

A Historical and Demographical Analysis of Uxorilocal Marriage in Hsin-chu Area
During Japanese Colonial Rule in Taiwan

Wen Shan Yang

Institute of Sociology & Program for Historical Demography
Academia Sinica

The purpose of this study is to examine the cause of uxori-local marriage in Taiwan during the period of Japanese colonial rule by utilizing the household registration data from six villages in Hsin-chu area. These data make it possible to reconstruct the life histories of husbands who lived continuously in their wife's native villages and townships. In colonial Taiwan, there are three types of marriages exemplified by the household registration database. They are the traditional 'major marriage'; a minor marriage which is adopted daughter turn daughter-in-law (child bride); and uxori-local marriage by which the husband is being "call in", or recruit, to the wife's family. When a daughter calls in a husband to her own family is called *zhou xu* [招婿]; when a widow calls in a husband to her late husband's family is called *zhao fu* [招夫].

According to our database, uxori-local marriages are equally distributed the north and the south, while other types of marriage, minor marriages, are more prevalent in the north. Uxori-local marriage existed in all parts of Taiwan because it is influenced by regional environment and household backgrounds. According to famous Chinese anthropologist Fei's field study in the lower part of Yangtze River, he found if any local family had only female children, the parents would request the parents of their daughter's fiancé to allow their daughter to bear a heir for their family. In other words, they had the right to request one son from their daughter after the family name and preserve the familial lineage. It was common for a daughter's son to become the heir of a family.

In Arthur Wolf's field study in Northern Taiwan, he argues that uxori-local marriage can be divided into two types: contingent and institutional reasons. The former usually associates with family lineage in which families that have no male heirs use uxori-local marriage as a way to continue family lineage; while the latter is caused by natural or economic reasons in which emphasizes on practical reasons. Pasternak, a Columbia anthropologist doing field work in the west-central part of Taiwan, observed that due to lack of the infrastructure for the irrigation system, small agriculture families because in need of extra hands to calling in a husband as a means

to obtain additional domestic labor.

In our field study village sites of the northern part of Taiwan, there were 391 women in uxori-local marriages. Among them, 373 had no older brothers. Out of these 373 women, 48 had younger brothers. Approximately 83% women who intended to marry uxori-locally in our field sites usually had no male siblings preserving the familial lineage is the major goal of uxori-local unions; while only 12% of them were for the demand of domestic labor.

Among men in uxori-local marriage, about 46% had elder brothers while the rest 54% don't. Although the colonial law prohibits single son to enter uxori-local marriage, many of them were the only son in the family. Observing the occupation of the heads of their households, their families were of lower social ranks, for example; labors, peasants, and maids. Poverty might be the force to drive to opt for uxori-local marriage as a way out of poverty. By examining the age of first marriage, that of men in uxori-local marriages are usually older than that of those in major or minor marriages. The reason was that poverty may delay the age of first marriage entering into uxori-local marriage. We may argue that uxori-local marriage was the last and unfavorable choice for a man to form his own family. In the research field sites of Hsin-chu area, women's choice of uxori-local marriage was mainly driven by the desire to continue the family lineage; men's choice of uxori-local marriage is largely due to poverty as the limitations of family resources prevent all the sons of the same family to be able to celebrate the formal ritual of traditional major marriages. To avoid 'losing face' by contracting uxori-local marriage, 74.8% geographical radius of uxori-local marriage partners was mainly of inter-town/inter-village marriages. The inter-regional uxori-local marriages might be the cause as well as the result of the high divorce rate. Because the geographical distance between the potential couple, the less chance they had to understand each other prior to the marriage. As a result, the lack of understanding increases the risk of marital stability.

Since uxori-local marriage was a way to make up for men's inability to pay for a proper wedding and a means to social mobility for lower class males, many of them might want to be called-in because they covet women's family wealth and property as well. Our study indicates that both men and women were aware that uxori-local marriage was a sort of contract or 'transaction', and it was established on the ground of mutual benefits or interests which might bring elements of destabilizing factors to the marriage itself.