

MARRIAGES AND SPOUSE SELECTION IN TIBET

RONG MA
Peking University

Tibet has its unique geographic characters and special natural resource distribution patterns. Because of its natural conditions and relative isolation from the outside world, special social systems and marriage patterns have formed in Tibet during its long history. These marriages cannot be classified simply by the categories of other societies. Polyandry, which can seldom be found in other parts of the world, is still popular in Tibet today. This article reviews the literature on Tibetan marriages and spouse selection, and based on author's field survey, analyzes the structure of marriage patterns in the late 1980s in Tibetan Autonomous Region and discusses the factors affecting spouse selection in contemporary Tibetan society.

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

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

The Institute of Sociology and Anthropology (ISA) at Peking University had a joint research project, "Social Development in Tibet" with the Chinese Center for Tibetological Studies (CCTS) in the late 1980s. As a part of this project, our research team carried out a sampling survey in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1988. The questionnaire used in this survey includes questions on marriage, family, migration, education, occupation,

income, consumption, language, and ethnic relations. This paper focuses on examining family and marriage patterns of the respondents in this survey.

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

RESEARCH LITERATURE OF TIBETAN MARRIAGES

Accompanying the revival of social sciences in China since the 1980s, there have been some publications discussing marriage and family in Tibet in the Chinese language. The literature can be divided into three parts. The first part conducted of studies based on historical records and investigation reports conducted in the 1950s.¹ Examples of these studies are "Tibetans" (Lu Liandi, 1986: 193-204) and "Tibetan Marriages and Families in Tibet before 'Democratic Reform'" (Wu Chongzhong, 1991: 480-499). These studies introduced several traditional marriage patterns in Tibetan society, and discussed the social and economic background for these patterns to emerge.

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

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

¹In the 1950s, the central government organized many research teams sent to frontier regions to investigate the local communities of various ethnic minorities. Their reports became the base for policy designing towards local authority and organizations, and also became the foundation for "minority group" recognition. These reports contain a lot of first-hand research records of the 1950s. Some of them were the printed in the early 1960s. These reports were re-edited and published in the 1980s as one of *Five Series of Ethnic Minority*.

circles of marriage spouses, and marriage decision-making processes based on the questionnaires of over 700 respondents.

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

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

The studies of Tibetan aristocracy marriages by Professor Nakane Chie also confirmed that "divorce, remarry, polygamy and polyandry are popular cases" (Nakane, 1992: 343). Another study stated that among marriages of Tibetans, "the most common arrangement is 'Sasum', it is a unit consisting of three spouses, regardless two females with one male or two males with one female, the last pattern is more popular" (Miller, 1987: 338). Nancy Levine describes polyandry families in southwest Tibet and their changes accompanying the system reforms since the 1950s (Levine, 1994).

The pattern of a woman married to several brothers is the basic type of polyandry. The pattern of several sisters married to one man is the basic type of polygamy. The marriage of brothers to one wife often occurred in aristocratic families, it would avoid the redistribution of family wealth by family splits. The marriage of sisters to one man often occurred in poor families, in many cases, the elder sister married the man, and the younger sisters will live with him when they grow up. Father and son share one wife, and mother and daughter share one husband; these are the other two patterns of polygamy and polyandry, based on the principle of "marriage out of family". "A man has the right to marry the daughter from his wife and

her former husband. In general, a man married the widowed woman with a young daughter. When the daughter grows up, she sleeps with her step father" (Chen Qingying, 1995: 419).

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

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

Chinese scholars noticed that Tibetans had exogamy restrictions in partner selection. Barbara Aziz also found serious restrictions among these Tibetans. "The rules of exogamy declare anyone who is a kin ineligible as a marriage or sexual partner, and anyone who is not a kin a potential mate. ... Whereas people express abhorrence at the idea that they might have sexual relations with a kinsperson, they delight in the idea of having access to the spouse of a kinsperson" (Aziz, 1978: 137).² This is very different from Han Chinese customs. Han Chinese would delight in marriages between cousins, but could not accept the idea that relatives (especially direct relatives such as father-son, mother-daughter) share the same spouse. This reflects the dif-

²For studies of polyandry, there is also other literature focusing on local communities in Himalayan regions outside Tibet which might provide helpful insights in understanding Tibetan marriages (Prince Peter, 1963; Parmar, 1975).

ferent social norms between Hans and Tibetans in regulating relationships between generations (“Xiao” — filial piety — has been the most important moral norm in Confucianism), between brotherhood, among relatives and friends.

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

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

From this table we notice that monogamy was still the major type of marriages in most areas in Tibet in the 1950s and 1960s. Polyandry was the second group in size, and consisted of one third in Liu Xika in 1958. Polyandry even consisted of 13.3% in total marriages interviewed by the Tibet University Survey in 1988. In contrast, polygamy existed in many places but its percentage in total marriages was usually lower than 10%, except in some special cases (e.g. Lazi County, Tuoji Xika). These types of marriages also existed in other Tibetan-inhabited areas outside the TAR. For example, in Muli Tibetan Autonomous County, “polygamy and polyandry ... consisted of over 30% of total marriages in the Ming and Qing dynasties, even above 20-30% in 1956” (Wu Wen, 1984: 43). The percentage is even higher than that in the TAR (Table 1).

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

The Survey Report of Liu Xika, Lazi County described another type of marriage “Sumo” in detail. “The woman openly living with a man who already has a wife is called ‘Sumo’ (‘Wai-shi’ in Chinese), meaning the woman standing aside. This kind of women is different from lovers.

TABLE 1. SOME SURVEY RESULTS OF MARRIAGE TYPES IN TIBET

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

*"Other" mainly refers to "formal concubine" with separate residence;

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

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

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

4 : TSHSSEG, 1987b: 157;

5: TSHSSEG, 1988a: 218;

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

9. 10: Ou Chaoquan, 1988: 81;

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

15: Wang Daben, 1993: 45.

Because her man has put 'side jade jewelry' in her 'bazhu' (head ornaments), her relationship with that man is public. All these 'Sumo' are single women" (TSHSSEG, 1989c: 320). This relation is similar to "concubine" in Han regions. In most cases, concubines live with their husband and formal wife together in Han regions. This relationship should be considered as a marriage type. But it is very likely that these types of marriages were classified into a category of "the family with a mother but without a father" (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 13) or a category of "the family without a marriage" (TSHSSEG, 1988:157), or these women were ignored as single women.

Even among these major types of marriages, bride(s) living in the house of groom(s) and groom(s) living in the house of bride(s) should also be distinguished, because there are some significant differences between the two

settings (power over properties and children within family, status in community, etc.). In the case of Jiuhe District of Qiongjie Zong, among its total 70 households, 41 were cases where grooms lived in the brides' houses. "Among the 41 households, 39 households were cases where a husband married two sisters, 1 household was a husband married to three sisters, other one household was monogamy. The reason for these marriage patterns is that all these families were serfs ("Tre-ba")³ of Rewudeying monastery. Since many males had to become monks and serve the labor duty of monastery, there were fewer men left in society for marriage. Therefore many households recruited a man at home as groom for their daughters. The older sister became the bride first, then the younger sisters became his wives later" (CCTS, 1992: 165). This type of marriage (man joins wife's family, lives on its property and takes its name) was also described by Sir Charles Bell in his book (Bell, 1928: 176).

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

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

(2) Monogamy, polyandry, and polygamy are three major marriage types

³The serf stratification in Tibet had several "classes":

(a) "Tre-ba" cultivated hereditarily "duty land" from aristocracy or monasteries, their body is attached to the land. Their status was still serf, but they had a large amount of land to work on and also owned some animals and tools. Because of the variation of the land quality and other properties, "Tre-ba" could be classified into "rich Tre-ba", "middle rank Tre-ba" and "poor Tre-ba". The "poor Tre-ba" consisted of about 70% of the total Tre-ba. "Tre-ba" pay various taxes to lords in the household.

(b) "Du-jung" were serfs without "duty land". They were in a lower rank compared with "Tre-ba". "Du-jung" could be divided into four groups: (i) rent a piece of land from his serf-owner's estates, (ii) rent a piece of land from rich "Tre-ba", (iii) provide labor service and pay his serf-owner the duty tax, (iv) engage in handicrafts and pay owner the duty tax. "Du-jung" paid their tax by individual, not household. This is a significant difference between "Tre-ba" and "Du-jung" besides the different tenure land (Goldstein, 1971: 65-67).

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

among Tibetans, but there are other types of marriage with small numbers as variations or complements of the three major types. If we only concentrate on the three major types and ignore others, we cannot get the whole picture, and also cannot understand the three major types as well.

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

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

Regional variations of marriage types has been associated with major economic activities (agriculture, animal husbandry), population density (available resources), types of economic organization (ownership, proportion of serf stratification), and the role of monasteries in the local community. In general, there were more monogamous and "Sumo" marriages in the areas with richer "Tre-ba" households). For example, the survey in Zilong Xika in 1959 reported that among 26 "Tre-ba" households, 19 of them were polyandrous with brothers sharing a wife, 1 household with father and son sharing a wife, and 6 were monogamous marriages. Among 50 "Du-jung" households, 20 were monogamous marriages, 2 were polyandrous, 1 was polygamous, 4 were "Sumo", 5 were "lovers" and 19 were single (TSHSSEG, 1988b: 595-597).

In Charles Bell's opinion, polygamy is for wealthy men who can afford two and occasionally even three wives. He described some weddings and was told that "the feasting will be on a smaller scale (for marrying a second wife)". (Bell, 1928: 192). For regional variations, he cited different opinions. Rockhill believed that polyandry prevails largely among the peasantry but not among the nomads.⁴ Reverend J. Huston Edgar thought "the nomads

⁴The tillable lands are of small extent and are all under cultivation, so it is extremely difficult for any one to add to his fields, which as a general rule produce only enough to support

around Li-tang seem peculiarly given to polyandry" (Combe, 1926: 73). A secretary of Dalai Lama told Bell that "polyandry is common among the communities of herdsmen in the Northern Plains, as well as in western Tibet, where the bulk of the people are herdsmen". He explained the reason for polyandry among herdsmen; "that they were needed to go to the lower countries to buy grain, as well as to go to the higher lands to procure salt for consumption and sale. ... And no doubt in the nomad's wandering life women and children are somewhat at a disadvantage". Another explanation Bell learned is that "polyandry is due to the fear of the family splitting up and of the family property being divided. This would impoverish the people". Bell concluded that "polyandry is frequently practiced by both farmers and herdsmen" (Bell, 1928: 193-194).

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

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

There are quite different opinions about polyandrous marriage in Tibet. Engels mentioned that "the most ancient family pattern was group mar-

one small family. If at the death of the head of the family the property was divided among the sons, there would not be enough to support the wants of all of them if each had a wife and family. ... The only solution of the problem in this case was for the sons of a family to take one wife among them, by which means their ancestral estate remained undivided, and they also saved considerable money. Among the nomads, where existence is not dependent on the produce of the soil, where herds of yak and flocks of sheep and goats are ever increasing and supply all their owners' wants, this necessity of preserving the family property undivided can never have existed" (Rockhill, 1891: 211-212).

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

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

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

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

MARITAL STATUS OF INTERVIEWED RESPONDENTS IN THE TAR

Our 1988 survey covered 644 urban households under 4 street offices in old urban areas of Lhasa as well as 668 rural households under 24 Xiang in 3 prefectures. Tibetans consist of the majority of all respondents (97.8% in Lhasa and 98.9% in rural areas). The percentage of Han population consisted of 36.8% in 1982 and 28.9% in 1990 in the total population of Lhasa

Urban District (urban sector of Lhasa). Because our sampling only covered the old urban area while most Han residents lived in new urban area, the percentage of Han in our sample is really tiny. From the point of studying Tibetan marriage, this sample might have a higher representativeness.

Among Lhasa respondent household heads, 60.8% were women, compared with 24.7% of women for rural household heads. There might be some reasons for Lhasa households to prefer women as household heads. Lhasa household heads were 9 years older than rural household heads on average. This age difference should be kept in mind when marriages were compared between urban and rural household heads since marriage patterns might differ by age. In general, Lhasa respondents may represent the native part of urban residents in the TAR, rural respondents may represent the rural residents in most areas of the TAR. Some nomads living in remote areas in the northern Plateau might be different from our respondents, but their number is small in total.

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

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

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

TABLE 2. MARRIAGE STATUS OF RURAL-URBAN RESIDENTS IN THE TAR

		Single in total %	Marriage status of married persons (%)				Total #
			With spouse	Divorced	Widowed	Total	
1990 census (Total population Above age of 20)	City	22.4	94.7	2.3	3.0	100.0	79,445
	Town	24.4	93.7	2.6	3.7	100.0	62,334
	County	25.6	90.6	3.4	6.0	100.0	550,083
	Total	25.1	91.4	5.4	5.4	100.0	691,862
1988 survey* (Tibetan household heads)	Lhasa	10.2	78.6	4.0	17.4	100.0	552
	Counties	11.6	87.9	3.1	9.0	100.0	555
	Total	10.9	83.3	3.5	13.2	100.0	1,107

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

lived with their husbands.

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

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

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

TABLE 3. MARRIAGE STATUS OF INTERVIEWED TIBETAN HOUSEHOLD HEADS (1988)

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

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

result in instability of family and increase the possibility of divorce.

MARRIAGE TYPES IN THE TAR

A total of 1092 interviewed household heads reported their marriage types, including both rural-urban residents and both genders. About 95.4% were monogamous marriages, 2.7% were polygamous and 1.9% were polyandrous marriages (Table 4). Most of the polygamous and polyandrous marriages were found in rural areas, but we did find some cases in Lhasa. This result probably represents the basic marriage pattern in Lhasa, Shigatse and Shannan areas, the most populated area along the middle reaches of Tsangpo River.

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

From both surveys, it is clear that monogamous marriages dominate in urban areas, while there are polysgamous and polyandrous marriages in rural areas in the TAR. The other two types of marriage have existed in Tibet for centuries, and still have some influences among Tibetan people. According to a questionnaire survey from Tibet University, "64.2% of 53 Tibetan students believed that polyandry and polygamy ... will benefit the

TABLE 4. COMPARISON OF TWO SURVEYS IN TAR IN 1988

Marriage type	Tibet University Survey 1988*			Peking University Survey 1988		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Monogamy	83.4	100.0	85.1	91.3	99.4	95.4
Polygamy	1.9	0.0	1.7	5.2	0.4	2.7
Polyandry	14.7	0.0	13.2	3.5	0.2	1.9
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total households	680	73	753	541	551	1,092

*Source: Wang Daben, 1993: 45.

family harmony and its labor division and cooperation" (Liu Ruei, 1988: 275). If young university students in the late 1980s believe the advantages of these two marriage types, there must be a rational for these marriage types under current economic and social conditions. These types therefore are still accepted and practiced by some residents, and probably will last for a period of time in Tibet.

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

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

DECISION MAKING OF MARRIAGE IN THE TAR

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

The 1950s' investigations gave some attention to marriage decision patterns in ethnic minority areas. The survey in Qiongjie Zong (Shannan) revealed that there were limitations on marriages in aspects of social status

and blood relations: marriage was prohibited between descendents of paternal and maternal sides within 6 generations.⁵ Marriage between aristocratic and ordinary people, between general occupations and "low class occupations" (blacksmith, butcher, beggar, corpse carrier, etc.) were also forbidden.

In the Shannan region, "the cases of parents making decisions for their children in spouse selection occurred more often among the rich, while young people had more freedom in their marriage" (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 98). Similar situations were also found in the field surveys in other areas.⁶ In Tibet before the 1959 "democratic reform", there were social and economic reasons for the poor youth to have more freedom in their marriages. "Since Du-jung and Qian-dou had no 'Tre-gang' lands or 'Ma-gang' lands, they were not bonded by the land properties and duties and therefore had more freedom in marriages (TSHSSEG, 1989c: 112). But the serfs belonging to different estates could not get married without the permission of their owners. If a female serf of one estate married a male serf of another estate, the owner of the male serf would give a serf to the owner of the female serf as a compensation (CCTS, 1992: 161-162). "The children of serfs who belong to different owners will be owned by their gender, boys belong to the owner of the father serf, girls belong to the owner of the mother serf (CCTS, 1992: 125). Therefore, "freedom" for the poor had limitations under the serfdom and estate system.

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

⁵Other studies argue that marriage rules in Tibetans "prohibit descendants of paternal sides for ever, and allow descendants of maternal sides to marry after 7 generations" (Lu Liandi, 1986: 194).

⁶For Tuoji Xika (Lazi County), "Tre-ba's marriages were mainly decided by their parents, ... and there were loose of parents' control on spouse selection for Du-jung" (TSHSSEG, 1989c: 112). For Niu Xika (Shigatse), "the marriages of aristocracy or rich Chai-ba were basically arranged by parents, ... the young people of poor Tre-ba and Du-jung families had more freedom in their marriages" (TSHSSEG, 1991: 397). For Luomarangxue Tribe (Naqu Zong), "Parents usually had a strong power in selecting spouse for their children, but there were relatively more marriages based on the decision of young people themselves among the poor" (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 49).

TABLE 5. THE CHANNELS OF GETTING KNOW EACH OTHER BEFORE WEDDING FOR INTERVIEWED TIBETAN HOUSEHOLD HEADS

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

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

trast, only 64.7% of rural respondents knew their spouses by themselves.

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

The structure of channels also experienced some changes in the past several decades. The percentage of “decided by parents” obviously reduced in rural areas from 26.5% in the 1960s to 20.6% in the 1970s, then to 12.3% in the 1980s. This percentage reduced in Lhasa from 10.6% in the 1960s to 9.3% in the 1970s, but increased again to 14.8% in the 1980s. After the 1959 “democratic reform”, the government encouraged young people to select spouses themselves and considered “decided by parents” as a residual of the “feudal system”. It resulted in more young people making decisions about their marriages in both rural and urban areas. The increase of importance of parents in marriage might reflect the revival of traditional customs.

After the implementation of the “household responsibility system” in rural areas of Han regions, economic functions of families and controls of household heads on properties were strengthened. This has resulted in significant growth of “parents-decided” marriages in rural areas. Among our respondents in Lhasa old urban areas, over 50% were “unemployed” and “self-employed”. Their income improved in the 1980s under the new “reform” policies; the economic activities and the financial power of household heads increased as the peasants in Han regions. This might partly explain the increase of “parents’ decided” marriages in urban Lhasa. Why

did this situation occur in rural areas of Han regions and among some Lhasa urban residents but not in rural TAR? This question needs a further study to explain. Since the sample size is small, small numbers remain in each cell after grouping by rural-urban sectors and by years; thus the significance of percentages of the cells is reduced. These numbers may only be used for reference.

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

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

There might be many methods to classify marriage by decision-making of spouse.⁷ The same type of decision-making or the same channel for the married couple to know each other might have different meanings in different societies. For example, "professional matchmaker" may play a quite differ-

⁷For example, there might be four types of methods for spouse selection: (1) parents make decision, (2) self-select but must get approval of parents, (3) self-select, and (4) parents decide and self-decide co-exist (Herter, 1981: 147).

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

COMPARISON OF BRIDE AND GROOM BY EDUCATION, OCCUPATION AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

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

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

Occupational background of Tibetan couples at the time of the wedding in Lhasa and rural areas are presented in Table 7 and Table 8. A common phenomenon is that most people married others with the same occupation

TABLE 6. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF HUSBAND AND WIFE AT TIME OF WEDDING

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

Husband	Wife						
	Counties						
	Illiterate	Prim. School	Junior middle	High school	Prof. High S	Univ./College	Total
Illiterate	313	14	2	—	—	—	329
Prim.school	116	44	2	—	—	—	162
Junior middle	10	3	5	—	—	—	18
High school	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Prof. High Sc	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Univ./College	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Total	439	61	10	0	0	0	510

in both rural and urban areas. The numbers at the diagonal line from left-top to right-bottom are generally larger than numbers in other lines. Thus, 40% at total marriages in Lhasa and 89.2% of total marriages in rural areas belong to this pattern: husband and wife had the same occupation at the time of the wedding. Because there was a high level of homogeneity of occupational structure in rural areas (91.7% of males and 88.1% of females in these couples were farmers), farmer-farmer couples consisted of 89.2% of the total.

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

There were 16 handicraftsmen married to “unemployed” women. Some

TABLE 7. OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND OF TIBETAN COUPLES AT WEDDING IN OLD URBAN LHASA

Husband	Wife						
	Worker	Cadre	Professional	Service labor	Unemployed	Peasant	Handicrafts
Worker	66	3	3	9	18	17	10
Cadre	8	17	—	3	7	6	3
Professional	1	—	2	2	3	—	—
Service labor	4	1	—	23	7	22	3
Unemployed	8	1	1	—	20	11	3
Peasant	6	—	—	1	8	23	4
Handicrafts	3	2	1	4	16	4	10
Collect. Worker	4	1	—	2	7	5	1
Soldier	4	—	—	4	1	2	—
Monk	3	—	—	2	5	1	—
Self-employed	1	—	—	—	2	2	—
Others	5	1	—	1	4	—	—
Total	113	26	7	51	98	63	34

Husband	Wife						Total
	Collect. worker	Soldier	Nun	Self-employed	Others		
Worker	8	—	—	—	1	135	
Cadre	8	1	—	—	2	55	
Professional	—	—	—	—	1	9	
Service labor	1	—	—	2	1	44	
Unemployed	3	1	1	2	3	44	
Peasant	2	—	—	—	1	45	
Handicrafts	5	—	—	1	3	49	
Collect. Worker	25	—	—	1	2	48	
Soldier	3	2	—	—	2	18	
Monk	—	—	—	—	—	11	
Self-employed	2	—	—	5	—	12	
Others	1	—	—	—	—	12	
Total	58	4	1	11	16	482	

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

Because of the high degree of homogeneity of occupations in rural areas,

TABLE 8. OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND OF TIBETAN COUPLES AT TIME OF WEDDING IN RURAL COUNTIES

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

TABLE 9. COMPARISON OF LIVING STANDARD BETWEEN BRIDE'S AND GROOM'S FAMILIES AT THE TIME OF WEDDING

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

marriages between farmer and other occupation for both genders were dominant besides the farmer-farmer marriages which consisted of 85.1% of the total.

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

we found in the analyses of the above three variables is consistent with this general principle.

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

GEOGRAPHIC DISTANCE BETWEEN SPOUSES BEFORE WEDDING

Considering migration, the geographic distance of residences between bride and groom before they got married was also asked in our questionnaire. In general, accompanying the development of market economy and urbanization, people's geographic mobility increases. Since the residential registration system and relevant migration restrictions have been practiced in China for several decades, "marriage" has been one of the legal channels for migration.⁸ In other areas, it was found that "marriage" had been the major legal reason for women to migrate from poor villages to rich villages, and from villages to towns (Ma Rong, 1989: 48-50). Our 1988 survey reported that 16.6% of in-migrants among interviewed Lhasa household heads and 14.3% of rural household heads claimed their reason of migration was "marriage".

Urban residents usually have higher geographic mobility compared with rural residents. This is confirmed in the 1988 survey. The marriages between men and women living in the same Xiang (or street office in urban areas) consisted of 74.7% in rural areas and only 39.4% in old urban areas of Lhasa (Table 10). The marriages crossing borders of counties and prefectures consisted of 26.2% and 13.8% respectively in Lhasa, but only 4.9% and 1.0% in rural areas. Therefore, it is clear that the geographic scope for peasants to

⁸Other channels include: (a) job transfer of government employees, (b) family reunion (for separated couples to move and live together or old parents to move and live with adult children), (c) job distribution of college graduates and demobilized military officers, and (d) government resettlement projects (students sent to countryside during the "Cultural Revolution", demobilized soldiers in military corps, migration projects for farmers who suffered from natural disasters).

TABLE 10. DISTANCE BETWEEN BRIDE'S AND GROOM'S RESIDENCES AT WEDDING

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

(1) "In Xiang": the places of both bride and groom's residences were located within the same Xiang (town); (2) "In county": the places of both residences were located within the same county but a cross Xiang boundary; (3) "In prefec.": the places of both residences were located within the same prefecture but a cross county boundary; (4) "In TAR": the places of both residences were located within the TAR but a cross prefecture boundary; (5) "Cross R": the places of both residences were located within China but a cross provincial boundary.

select their spouses was three-fourth within Xiang, one fifth in nearby Xiang but within county, and only 6.2% crossing the county border.

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

The large volume of migration due to historical social changes has impacted spouse selection and marriage patterns. In the 1950s, rural marriages crossing Xiang border were 69 (38.8% of the total in that decade), much more than in other periods. It might reflect the population migration due to the political situation and "democratic reform" in rural areas (Table 10). In contrast, there are no obvious changes of marriage distance patterns in the old urban area of Lhasa over time. The marriages crossing at least county borders were around 39.3% (1940s), 42.1% (1950s), 37.1% (1960s), 39.3 (1970s), and 46.4% (1980s), kept at a general high percentage in all decades.

TIBETAN-HAN INTERMARRIAGES

Tibetans consisted of 95.5% of the total population of the TAR in 1990,

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

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

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

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

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

up their scanty pay" (Fletcher, 1978: 102). It seems that intermarriages for soldiers were popular in Tibet at that time.

In addition to soldiers, there were about 2000-3000 Han merchants, handicraftsmen, and farmers living in Lhasa and other towns in Tibet in the late Qing dynasty. It is quite possible that some of them intermarried locally. Though we cannot get detailed data, their number should be significant. Huang Musong went to Lhasa in 1934 to attend the memorial ceremony for the death of the 13th Dalai Lama. During his negotiations with the Kashag Government, one of his requests was that "all half Chinese residents in Tibet should be under the sole jurisdiction of the Chinese officer at Lhasa". But this request was refused by the Kashag government (Goldstein, 1989: 237, 240). Two serious arguments between the Mission of Kuomintang government and the Kashag government in August and October of 1942 were caused by the jurisdiction of persons of intermarriages ("half-Chinese") (Goldstein, 1989: 383-384). All those records show that Han-Tibetan intermarriages were common in Tibet during the Qing dynasty and the period after the 1911 revolution.

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

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

The intermarriage rate is an important index of measuring ethnic relations. There were 383,839 "minority households" (Tibetan households, households of other ethnic minorities, and intermarried households between other minorities were not separated in this category), 15,963 "Han households", and 2,639 "united households" in the TAR in 1990. If we assume that all "minority households" were Tibetan households with only one married couple in each household,⁹ the intermarried were 16.5% among

Han and only 0.7% among Tibetans (minorities). The low intermarriage rate of Tibetans is largely due to the small Han and other ethnic minority populations in the TAR. Compared with inner Mongolia, there were about 15% of intermarried Mongolians in the 1982 census report. Males and females consisted of about half and half among total intermarriages (Song Naigong, 1987: 372). The Han population consisted of 85% of the total population in Inner Mongolia in 1982, which increased the possibility for Mongolians and Han to contact each other in daily life.

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

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

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

From the information obtained from the 1988 survey, it seems that there were more "Tibetan (male)- Han (female)" intermarriages in urban Lhasa,

⁹If there were more than one couple in the household and one of them were intermarried, this household was classified as "united household". Therefore, our assumption is a rough estimate. According to the 1990 census reports, 72% of the "united households" (1900 households) had a size between 2 and 4 persons, another 11.7% (309 households) had a size of 5 persons. The "united households" with 5 persons consisted of 16.3% of the total (Census Office of TAR, 1992a: 180). We may assume that the households with a size between 2 and 5 were "one-couple households" since 3 or more children per couple were very common in the TAR among Tibetans. Therefore, "one couple per one household" is the most common case.

TABLE 11. HAN-TIBETAN INTERMARRIAGES IN THE 1988 SURVEY

Year of Marriage	Lhasa					County*		Total
	Tibetan-Han		Han-Tibetan			T-H	H-T	
	married	Divorced	Married	divorced	widowed	married	married	
-1920	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1921-1930	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
1931-1940	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
1941-1950	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	5
1951-1960	3	0	1	0	0	0	2	6
1961-1970	2	1	1	1	0	3	2	10
1971-1980	4	0	1	1	0	0	1	7
1980-1988	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Total	12	2	5	2	3	3	7	34

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

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

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

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

TABLE 12. EDUCATION AND WEALTH COMPARISON AT WEDDING FOR INTERMARRIAGES

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

TABLE 13. OCCUPATIONAL COMPARISON OF INTERMARRIAGES AT WEDDING

Occupations of intermarried couple at wedding (Husband-wife)	Lhasa		Counties	
	T-H	H-T	T-H	H-T
State-owned ent. worker-state-owned ent. worker*	5	2	0	0
Professional-state-owned ent. worker	1	0	0	0
Cadre-state-owned ent. worker	0	1	0	0
Service labor-service labor	1	1	0	0
Collective ent. employee-state-owned ent. worker	1	0	0	0
Craftsman-craftswomen	0	1	0	0
Unemployed-unemployed	0	1	0	0
Cadre-collective ent. employee	0	1	0	0
Cadre-cadre	0	1	0	0
Peasant-peasant	0	0	3	7
Service labor-state-owned ent. worker	1	0	0	0
State-owned ent. worker-collective ent. employee	0	1	0	0
State-owned ent. worker-unemployed	1	0	0	0
State-owned ent. worker-craftswomen	1	0	0	0
Peasant-craftswomen	1	0	0	0
Other-other	1	0	0	0
Service labor-other	1	0	0	0
Craftsman-unemployed	0	1	0	0
Total	14	10	3	7

*State-owned enterprise worker.

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

THE FIRST MARRIAGE FOR HOUSEHOLD HEADS WITH MULTI-MARRIAGES

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

But this general trend does not necessarily exclude the possibility that there might be a certain number of other types of marriages in some areas, and that these type of marriages might increase there. "The reports of the Women's League of the TAR revealed that among 50 newly married couples in Ba-ga Xiang of Dang-xiong County during 1982-1984, 10% belong to either polyandry or polygamy" (Zhang Tianlu, 1989: 26). These marriage types were common in both urban and rural areas in Tibet for centuries as Tibetan Buddhism. They were not encouraged by the government after the 1959 "democratic reform", and their numbers declined as the number of monks decreased in the 1960s and 1970s. The decrease was due to the political and cultural environment during that time. Since the new "reform" policy began in the 1980s, the restrictions were loosened in all aspects. The number of monks obviously increased from 800 in 1970 to 41,800 in 1994 (Lin

TABLE 14. THE FIRST MARRIAGE OF MULTI-MARRIED TIBETAN HOUSEHOLD HEADS

Type of the first marriage	Lhasa		Counties	
	# of marriages	%	# of marriages	%
Monogamy	54	78.3	33	71.7
Polygamy	3	4.3	10	21.7
Polyandry	1	1.4	1	2.2
Unknown	11	15.9	2	4.4
Total	69	100.0	46	100.0
Reason for ending of first marriage	Lhasa		Counties	
Divorce	26	37.7	21	45.7
Widowed	36	50.7	24	52.2
Unknown	8	11.6	1	2.2
Total	69	100.0	46	100.0

Junhua, 1995: 17). The household responsibility system in rural areas promoted the need for labor re-organization while the traditional customs were also revived, which may have resulted in an increase of polyandry or polygamy in some areas.

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

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

DIVORCE IN THE TAR

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

are more complicated.

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

In the Tibetan tribes in Guo-luo areas (Qinghai), "divorce was considered quite normal and there was no written legal procedures. But divorces were required of the judgement of tribe chiefs. ... A certain amount of money and items should be submitted to the chief before the divorce. The chief would mediate the problem between the couple, if he failed, the divorce becomes final. Upon divorce, all household properties would be divided equally for all adult members of the household, children get half of the adult" (Xing Haining, 1994: 128). In some areas, "even the unborn baby could get half of the household properties as adult members" (Chen Qingying, 1995: 437). In Golok areas, "if the man and the woman belong to different tribes, their marriage should be permitted by their parents as well as the chiefs of both tribes" (Xing Haining, 1994: 125). It is clear that tribal chiefs enjoyed a high authority in their people's lives from the cases of marriage and divorce. Except in Golok areas, "there was no need to go through tribe chiefs for divorce in most areas, the chiefs would be invited for judgement only when argument happened, the gift as a reward to chiefs was usually a sheep or a cow" (Chen Qingying, 1995: 438).

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

Some studies introduced the "lip to lip marriage" among the poor

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

The investigation in Qiong-jie Zong of Shannan area reported the marriage rituals of ordinary Tre-ba. "The marriage rituals are more complicated than that of tre-ba, the marriages of poor Tre-ba and serfs are more simple. The marriages of Nang-shen are so simple without any rituals. If the both sides agreed, reported to their owner, then they moved to live together. They could get divorced if they could not get along but the cases of divorce were limited. Boys will be with the father and girls with the mother when they decided to divorce, family properties would be divided into two parts, the part for the one who leaves was smaller than the other part" (CCTS, 1992: 164).¹⁰

Based on the discussion above, the first character of Tibetan marriages is the simple procedure of marriage, and even no procedure among the poor. The second character is the simple procedure for divorce and low stability of marriages. However, we must emphasize that the marriages among aristocracy were very different from the poor serfs and herdsmen, though their number was very small.¹¹ They had very strong restrictions on marriage for class background, very complicated procedures and rituals of marriage, "Ru-zhui" (groom marrying the bride's family and taking her family's name), and "Zhuan-hun" (switching marriage relations with different spouses). Their marriages were also much more stable because they were

¹⁰For detailed information about the property distribution, who keeps the children and the methods for children's supporting expenses, please refer to *Survey Reports of Social and Historical Studies in Tibet* Volumes 3 and 5 (TSHSSEG, 1989a: 50, 228; 1989c: 115, 324).

¹¹The lay aristocracy consisted of about 150-200 families in Tibet. "About 30 higher-status families, known as Depon Mitra, and about 120 to 170 lower or 'common' aristocracy families" (Goldstein, 1989:6). Other studies classified Tibetan nobles into three groups: 6 "Yaxi" families (families of Dalai Lamas), 5 senior noble families ("Depon"), and about 200 common noble families (those owning land are called "Geba")(Petech, 1973: 18).

TABLE 15. MARRIAGE REGISTRATION IN LHASA URBAN DISTRICT (1981-1987)

Year	Total Population	First marriage			Divorce			Re-sume	Re-marry	
		Num-ber*	Marr-rate**	Reque-sted	Medi-ated	To court	Div-orced			Div-rate***
1987	107,277	2,322	10.8	178	60	10	108	5.0	6	22
1982	105,897	2,234	10.5	186	40	22	124	6.0	6	24
1983	104,794	2,326	11.1	228	68	18	142	7.0	20	146
1984	104,269	1,660	8.0	270	110	34	126	6.2	14	74
1985	107,712	1,832	8.5	158	32	12	114	5.6	14	150
1986	107,725	2,220	10.3	358	30	36	192	9.3	16	102
1987	117,679	2,220	9.4	340	100	32	208	10.0	20	26

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

**"Marriage rate": number of marriages (couples) per 1000 population;

***"Divorce rate": number of divorces (couples) per 1000 married couples.

closely related to continuity of families and estates as well as other properties (Nakane, 1992).

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

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

TABLE 16. DIVORCE CASES IN LHASA URBAN DISTRICT COURT

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

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

portion of Han population lived in Lhasa, Han-Tibetan intermarriages were more common in Lhasa. The statistics of Lhasa Urban District may largely represent the situation of intermarriages and divorces in Lhasa areas.

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

CONCLUSION

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

found in other parts of the world.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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RONG MA, Professor of Sociology, also serve as chairman of Department of Sociology and Director of Institute of Sociology and Anthropology at Peking University. He received his Ph.D in Sociology at Brown University in 1987 and then returned to teach at Peking University. He has conducted many surveys in ethnic minority regions in China, including Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang. His book *Population and Society in Tibet* (Tongxin Press, 1996, in Chinese) has been the most influential publication on Tibet in China.