Introduction to Patterns of Chinese-Western Intermarriages in Modern China (1840—1949)

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Abstract: This paper reviews the Chinese-Western marriage in modern China from 1840-1949, and it finds the earliest Chinese married Westerners in the begging of China’s open. More Chinese men married Western wives at first, and then Chinese wives-Western husbands outnumbered much more. Both Western and Chinese governments’ policies and attitude towards Chinese-Western marriages in this period were also studied. It concluded that marriages between China and Western countries at this period were the result of free choice of both sides. Compared with the prevailing marriages arranged by the parents in China at that time, they could be regarded as models of free marriages in the early times. These marriages happened in the particular settings, thus they have particular characteristics in different types. Both of Chinese and Western countries were revolting intercultural marrying with each other from the government side. At last, this paper also pays attention to Chinese men married Western women, and it pointed out that Western countries even had more severe policies on restraining Western women to marry Chinese men. The Chinese men were particularly treated by policies unequally in this setting. The traditional researches only emphasized Chinese women’s inferior position, but they almost neglected Chinese men’s berefted position which more or less led to Chinese men’s very negative emasculated and effeminate positions.

Keywords: Chinese-Western Intercultural marriage, Saga, Intermarriage Policies, Chinese men, Sex Hegemony

It is more and more common to see the Chinese-Western intercultural couples in China and many other countries. In this era of the global village, the intercultural marriages among different races and nations are more and more frequent. It is becoming very fashionable and popular. As a result, an ordinary marriage between a Chinese and a Westerner is actually an episode in the Sociological grand narration. Dated back, the Chinese-Western marriages happened a lot in modern China.

1 The First and Second Patterns: More Chinese Men Married Outwards Than Chinese Women

During early period of Qing Dynasty, the government closed China from the outside world, even Manchu and Han people would not be intermarried, not to mention intermarriage with Westerners. Although Code of Qing Dynasty did not forbid Chinese citizens to intermarry foreigners, Chinese at that time may be relatively conservative, foreigners were totally different from them, they would avoid contacting them as much as possible, let alone to marry them. To late Qing Dynasty, the policies were more open, and a great many of foreigners poured in, intermarriage between Chinese and foreigners were becoming more gradually, especially in settlements. At present, the earliest thesis recording intermarriage between Chinese and foreigners in Shanghai settlements was Sino-American Miscegenation in Shanghai written by Herbert Day Lamson in 1936, this thesis utilized marriage registration files from 1897 to 1909 of American consulate in Shanghai and studied the intermarriage between Chinese and American at that time in Shanghai1. There was a very peculiar phenomenon of intermarriage between Chinese and foreigners at that time, Chinese men married foreign female was

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relatively common, whereas, little Chinese female married foreign male. Early intermarriage between Chinese and foreigners in modern China was based on sincere love, thereby ended with happy marriage. At that time, hardly ever people would marry foreigners with utilitarianism. There were three patterns of intercultural marriage between Chinese and foreigners at this period. The first pattern was that foreigners in China married Chinese. In 1903, it was reported in Zhong Wai Daily that a female Boanorges from Norway was doing missionary work round HuoZhou, Shanxi Province, and then she married Cheng Xiuqi, one of her believers, based on free courtship and changed her name to Yu Ying. Afterward they went to Britain together and gave birth to one daughter, before long they returned China and set up “Jie Yanju” (Opium Rehabilitation Station) in Haizibian, Jin Cheng. Shanxi province was always a closed and conservative area in China, but at that time even Chinese-Western marriage could happen in such an area, there were also more intercultural marriages in other areas of China.

The second pattern of intercultural marriage between Chinese and foreigners at this period was the overseas marriage of Chinese diplomatic envoys and Chinese students who were studying abroad. From middle period to late 19th century, especially from 1871 to 1875, Qing government had dispatched Chinese students abroad of certain scale to study in western countries. Those dispatched students abroad were mostly male, when they reached western countries, as the first batch of Chinese who contacted western land of that time, totally different culture, society, custom and concept for male and female between western countries and China gave them unprecedented ideological shock. Chinese students abroad were attracted by liveliness and romance of western female, for example, Hu Shi got to know Miss Williams in America, and then he wrote in his diary that “Since I knew my friend Miss Williams, I have greatly changed my opinion on female and social relation between male and female.”

Chinese students who studied in western countries in late Qing Dynasty had realized that western women’s rights had been developed very well, “in western countries, women were the same as men, they started studying when they were young, they learned painting and calligraphy, mathematics and astronomy, star images and geography, maps, classics of mountains and oceans, and got the essence of knowledge, even men in China cannot match for those female.” New Record of Travelling around the Earth (HuanYou Diqiu Xin Lu) as the first book recording what the participator experienced in World Exposition, the author Li Gui on his journey in western countries saw development of western women’s rights by himself and sighed that women still can’t study the same as men in China of late Qing Dynasty, “According to western custom, female and male were of the same importance, female can go to school the same as male, so women can propose important suggestions and participate in important affairs”.

Mr. Zhong Shuhe praised this comment as the “declaration for equal women’s rights on a grand scale

2 Min Jie, The earliest divorce lawsuit and international marriages in modern China, The Hundreds years of tide (Bai Nian Chao), 1999 (9)
3 “Universal Gazette”, cited from San Mu, The tidal current of Chinese-Foreigners marriages since late Qing Dynasty, Journal of The Study, 2002 (9)
6 Ibid
7 (Qing Dynasty) Wang Tao, punctuation collated by Wang Jiaju, “Impressions Abroad with Illustration”, Shandong Pictorial Press, 2004
for the first time” in modern China. Evaluating foreign female as “Other” was also common in Chinese male who studied abroad in the same period. For example, Lin Jinxian who toured to study in western countries saw western women were not conservative as Chinese female, stroke up a conversation like “Adonis”, claiming that “western women were naturally with great affection”. When they returned from abroad, students made reference to the western countries, and initiated “Natural Feet Movement”, “Natural Breast Movement” for Chinese female, some Chinese men even married Western wives. When Jiang Liangfu was staying abroad, he was imperceptibly influenced by what he saw and heard. He sighed with all sorts of feelings at this point in his book Travel in Europe (Ou Xing San Ji), that “Most of our students studying abroad were people younger than 24 or 25, some of them were college graduate of China, some even did not go to college, all their cultural insights such as knowledge and view point were shallow and their moral characters were not mature. Once they moved to European and American countries with orders, laws and full of temptation, everything was too impressive to keep their mind tranquil, in such unrestrained and far-ranging places, how can they control themselves? So, the first outside temptation for students studying abroad was Western feminine charms, there were all sorts of charms, especially feminine charms. As far as I saw and heard, there were a lot of students indulged in sexual desire. European female was healthy, beautiful and with white skin, and the discipline between male and female was not so strict, how can our youth control themselves? ”

Between Late Qing dynasty and the First World War, many Chinese students abroad in Europe and USA married Western women. The initiator of marrying Western wife might be Yung Wing, who studied in USA, and he married an American woman. The latter one might be Kai Ho, and his wife was British. Yung Wing probably was the first Chinese who went to study in the USA in Qing dynasty, and he obtained the degree from Yale University. He married an American woman, and she is Mary Kellogg Yung. Kai Ho (1859–1914) was a Hong Kong Chinese barrister, physician and essayist in Colonial Hong Kong. In 1887 he opened the Hong Kong College of Medicine for Chinese, which later became the basis from which the Hong Kong University was established in 1910. He married a British woman, Alice Walkden (1852-1884) in England in 1881 and returned to Hong Kong after his studies. Alice gave birth to a daughter, but died of typhoid fever in Hong Kong in 1884. In order to remember his British wife, Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital was established and named for his wife Alice by Kai Ho.

Another forerunner was Chen Jitong, styled as Jingru, was from Fuzhou, Fujian province, who studied in Fujian Ship-building and Navigation Academy in his early years. In 1873, he became envoy to Europe for the first time, two years later, took office in France and Germany legation. He had been counselor of legation in Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, etc., deputy envoy of legation in France, and lived in Paris and other places for nearly 20 years. He was one of the modern Chinese people first went towards the world. The interesting thing was that he was also the first appointed official of the Qing government who dared to break the gap between Chinese and foreigners and resisted the pressure from common customs, married foreign female formally in late Qing Dynasty, who can be rated as the pioneer for intermarriage between Chinese and foreigners. During Wuxu Period, the famous reform group people Tang Caichang published astounding “Tong Zhong Shuo”, in which he advocated intermarriage between Chinese and Westerners and implemented intermarriage to improve Chinese race.

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10 Zhong Shuhe, Yang Guozhen, Zuo Buqing, “Records of Being Firstly Sent to Western Countries”, Yuelu Press, 1985, pp20,pp40
14 Ibid, pp57--59
in the 10th argument listed in his article, he particularly quoted Chen’s transnational marriage as example to indicate that intermarriage with foreigners were not only expected to but also possible to be implemented. It was said in his article that “Feng Yi, Chen Jitong both married Western women. Those Western at that time did not despise intermarriage with people from a weak country as China, how can you people give aggressive expressions and indignation to intermarriage?” And from these words we can see his admiration for the unusual behavior of marrying Western women. In Zeng Pu famous novel Nie Hai Hua, the author also gave emphasis to describing the duel for possession of Chen Jitong between his French wife and English ladylove. At the time when scholar-bureaucrat in late Qing Dynasty were mostly ignorant of the outside world, and regarded Westerners as Deviants, Chen was bold and reckless to marry a Western female; moreover, when Chinese people were subjected to every kind of discrimination by European and American countries, and Chinese men even still had the “pigtail”, there were still Western women who disregarded the race prejudice and adored Chen, so Chen must be an unusual and talented Chinese man. (Note: in the plot about Chen Jitong in Nie Hai Hua by Zeng Pu, he was named “Chen Jidong” in the book). Chen Jitong married French lady Miss Lai, and also had one English female doctor Shao Shuang “admired his talent followed him to China”, and gave birth to one son. It could be referred to The Life of Chen Jitong (Chen Jitong Zhuan) by Shen Yuqing. In this book, it was also described that “he was skillful at shooting and riding horse. Where he was several meters from the horse, with one leap he can get on the horse; and when he used gun to shoot a flying bird, he hardly missed it.”

Same as Chen Jitong, Yu Geng and his son, two diplomats, also took the advantage of closeness. Yu Geng, whose wife is French, generally known as a talent among the “Eight Banners”, was an excellent tribute student during Guangxu Period. First he handed in a memorial to the throne against Ying Han, the governor in general of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces. He held the position of Shaqing in Taipusi, and then was sent on a diplomatic mission to Japan and France. He had two sons and two daughters, the elder son Xinlin, the younger on Xunlin, the elder daughter Delin, and the second one Ronglin. Yu Geng was open and enlightened, and his son and daughter also married to Westerners. His second eldest son married a French wife in 1902, and his daughter Princess Yuling married an American.

There are more famous Chinese men married Western women can be found from historical records, but very few of famous Chinese women married Western men. The reason might be women in China were still conservative, and the patrilineal culture required women to be more obedient and conservative, but Chinese men were free of this kind of restrain. For example, there are Lu Zhengxiang, Li Jinfa, Zhang Daofan, He Siyuan, Yan Yangchu, Huie Kin, Liao Shangguo, Yang Xianyi, Li Tang Changcai, “Theories of Miscegenation” in “Collection of Tang Changcai”, 1897, pp102, cited from “The Horizon of Cultural History: A Personal Academic Anthology of Huang Xingtao”, Fujian Educational Press, 2000, pp15


Min Jie, The earliest divorce lawsuit and international marriages in modern China, The Hundreds years of tide (Bai Nian Chao), 1999 (9)

Shi Jianguo, “Biography of Lu Zhengxiang”, Hebei People’s Press, 1999


Fengbai, Lin Fengmian. There are also some other famous Chinese male intellectuals married Western wives, such as Dr. Xu Zhongnian (1904—1981, French linguist, writer); Wang Linyi (Sculptor); Chang Shuhong (1904--1994), Chinese painter; He was the director of Dunhuang Art Research Academy, and he devoted his whole life to protect art of Dunhuang. Zhang Fengju (1895--1996), a great Translator and Professor in Peking University, and etc. There were some Chinese male Scientists married Western wives in this period, for example, Ye Zhupei, Xu Jinghua, Qiu Fazu, Bobby Kno-Seng Lim, Huang Kun, Du Chengrong, Tiam Hock Franking, Liu Fu-Chi. In addition, there are lots of Chinese Scientists married Western wives, such as Xia Yuanli, Wu Shaoqing, Guo Chengji, and so on.

2 The Third pattern: Zu Jie (Concession District)-Cradle for Chinese-Western Marriages in Modern China

As China gradually became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society in the 19th century, and many districts in cities including Shanghai were classed as leased territories of the western powers. In the modern leased territories living with both the Chinese and the foreigners, there were some interracial marriages, a few of which were formal while many were informal. There also arose problems of the mixed-blood. The earliest formal interracial marriage between the Chinese and a western white in the modern Shanghai occurred in March 1862. The American Huaer (Frederick Townsend Ward) married

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29 Diana Lary, China's Republic, Cambridge University Press, 139, 2007
35 Shu’Er, Lu Liuping, “The Matchless Love of Qiu Fazu and His Foreign Wife”, Zhi Yin Magazine, 2008 (8)
38 Bo Jiao, Foreigners in China, China Intercontinental Press, 2003, pp7--10
41 San Mu, “The tidal current of Chinese-foreigners marriages since late Qing Dynasty”, Journal of The Study, 2002 (9)
Yang Zhangmei, daughter of Comprador Yang in Shanghai, which was very famous in the first year of Tongzhi Period. The second case of interracial marriage was between the Amerian F. L. Hawks Pott, principle of Saint John's University and Huang Su’e. They got married in 1888. Huang Su’e was the daughter of Huang Guangcai, Chinese priest of Church of England, who later became the chief principle of Shanghai St. Mary’s Hall. The most famous interracial marriage in Shanghai was between the Jewish merchant Hardoon and Luo Jialin, which happened in the fall of 1886. Luo Jialin herself was a mix-blood and was born in Jiumudi, Shanghai (about Street Luxiangyuan and Street Dajing). Her father Louis Luo was French while her mother, called Shen, was from Minxian, Fujian Province.

According to population records of the US consulate in Shanghai, during the three decades from 1879 to 1909, there were 34 cases of interracial marriages with American husbands and Asian wives, among whom there were 8 Japanese women and the rest 26 were Chinese women. There was no case with white wife and yellow husband. For 26 cases in 1930, there was less than one case during each year. The jobs of these 34 Americans marrying with Asian women are listed as follows, that is, 11 seamen, 2 policemen, 3 customs officers, 1 engineer, 1 missionary and 14 with indeterminate jobs.

During the 9 years from 1910 to 1918, there were 202 marriages on the records of the US consulate in Shanghai, among which there were 18 Asian wives including 6 Japanese, 1 Philippine, and 11 Chinese. From 1920 to 1922, there were 217 registered marriages, while from 1930 to 1932, there were 236 cases. In these 6 years, there were 453 cases in all, among which only one was an American white woman with an Asian man, a Philippine to be exact. There were 10 cases with Chinese or Japanese women, the proportion of which went down in comparison to previous situation. The reason might be that in these registered marriages the number of white women increases. During this period, the Russian population and Russian women increased rapidly in the French concession and the International Settlement. For these American white men, especially those with low income such as seamen, sailor and grassroots customs officers, Russian women were more popular than the Chinese and Japanese women. Most of the Russian in Shanghai were of low economic status, which increased the possibility of marriage between Russian women and Western white men in the lower class. These Russian women sang or danced in the night clubs, and to some extent contacted more with the white men in the place of Asian women, and it also increased their chances of marriage with white men.

There were materials about 9 cases of interracial marriages in Shanghai Archive relating to the English, among which two were between Chinese men and western women (One couple got divorced less than a year after their marriage.), and the other 7 were all between western men, mostly the English, and the Chinese or Korean women (One divorced.)

Judging from transnational marriages, actual ones and cohabitation in Shanghai concessions, in the end of 19th century the phonomenone of more Chinese men marrying Western wives was replaced by the phonomenone of more Chinese women marrying Western husbands. Among those foreigners in Shanghai, there were many single ones without families, who had a lot of opportunities to contact with Chinese women. This would inevitably result in many informal marital relations between western white

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38 This marriage was very short. In Sep of same year, Frederick Townsend Ward was killed in the battle with Taiping troops. It was said that Frederick Townsend Ward bequeathed his wife 50,000 Chinese silver dollars. It can be seen from Hao Yen’ping, “The Comprador in Nineteenth Century China: Bridge between East and West (East Asian)”, Harvard University Press, Translated by Li Rongchang and Published by Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press in 1988, pp228; Also see in Yu Xingmin, “Shanghai, The Year of 1862”, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1991, pp202, pp212

39 Xiong Yuezhi (2010(7) The Interracial Marriage and Half-Breed in Modern Shanghai, Journal of Shanghai University (Social Sciences), Jul 2010, Vol 17 No.4


41 Xiong Yuezhi (2010(7) The Interracial Marriage and Half-Breed in Modern Shanghai, Journal of Shanghai University (Social Sciences), Jul 2010, Vol 17 No.4

42 Ibid
men and Chinese women. Not only in the early days of Shanghai but also in Ningbo concessions, there had already been those westerns in Shanghai, who had a child with the Chinese maids. For these English, it was very common to have a Chinese concubine. In 1857, Herder, translator in Britain’s Ningbo consulate then and later Inspector General, lived together with Ningbo woman, A Yao. They lived together for 8 years in all. And in 1858 or 1859, 1862 and 1865 they had three children who were then sent to Britain by Herder. Of humble origins and unclear specific conditions, A Yao was a decent girl indeed. Her union with Herder was through compradors or other others’ introduction. Xun He, colleague of Herder, bought a Chinese girl as concubine soon after he came to China. Another colleague of Herder in Britain’s Ningbo consulate, Meadows also had a Chinese wife. According to Bruner, John King Fairbank, and Richard J. Smith, one of the necessary conditions of high-class life for westerns in China was to have a Chinese woman. This kind of woman was actually a walking commodity, which could be bought or sold by any foreign merchants. “At that time, the price for a foreign to have a Chinese concubine was about some 40 silver dollars” according to Herder. As the American Powell who lived in Shanghai temporarily described about the situation of formal or informal interracial marriages in Shanghai, Shanghai could be considered as a city of men. Nine out of ten foreigners in Shanghai were bachelors, and therefore various friendly relations developed and resulted in numerous international marriages, which even the American Marine Corps quartered at Shanghai took part in. “Once I asked a chaplain of Marine Corps whether these marriages were happy or not. He answered just like other marriages. I became to wonder his answer had a little irony in it.” For the foreigners in modern Shanghai, especially those single western businessmen, it was very common to have informal marital relations with Chinese women. According to Bruner, foreign businessmen could easily buy Chinese women in China, and therefore many of them were registered single on the household registration form. These churchmen did not deal with commodities and had no comprador, and as a result they quickly brought their wives to China as well. But why there were so few materials about these events? Herder’s diary could easily and convincingly show the case. Although the diary was published, Herder deleted all the contents about his cohabitation with A Yao in Ningbo while he sorted his diary which was left with a large blank. Afterwards, Herder was reluctant to mention this experience and he never admitted that he was the father of the three mix-bloods in public, despite the fact that he always gave money and liked them very much. In general, there were not many interracial marriages between the Chinese and the western white in modern Shanghai. According to Xiong, it was estimated that after being opened as the commercial port in 1843 till 1949, there were no more than 100 cases of formal marriage between the Chinese and the western white in Shanghai during the 106 years. Judging from the aspect of time, there was a tendency of gradual increase from far to near. Maybe this was related to the increase of foreign settlers, or the increasing communication among various races. For a long time, English settlers in Shanghai resolutely opposed to the marriage with the Chinese. In 1908, the English envoy in China sent out a confidential document, harshly assailing marriages with the Chinese and threatening to expel the violators from the English circle forever.

44 Ibid  
46 Ibid  
48 Xiong Yuezhi (2010)(7) The Interracial Marriage and Half-Breed in Modern Shanghai, Journal of Shanghai University (Social Sciences), Jul 2010, Vol 17 No.4  
49 Ibid  
Bickers, before 1927, policemen in Shanghai Municipal Council were prohibited to marry the Chinese. In 1927, the general inspector of English police station stated in Shanghai Municipal Council that transnational marriages did not meet the interests of police force. In 1937, the president of HSBS said that the marriage between foreigners and Chinese local mixed-bloods was absolutely intolerable. If anyone did this would be formally fired by John Swire & Sons Group and other big companies. The community of English residents in Shanghai had a harsher restriction upon English women as they believed it was treacherous for the noble English women to marry the humble Chinese men. One English man wrote in his letter to his sister that “if you dared to have an affair with Asian men in Shanghai, you would never stay here well.” In the middle of 1930s, Department of the Far East under English Foreign Ministry tried its best to persuade those English women who had an intention to marry the Chinese men not to do so. In the official book, it warned that marrying Chinese men may cause losing the British nationality, which meant that those British women who married Chinese men would no longer be protected by the British law in China. Compared with the upper-class British residents, the restrictions upon the lower class on marriage were relatively looser, and there were some instances of marriage between the lower-class British and the Chinese. In 1927, policeman Parker in Shanghai Municipal Council applied for marriage with a Chinese woman. After the committee’s examination, the woman’s parents were believed to have high status, and the marriage was permitted. But this policeman had no prospect of future promotion. In 1934, relating departments in Shanghai issued martial certificate to 6 Chinese women all of whom had British husbands. Therefore, it could be noticed that before the wide contact between the Chinese and Western whites, both sides had a long cultural tradition and were confident and proud of their culture. After the Opium War, although the Chinese were defeated on the battlefield, their sense of cultural superiority deep in their heart did not lose. Whites from Britain, France, US and other countries in Shanghai even claimed to be top races on the level of culture. Compared to the British, the American had a more tolerant attitude towards marriages with the Chinese, but they also oppose it at the bottom. Therefore, in general, both sides reject marriages with each other.

In the respect of transnational marriages in modern Shanghai concessions, if it is said that there was not a high rate of Western men marrying Chinese women despite some definite cases, then it was quite rare to have examples of Western women marrying Chinese men. It was because that supposing an American woman got married with or just engaged with a Chinese man, the general reaction of other Americans was why she wanted to marry a Chinese man, and could not she find a more appropriate one in the US, no matter how perfect or how well-educated the Chinese man was. Or the other American would say it would be unfair for their children. However, this situation was quite opposite to the transnational marriages situation of the Chinese in America. At that time in America, nearly all of the transnational marriages relating to the Chinese were exclusively between Chinese men and Western women. In 1876, there had already been 4 or 5 Chinese men marrying American wives in San Francisco. In 1885, there were 10 families of Chinese husbands and American wives in San Francisco. From 1908 to 1912, there had been 10 white women in New York marrying the Chinese men, without a case of marriage between

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51 Ibid, pp100
an American man and a Chinese woman. Mr. Wu Jingchao who researched on this issue said, “Has there been any American man marrying a Chinese wife? In the materials I have collected, there has never been such a case. Of course, we know there were a lot cases that foreign men marrying Chinese women, but all these happened in China rather than America. Only several years before, a Chinese woman, being an actress in some Hollywood movie company, fell in love with an American man who never married her. Later he said to others that I could be friends with the Chinese woman. As for marrying her, it was impossible. Even if I would, my mother would definitely reuse and my friends may also oppose.”

In Shanghai, intercultural marriages were between Western men and Chinese women, while in America marriages were between Chinese men and Western women. Although it seemed quite opposite, it reflected the same truth that if the migrants only took a tiny proportion in comparison with the natives it was men who first broke through interracial marriage restrictions. It was the same as during the end of Qing Dynasty it was mostly Chinese men especially those who had experience of staying in Western countries marrying western wives.

We can see that at the beginning of opening of China, more Chinese male celebrities married Western ladies than Chinese women did, this situation changed very quickly after a few years of Opening, especially along with the establishment of Republic of China. This trend has been keeping until now (it will be reviewed in later of this chapter), and will probably continue in the future. Therefore, many Chinese men married Western ladies were a kind of special phenomenon in some special situation, such as the local Western men were not enough. This situation is the third type of Chinese-Western marriage in this period, and it could be seen in many Chinese men married Western women happened in the First World War. Very a few margin researches were found to show that many Chinese male labor corps married French women at that time. Dr. Xu Guoqi showed that many French women married to Chinese labor men during First World War. During the First World War, 140,000 Chinese laborers came to France to help the Allied war effort, 96,000 of them were allocated to British army, and 37,000 were dispatched to France. It was found that French men died a lot because of the war, so many French women welcome Chinese men, and even more than 3,000 Chinese labor men married French women at that time. Although Chinese male labors were maltreated and beaten, and they were not allowed to leave the camp, they still “managed to escape at night, for one night…Also there were problems with French women”

“The most similar case with this could be lots of Chinese men married Russian women during their fossicking and evacuating to Russia during early of 20th century as well as many Russian evacuated to China

59 Ibid
60 Xiong Yuezhi (2010) (7) The Interracial Marriage and Half-Breed in Modern Shanghai, Journal of Shanghai University (Social Sciences), Jul 2010, Vol 17 No.4
64 Demeestrere, Matthieu : article in a French magazine
during the October Revolution in 1917.  

3  Government Interventions on Chinese-Western Marriages

Besides language and cultural barriers, the marriage between the Chinese and Westerners also encountered opposition from outside world, which came from the western governments as well as the Chinese one. As the westerners held racial bias against the Chinese, they set up various obstacles in and brought pressure to the marriage between the westerners and the Chinese. Western policies makers had a strong desire to separate these lovers. Especially for those instances that the Chinese men would get married with a foreign woman, the western countries seemed to object to and discriminate against them, which might be a miniature of the male-dominated world, that is, men took precautions against women of the same race to married outward. In 1899, an American priestess and doctor in Guangdong got married with a Chinese man, which unexpectedly caused a big stir. Some Westerners even asked the American Embassy to send a doctor to check whether the woman was sick or not. This is a clear evidence of racial prejudice. Fortunately, American consul in Guangzhou did not interfere as “There has been no obstruction for a foreign woman to get married with a Chinese.” (However, in some states of America, there were laws prohibiting the white to get married with the Chinese.) There were also opposite cases. In 1911, some western women eagerly asked British consul in Chengdu to interfere with the marriage between the British women Helen and Hu Jizeng in Sichuan. She said that Hu already had a wife, and he committed bigamy in the western terms. The British consul negotiated with Wang Renwen, Sichuan vice governor, and asked to punish Hu according to the law. Wang said in the Chinese terms that having two wives was not a crime. Finally British Embassy in China knew it and gave Helen the final dispatch that “If you don’t have a divorce and return home, it will be regarded that you give up your British nationality”. However, the woman said in the Chinese terms that “I would like to be his concubine even till death”. Unexpectedly, the angry envoy replied that “Britain would never permit you to be a concubine. If you were a whore, you are not permitted to stay in China.” At that time, judging the whole case, Ta Kung Pao commented that “The marriage between Hu-He and Hu is a case based on their personal love which is not related to the third party. Now the British envoy even said it gets involved with the international affair and force them to have a divorce. He insisted that women from a great power was reluctant to get married with men from a poor country while women in the poor countries could be the wife, concubine or even nothing to men in the great power. How pathetic it is!” Later, there was also another comment on Ta Kung Pao “The law should take people’s feelings into account, and the law is formed by nature. It is well-known that the British culture is famous for kindness around the world and wins respect from all the countries. Therefore, most of the British people should be clement, and the British envoy would never like to see all of the Hu families died because of his plan. Maybe he also had to interfere into the affair”. Although it was to whitewash the British envoy’s deeds, it also indicated the sense of power behind power language. Meanwhile, inside the western countries, in the 19th century, ideology and government policies of Great Britain and the US held a repellent or inhibitory attitude towards interracial marriages. From the middle and late period of 19th century and the first two or three decades of 20th century, there were about 11 states in the US prohibiting marriages between the American and the Chinese, including Arizona, California, Missouri, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Virginia and etc. For some of these states, especially those in the south, they were always hostile towards the colored. They were against the black

as well as the yellow. For those states in the west, such as California, as there were a lot of overseas Chinese, there had been movements against the Chinese labors and they also didn’t like the Chinese. In 1878, the California state council approved state amendment, prohibiting the Chinese to get married with the white. In 1880, California Civil Law prescribed that marriage certificates were not allowed for the white with the black, Mulatto or Mongolians. In 1882, Chinese Exclusion Law forbade the marriage between the Chinese and the white, which was first issued in California and later around the country, becoming a national law. In 1922, Cable Law restricted and prohibited the marriage between the American and Asian migrants, and it warned that they would lose their civil right if they marry Asians. In addition the female citizenship was not linked to her husband’s, and it was mainly in order to forbid Chinese women to immigrate to USA by marrying the Chinese men who were born in America. Because of those regulations and other factors, most of Chinese American men in USA at that time did not have a wife. According to the data of Los Angeles from 1924 to 1933, it shows that only 23.7% Chinese men there had non-Chinese wives, and at that time the Male-to-Female Ration in Chinese Americans was 9:2, so most of Chinese men did not have a wife. The other Asian people was in the similar situation with Chinese in marriage. Japanese was the one who followed Chinese to come to America, in the early days, they had a very low intermarriage ratio. According to the data of Los Angeles from 1924 to 1933, only 3% married Japanese men had non-Japanese wives. Japanese in America was also suffered from the discriminatory laws as well as the social discrimination on them. In 1923, the organization of “Native Daughters of the Golden West” warned White women that “During those day, some Japanese men with a good family background are found to peek our young women, and they want to marry them.”; The president of Califorlia Control Society even thought that Japanese polted to conquer the USA by intermarriges as a part of their plan. Because of this cultural background, the American white people in China at that time always held an objective attitude toward marriage with the yellow. Some of the English scholars once tried to discuss this question from the sociological respect. In 1982, some Japanese wrote to Spencer, the famous English scholar, and asked about his attitude about interracial marriage. In his reply, Spencer talked about his opinions and mentioned the case that the US prohibited the entrance of the Chinese. He thought it was excellent as if the US allowed the Chinese to come and go at their will, there would only be two options for them. One was that in the US there would be two classes of the white and the yellow, and they would not get married with the other side. The other is interracial marriage which would lead to many undesirable hybrids. No matter which way it would be, the result was not favorable. Spencer’s attitude had a great influence, and well until 1920s and 1930s, many of the westerners were for this opinion. For the Chinese, the Qing government had no intention to interfere with transnational marriages at first, and just let it be. Later on, as there were more cases of this kind of marriage, some problems also showed up, and the government had to pay attention to this. In 1908, Li Fang, magistrate in the central judicial office in late Qing Dynasty, asked for a divorce with his English wife to “Shuntianfuyin Yamen (the chief executive who was in charge of Beijing’s government affairs and security in Qing Dynasty)”. It was the first case of divorce between a Chinese and a foreigner. This was an unprecedented case in China, and the excuse of the men was that the wife didn’t stick to wifehood. After the divorce, the reports on the Chinese papers were quite amusing that it went as the case was a reminder for those wanting to get married with Western women. In March 1909, Qing government enacted and issued the

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73 Shanghai World Publishing House Compiled, “Wonder and Unofficial History of Modern China with Illustration”, Shanghai, World Publishing House, 1925
Nationality Law which followed the principle based upon paternal line. At the beginning of 1910, Qing government especially held a discussion about interracial marriages between the Chinese and the foreigners. Then it thought that as the exchange among various countries became more and more frequent, theoretically speaking, interracial marriages between the Chinese and the foreigners should not be prohibited, but it should be restricted. It prescribed that the future marriage between the Chinese and the foreigners should first be reported to the government. If one was the diplomatic official or officer, they were not allowed to get married with a foreigner without permission. In the same year, the Qing Government also permitted the request of the Imperial Educational Ministry and declared that overseas students should not marry foreigners. The reasons were as following. First, during their study, overseas students should not be burdened by the family in case that their study would be pulled. Second, economically speaking, the foreign women were basically extravagant, while the overseas students had only a limited amount of money, and they would not had a good balance between study and life. Third, if the overseas students got married with foreign women, they would not like to return and contribute to China though they had achieved academic success, so it is profitless to Qing government. At the transaction between Qing and the Republic of China, especially after the defeat of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, China began to learn from Japan. Various young men went there including Yang Erhe, Wu Dingchang, Jiang Baoli, Fang Zong’ao, Yin Rugeng, Guo Muoruo, Tian Han, Tao Jingsun, Su Buqing and Lu Xun whose two bothers got married with Japanese women. After learning from Russia, Jiang Jingguo, Li Lisan, Xiao San, Wang Bingnan and many others got married Russian and German women. (Those foreign men who took part in Chinese revolution, such as Li De, Ma Haide, Kwarkanath S. Kotnis, Michael Lin, Sidney Shapiro and others got married with Chinese women.) Some of these wives regarded China as their home since then, and obeyed Chinese womanhood as they assisted their husbands and taught the children. The trend of marrying Russian had been kept until the early days of the Founding of PRC, especially before China returned to the United Nations in 1971, as Soviet Union assisted in China’s construction, a lot of Chinese students were sent to Soviet Union and a lot of Soviet engineers and cadres came to China. During this particular period, many Russian women got married with Chinese men and Chinese women also got married with Soviet men.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, firstly, historic changes occurred in the opening-up at the end of 19th century in China. That opening-up was the result of western powers’ advanced guns and boats, and brought the meet between the Chinese and the westerners after thousands of years. Judging from the angle of country and nation, various battles between each other were mostly temporarily ended with the compromises and concession of the Chinese. It could be said that the Chinese had gone through all kinds of abuse and hardship. It was right against this major background that the earliest transnational marriages between Chinese and Westerners took place. However, since the transnational marriages between China and foreign countries at the end of 19th century recorded in the historical materials, it seemed quite different from later transnational marriages as most of them were between Chinese men and western or Japanese women. The reason could possibly be that after opening-up all those going abroad were men, and the restrictions of traditional culture upon Chinese women were greater than the ones upon men. At the

74 “The Manuscript of the History of Qing Dynasty, No. 112”, Volume 137, pp4645, also see: Qiu Jianzhang (2004). 44(3) The Establishment and Influence of Nationality Law in Late Qing. JOURNAL OF HENAN UNIVERSITY(SOCIAL SCIENCE)
75 Li Mo, “Transformation of Family in Late Qing Dynasty”, cited from Li Mo, “Family Development in a Century”, Jiangsu Fine Arts Publishing House, 2000
76 San Mu, “The tidal current of Chinese-foreigners marriages since late Qing Dynasty”, Journal of The Study, 2002 (9)
77 ibid
same time, all those Chinese men who first came into contact with the west were almost noble personages with prominent social status which could make up for the weakness of the nation and the country. The marriages between China and other countries at this period were the result of free choice of both sides. Compared with the prevailing marriages arranged by the parents in China at that time, they could be regarded as models of free marriages in the early times. The Chinese people who married foreigners at that time were those who had the chance of contacting foreigners, besides this, they usually had the special experiences and statuses which dissociated them from the mainstream Chinese culture, and consequently these transnational marriages would receive the tolerance of social public opinion.

Secondly, no matter Chinese or Western governments including USA and UK, they were unwilling to promote their people to marry to Westerners/Chinese, and both of Chinese and Western countries were revolting intercultural marrying with each other. Chinese was marked by the trepidation towards Westerners, and Westerners was marked as disdainful marriage between their people and Chinese. However, the trend of love and marriage among common people has not been blocked off by administration order, and the legislation and policies in both governments were steadily losing ground. Indeed, the inertia of the negative attitude from both governments still affects the people’s choice on intercultural marriage.

Thirdly, Chinese men firstly married Western women more than Chinese women at the beginning of China’s Open, but the situation changed very quickly and much more Chinese women married Western men later on. Only in some special situations that many Chinese men married Western wives could happen. Western countries even had more severe policies on restraining Western women to marry Chinese men. The Chinese men were particularly treated by policies unequally in this setting. The traditional researches only emphasized Chinese women’s inferior position, but they almost neglected Chinese men’s berefted position which more or less led to Chinese men’s very negative emasculated and effeminate positions. This phenomenon could be discussed and analyzed more from the perspective of masculinities and sex hegemony in the future studies.

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