Another
and the Date of Marriage

Length (in month)	Number	Percentage
1-6 months	117	40.6
7-12 months	101	35.1
13-18 months	30	10.4
19-24 months	26	9.0
25-98 months	11	3.8
Unknown	3	1.0
Total	288*	100.0

*Limited to Taiwanese husbands marrying mainland women.

Source: Authors' survey.