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From Manchukuo to Marriage: Localizing Contemporary Cross-Border Marriages between Japan and Northeast China

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This essay examines Japanese-Chinese arranged cross-border marriages and investigates the ways in which participants legitimate and render such marriages comprehensible in light of national and local histories. Marriageability in this context is produced not through conceptions of "exotic difference" but instead distinct discourses of "familiarity." On the one hand, Chinese participants tactically narrate "blood ties" (xueyuan guanxi 血缘关系) *to interpret current marriage migration as following relational bonds and thus a "natural" phenomenon. On the other hand, Japanese participants stress Chinese women's "familiarity"* (shinkin kan 親近感) *with Japan, a familiarity that is claimed to stem from positive historical ties forged by colonialism, and thus effaces Japanese wartime culpability. In short, multiple layered notions of familiarity, shaped by the colonial legacy in East Asia, are at work in rendering these transnational intimate relations possible.*

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

As I would learn, Xinghai is one of the major communities that send brides to Japan. In fact, many commercial marriage broker agencies (*kokusai kekkon shōkaijō* 国際結婚紹介所) specifically introduced Chinese brides from Xinghai to Japanese men; it is through these brokers that I came to know Xinghai. But what was it about Xinghai that made that marriage migration to Japan a choice for so many local women? More broadly, what made a certain flow of brides between the two locations feasible? During my fieldwork, both Japanese and local Chinese informants repeatedly conveyed

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a similar refrain: the feelings of familiarity and closeness residents of Xinghai feel towards Japan. In the words of one Japanese broker, "people in Xinghai are in general pro-Japan (*shin nichi* 親日) and they have feelings of familiarity (*shinkinkan* 親近感) toward Japan." Alternately, a local resident of Xinghai told me, "Xinghai and Japan have familiar (*qinqie* 亲切) relations," or as another local informant put it, "Xinghai has unique intimate (*miqie* 密切) feelings toward Japan."[1] Given the ongoing political tensions and hostilities between Japan and China, it was remarkable that informants described such intimate feelings between the very place that was colonized and its former colonizers, and that this in turn was seen as the basis for contemporary cross-border marriage. Yet while there were surface similarities in the discourses of familiarity and closeness employed by Japanese and local Chinese informants, I came to learn that they were the product of two very different assertions of historical subjectivity and strategies to legitimate marriage migration. It was not simply different memories of Japanese colonialism in Manchuria, but also how locals understood and even appropriated such colonial histories in their own terms. These appropriations of history illuminate the localization of meanings attributed to contemporary cross-border marriages between Japan and northeast China.

Existing work on cross-border intimate relations tends to highlight how global gender and economic inequalities produce the feminization of migration, whereby women from "developing" countries migrate to "developed" countries (Constable 2009; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Parreñas 2001; Sassen 2000). Such economic inequalities, in turn, make certain imaginings possible. For instance, the participants in such relationships seek "different," "traditional," or "exotic" others generated by global gendered imaginings (Brennan 2004; Kelsky 2001; Suzuki 2005; Wilson 1988).[2] Whereas global inequalities contribute to making such transnational relations possible, this essay further demonstrates how the existence of inequalities or the production of "difference" alone is inadequate to understand this phenomenon. In other words, the cross-border marriage industry between Japan and northeast China is not simply a product of gendered economic inequalities, although these do exist, but also is rooted in relationships and even imaginings generated by specific regional histories, historical contingencies, and interpretations.

In order to further elucidate this phenomenon, I interrogate the little-explored dynamic links between practices of transnationalism, marriage migration, and colonial legacies in Japan and China. Nicole Constable (2003) has critically examined the link between political economy and the cultural logics of desire in her work on correspondence marriages between Filipina or Chinese women and U.S. men. She argues that the historical, political economy is embodied in the production of desire at an intimate level. In particular, historical power relations between nation-states imply a certain imagination of others that shape particular desires (see also Brennan 2004). These arguments provide a useful framework; nonetheless, the discussion is limited to the large-scale historical perspective of relations between states, one that overlooks local differences within states. As my ethnographic data shows, both the forms and implications of desires for

[1]My use of the Japanese and Chinese terms are how the informants used them in particular contexts.

[2]Other forms of transnational marriage are driven by the conceptions of ethnic reunions or alliances (cf. Charsley 2005; Freeman 2011; Oxfeld 2005; Schein 2005).

border crossing are inextricable from the distinctively local. Thus, by addressing the specific local history in which the participants are embedded, this essay aims to add a more complex picture of the logic of desire, incorporating the local particularities that a discussion of large-scale national relationships cannot capture.

This essay accordingly asks how different historical narratives are deployed at a local scale to make contemporary transnational intimate relations legible, and how such narratives play a role in remapping colonial memories, national subjectivity, and the very notion of marriageability.[3] I argue that for those involved in marriage migration between northeast China and Japan, it was the tactical deployment of socially and historically created conceptions of *familiarity* that rendered these marriages legitimate for participants. My ethnographic data reveals as well that current transnational links between Japan and northeast China are inextricable from the residual socialities of the Japanese colonization of Manchuria, the phenomenon of Japanese war orphans, and local Chinese ties to labor migrants in Japan.

I illuminate the ways in which multiple actors mobilize historical narratives to legitimate such transnational practices and navigate the marriageability of themselves and others. Specifically, I focus on two different discourses utilized by Japanese and Chinese informants. On the one hand, many Japanese informants deploy a positive notion of historical relatedness forged by colonialism to efface Japan's war culpability, stressing Chinese people's "familiarity" (*shinkin kan* 親近感) with or "friendliness" (*yūkōuteki* 友好的) towards Japan. On the other hand, many Chinese informants in Xinghai tactically narrate claims of "blood ties" (*xueyuan guanxi* 血缘关系) and in doing so interpret marriage migration as a "natural" product of "following blood ties." The aim of this essay is not simply to give an accounting of the historical background of Japanese-Chinese cross-border marriages, but rather to investigate the ways in which current cross-border marriages are rendered comprehensible in light of history. Correspondingly, I suggest an alternative logic by which colonial memories create (dissimilar) conceptions of familiarity key to negotiations of marriageability.

Localizing cross-border marriages does not mean to deny the global inequalities that generate gendered migration. Rather, the aim is to reveal how particular historical memories are selectively deployed to "naturalize" unequal transactions (cf. Shih 1998).[4] As Collier

[3]My use of marriageability is influenced by Claude Lévi-Strauss's (1969) discussion on endogamy and exogamy. He observes, "Any society is both exogamous and endogamous" (45–46). For instance, he explains that the Australian aborigines practice clan exogamy, but tribe endogamy. What Lévi-Strauss calls "true endogamy" is "merely the refusal to recognize the possibility of marriage beyond the limits of the human community" (46). He cites the example of the Eskimos of Norton Sound who exclusively portray themselves as "men" and do not recognize their neighboring people as "men" such as themselves. Such inability to perceive others as men importantly shapes their notions of marriageability. He states, "In all these cases, it is merely a question of knowing how far to extend the logical connotation of the idea of community, which is itself dependent upon the effective solidarity of the group" (46).

[4]Instead of seeing the concept of "Greater China" among mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan as simply an emergence of transnational Chinese culture, Shih (1998, 289) argues that "the perceived economic integration is by no means a fait accompli, nor does it translate into, nor should it be equated with, cultural and political integration." On the one hand, various actors on all sides have emphasized discourses of former unity and a putatively shared cultural heritage or sisterhood in order to stress the "Chineseness" of the three sides for various reasons. On the other hand,

and Yanagisako (1987) argue, the study of marriage is not an isolated domain (cf. Schneider 1984); this essay demonstrates the ways in which communal memories and marital practices are intertwined. Therefore, cross-border marriages are not phenomena isolated to those involved, but also shape and are shaped by larger local and translocal contexts.

The Transnational Marriage Industry

To first provide some background, since the 1990s transnational marriage agencies (*kokusai kekkon shōkaijō* 国際結婚紹介所) specializing in arranging marriages with Chinese brides have increased in number in Japan. A primary function of these agencies is to provide "matchmaking tours" for Japanese men to visit China in search of Chinese brides. On these tours, male clients are typically given the chance to interact with several Chinese women through translators. Should the client find a potential match and both sides consent, a marriage is immediately brokered. The men then return to Japan, and —if and when their visa is approved, usually three to twelve months later—their Chinese brides join them in Japan. Unlike in studies that focus on marriages between non-Japanese women and Japanese men from the countryside (cf. Shukuya 1988), the agencies that I study primarily provide matchmaking services to white-collar Japanese men in urban areas. A large number of their customers are men who first had unsuccessfully attempted to find a Japanese bride through domestic marriage agencies. Many have stated to me that after the age of forty—the average age for men involved in transnational marriages—it was almost impossible for them to find a "suitable" bride locally. Brokerage costs usually ranged from ¥1 million to ¥3 million (approximately $12,000 to $36,000), including a multi-day matchmaking tour to China, a modest wedding ceremony, and assistance in navigating the requisite paperwork. In general, transnational marriage agencies in Japan are not willing to welcome outsiders, including researchers. A number of marriage agencies ignored or politely declined my requests to conduct research on their work. However, after repeated visits since 2007, some brokers invited me not only to their offices, but also on matchmaking tours to China.

Contemporary Chinese brides come primarily from northeast China, the site of the former Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo, established in 1932 as part of the Japanese imperial project. The backgrounds of the Chinese women who have sought Japanese husbands in these areas vary, and women ranged in age from being in their early twenties to their fifties. Women in their twenties or early thirties constituted the majority of the brides for Japanese men, who themselves were usually in their forties or fifties. Nonetheless, women in their forties or fifties were not uncommon as brides for Japanese men sixty

in particular for Taiwan and Hong Kong, the concept of similarity also has been seen as a threat to their political independence. This is shown in the discourse of sisterhood among the three places, with the emphasis on the women in mainland China as feminized and sexualized younger sisters. This also implies that Taiwan is more sophisticated and modern than "backward China" (296). Shih's work shows the ways in which the concepts of similarity and difference are deployed in rearranging, negotiating, but at the same time reinforcing boundaries of national communities.

or older.[5] Some of these women had never been married; some were divorcées with children.[6] My ethnographic data also shows that matchmaking practices involved brokerage payments (*zhongjie fei* 中介费) from the women to Chinese brokers. Fees ranged from 20,000 RMB to 130,000 RMB ($3,000 to $20,000).[7] Women were aware of these brokerage fees before marrying. Women usually paid half of the fees as a down payment (*yajin* 押金) when they married and paid the rest when their spousal visa was issued. When a spousal visa was declined, some women divorced and reclaimed a refund from their brokers. Thus, their fees were based on the entire migration processes, not simply marriage. These women's payments reveal dynamics different from the typical depiction of "mail-order brides" whose agency is denied, and also suggest that their engagements should be analyzed in terms of both gendered capacities and constraints within the context of local values and the global markets.

Remapping and Reconstructing Memories

The constitution and reconstitution of knowledge about the past is importantly linked to changes in national and global conditions (Fujitani, White, and Yoneyama 2001). Although the residues of Japanese colonialism have not completely disappeared from northeast China, many local informants expressed to me that it was a thing of the past (*guoqu de shi* 过去的事). However, the current movement of people between Japan and northeast China, in particular in the form of marriage, still works to evoke colonial and postcolonial memories in a multiplicity of ways. Narratives of what happened in the past between Japan and northeast China were deeply intertwined with how participants made sense of contemporary cross-border marriages and vice versa.

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

[5]Women in their forties and fifties were uncommon as bride candidates in other major bride-sending communities in northeast China. In this sense, Xinghai is distinct in that marriage migration has become possible for various members of the community.

[6]Chinese brides who had a child from their previous marriage usually left for Japan without the child. Often, the guardianship of the child was their ex-husband's. However many women hoped to invite their children to Japan several years later to live together. Yet, from my observation, their wishes did not always materialize.

[7]The brokerage fees were also observable in other bride-sending communities. The average fees varied across communities. For instance, during my research between 2009 and 2010 in another town in Liaoning Province, women usually paid from 20,000 RMB to 40,000 RMB.

The reconstruction of memory also involves issues of identity and morality. As Paul Ricoeur (2004, 81) argues, the mobilization of memory operates in the service of the demand of identity. Knowing what happened in the past is connected to knowing who we are. John Edison (2000, 579) also argues that the field site may be regarded as a site of memory, which suggests "a public arena in which actors cultivate forms of historical understanding, which are, in turn, expected to provide these actors and their audiences with means for orienting themselves to others, to their surroundings, and to themselves." Hence, specific understandings of the past and historical narratives also provide frameworks to make sense of and reaffirm one's identity and further orient how we act in a certain context (see also Antze and Lambek 1996, xii; Halbwachs 1992, 47; Morris-Suzuki 2005, 24; Wertsch 2000, 518).

As Geoffrey M. White (2000, 496) argues, stories about the past are devices for "self-fashioning." White further claims that narratives—repeating and renarrating well-known past events—are discursive practices to render past events comprehensible and persuasive. He states, "In producing, enacting, circulating (or simply consuming) stories of the past, social actors, create and objectify the realities in which they live" (497). Therefore, cultural memories are not simply a reflection of the past but rather "social actions" (White 2006, 328) and "cultural tools" (Wertsch 2002, 515) for groups of people to conceive their unity and peculiarity through common images. Moreover, memories are formative and normative (Assmann 1995, 132). Memories serve as the moral stories of certain communities. In short, examining the remapping and reconstructing of memories consequently reveals that marriageability across national borders is shaped and legitimated by such senses of historical continuity.

This historicized sensibility goes beyond what Constable (2003, 117) calls "the cultural logics of desire." The cultural logics of desire highlight the limitations of material and practical factors in explaining how transnational intimate relationships are created. Constable argues for the possibility of love. Instead, I suggest that it is through the historically constructed conceptions of familiarity that Japanese-Chinese transnational intimate relationships were made possible, that participants were made mutually marriageable.

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

Xinghai Local History: The Phenomenon of "War Orphans"

Following the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) and the colonization of other parts of Asia (Okinawa in 1879, Taiwan in 1895, and Korea in 1910), the Japanese state

established the puppet state of Manchukuo in Manchuria in 1932. In addition to seeking to create a "utopian" country in Manchuria (Duara 2003; Matsusaka 2003; Watt 2009; Young 1998), a goal that was never practically implemented, the Japanese state deployed an image of Manchuria as a huge, fertile expanse to recruit Japanese nationals to settle there.[8] By the early 1930s, about 240,000 Japanese nationals had moved to cities in southern Manchuria (Tamanoi 2009, 15); by August 1945, 6.9 million Japanese nationals were living outside of the main Japanese islands and 2,214,000 Japanese nationals (1,550,000 civilian and 664,000 army) resided in Manchuria (Watt 2009, 2, 39). Many of those who migrated to the northern part of Manchuria were middle-scale farmers. They were "encouraged" to migrate to Manchuria as "man/mou pioneer groups" (*man mō kaitakudan* 満蒙開拓団) so they could obtain their own land (Ide 2008; Nakajima 1990). These farmers later explained that they had heard or assumed that the Japanese state purchased the land from local Chinese people (Hayashi 1983, 10–11), although the local people had actually had their land expropriated by the Japanese colonial authorities. Such different perceptions also contributed subsequently to the dissimilar memories and narratives of Japanese colonialism in Manchuria.

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

The Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945, elicited a massive reverse migration.[10] As Soviet troops advanced on the northern borders of Manchuria, the remaining Japanese settlers attempted to reach train stations in the hope of returning to Japan. However, due to the chaos resulting from the Japanese surrender, the Soviet Union's advancement, and the intentional destruction of the transportation system by the Japanese army, many were not able to find their way to Japan. Those who survived the Soviet invasion, starvation, and freezing temperatures, and yet were unable to return to Japan—a large number of whom were children at the time—were called *zanryūkoji/ribenyigu* 残留孤児/日本遺孤 or "the Japanese orphans left behind."[11]

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

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

[10]Repatriation stories vary drastically depending on where the people used to reside in Manchuria. For those who resided in the southern or middle part of Manchuria, their repatriation stories were somewhat less arduous than those who were in the northern part of Manchuria.

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

Although war orphans were present in all three of the northeastern provinces (Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang) of China, the majority of these orphans were stranded in northernmost Heilongjiang as a function of their geographical proximity to the Soviet Union, the urgency for those fleeing to escape from the Soviet troops, and the inability of refugees to reach the trains to the coastal areas. According to existing memoirs and local narratives, there was a bureau headquarters located in Xinghai for Japanese troops with food stocks. Thus, many believed that they could at least receive help and food from the troops there. When they arrived, however, the entire deployment was already gone, and the refugees were stranded.[12]

Approximately 5,000 to 8,000 Japanese nationals arrived in Xinghai (Nakajima 1990). About 2,000 to 2,500 of these survived the lack of food, the cold of the winter, and outbreaks of typhoid fever by being incorporated into Chinese families or marrying locals (Hayashi 1983). Here the interpretation of these events—whether the Chinese citizens were adopting and helping or buying and selling war orphans—varies depending on the perspective.[13]

From 1946 to 1948, 1,046,620 Japanese returned to Japan, and from 1953 to 1958, an additional 302,506 returned with the help of the Japanese and Chinese Red Cross organizations (Ide 2008).[14] However, in 1958, due to the lack of diplomatic ties between Japan and the People's Republic of China (PRC), all official communication and connections were severed. This began to change after diplomatic ties between Japan and the PRC were established in 1972. In 1981, the Japanese government began supporting groups of war orphans to visit Japan to identify relatives. Those who were able to prove their roots and find blood relatives regained Japanese citizenship. Almost forty years after the Japanese defeat on August 15, 1945, the majority of these orphans gradually returned to Japan with their families.[15]

The Japanese government has allowed the orphans' families and their succeeding generations to reside in Japan. The initial orphans' visits to Japan at the time were widely broadcast on Japanese television, which reveled in presenting the dramatic and emotional scenes of orphans and their blood relatives being reunited after almost forty years of separation. These war orphans, even if they were already middle-aged, were treated as victims not only of Japanese imperialism but also of a postwar government that ignored their existence for thirty-five years. Nonetheless, after their return to

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

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

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

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

Japan, the orphans still faced numerous difficulties due to a lack of language skills and insufficient government support (Araragi 2008, 2011).[16]

"Humane" Colonialism and Transnational Links

It was the Japanese marriage broker from First Love, Kimura, who first told me the history of Xinghai and described the intricate connections that extend from the history of Japanese war orphans to the current cross-border marriage industry. According to him, the marriage brokerage business works so well in Xinghai precisely because of its unique local history during the colonial and postcolonial eras.[17] He explained:

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

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

Such a narrative was not unique among Japanese informants who knew Xinghai. In January 2010, I visited the Japan-Xinghai Friendship Association in Tokyo.[18] Although

[16]Araragi (2008, 2011) observes that the migration of people, not limited to Japanese nationals, but also Koreans, Chinese, Taiwanese, or Okinawans, during Japan's imperial period and as part of the processes of repatriation after Japan's defeat were not simply movements of these people across national borders, but also that such flows of people involved the issues of how those people were included or excluded in respective societies after the war (also see Hayashi 1983; Ide 2004, 2008; Okubo 2006).

[17]After victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan acquired land rights on the Liaoning Peninsula, which became a foothold for Japan's invasion into northeast China. After the Manchurian Incident in 1931, Japan occupied Manchuria (1932–45) and installed a puppet government.

[18]The association was established in 1993 and sends a group of Japanese tourists to Xinghai every year to visit the war orphans monument memorializing 4,000 to 5,000 orphans who died and were buried there.

the aim of the association was to commemorate the orphans who had perished in Xinghai and build friendship between Xinghai and Japan, the director was also aware of the phenomenon of brokered transnational marriages there. The director told me that, although he was not an expert on transnational marriages, he knew that many people in Xinghai were friendly to Japan, or pro-Japan (*shin nichi* 親日). Then he went on to say:

> Actually, Japanese people in northern Manchuria were just ordinary farmers and did not harm the communities there. Some of them had a good relationship with the local people and Chinese people did not have strong feelings of hostility toward them, so Chinese people raised the Japanese children left behind. Their affection towards Japan is also the reason that many people from Xinghai want to come to Japan today.

During the interview with the director, he also explained to me the historical background against which the current marriage industry operates. He explained the history of the monument for the Japanese war orphans, which was built in Xinghai. He said:

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

Although the director showed appreciation and respect for what he described as Chinese people's kindness, he also noted that many war orphans were actually "sold" to Chinese people as workers, and many orphans had a really difficult time in China. However, he still recognized China's "friendship spirit" (*yūai seishin* 友愛精神) vis-à-vis Japan. The director told me, "My friends in northeast China also have feelings of familiarity (*shinkin kan* 親近感) with Japan. It is also possibly because one out of four people in Xinghai have relatives in Japan." Overseas Chinese in Japan are contributing greatly to the economy in Xinghai and thus, he said, the local government also actively supports interaction with Japan. Then, the director mentioned the illegal migration, which takes advantage of counterfeit orphan status. He said, "Yet, now it has become difficult to obtain counterfeit orphans status in China, and thus, marriage is seen as another option for coming to Japan."

The legacy of Japanese colonialism looms large in the accounts provided by the broker and the director. They repeatedly attested that current transnational links between northeast China and Japan descend from the vestiges of the failed Japanese imperial project. Running throughout their accounts was the assertion that this project, or at the very least, the conduct of Japanese settlers associated with it, was "humane." Moreover, it was the humane treatment of local colonial subjects during the colonial era that subsequently enabled Japanese war orphans to survive in Xinghai. Put differently, it was

the benevolence of Japanese settlers that was the original wellspring of the friendliness and familiarity asserted to exist between Xinghai and Japan today. That said, informants also viewed the willingness and even eagerness of Chinese to go to Japan as indicative of Japan's superiority and advancement into modernity to the status of a "better place"—a narrative itself reminiscent of the discourse used to justify and legitimize the original colonial project.

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

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

Moralizing the Other's Desire

The transnational links created by Japanese colonialism provide an arena for multiple interpretations for desires. Many Japanese men who visited China on matchmaking tours were concerned about the women's motivations and occasionally asked me why some Chinese women are willing to marry Japanese men. Some of them were worried that the Chinese women would marry them only for money or a visa. Many Japanese men conducted a lot of Internet searches to investigate stories of "fake marriages." They found that some women disappeared as soon as they arrived in Japan. Although these stories were not totally false, on those websites, any reasons for women to run away, including

difficulties in the marriage or abusive relations, could easily be justified by anonymous writers as the women's original intention before marrying. Partly influenced by such stories, the question of what makes Japanese men appealing and desirable for Chinese women was one that some Japanese men themselves wanted to know the answer to. This put Japanese marriage brokers in the position of explaining women's motivations to their male clientele. In particular, when the Japanese men were concerned about Chinese people's possibly hostile feelings toward Japan (*han nichi kanjō* 反日感情), the brokers typically responded by saying that people in Xinghai are friendly to Japan. For example, Kimura explained the historical connection between Xinghai and Japan to me on my first trip to Xinghai in the same way he explains it to his male customers. Kimura told his customers that "after war orphans went back to Japan, they spread the stories among their relatives that 'Japan is a good place,' and more and more women came to desire to go to and live in Japan." According to Kimura, women's desire to marry Japanese men is historically constructed upon and embodied by the "real experiences" (*jittaiken* 実体験) of other local people.

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

Consequently, this particular historical narrative not only rearticulates Japanese colonialism in Manchuria, positing local positive feelings toward Japan and Japan's "contributions" to northeast China, it also provides legitimating and morally acceptable grounds for Chinese women wanting to marry Japanese men. A historical narrative, here, informs a "moral story" not only of Japanese settlers, but also of Chinese women in the present context.

This is especially significant given that many Japanese men who visited Xinghai had experienced difficulties finding a Japanese bride. Those who were seen as "unmarriageable" in the eyes of Japanese women were able to come to see themselves as "marriageable" in the eyes of women in Xinghai. But there were concerns that their appeal as husbands was simply a function of material desires on the part of potential brides. Thanks to the "historical" stories from brokers, Japanese male participants came to see their marriageability—even desirability—not simply as a product of their economic status, but instead as a result of women's familiarity with Japan. With this explanation in hand, Chinese brides became more acceptable partners.

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

I visited Xinghai again in February 2010 for a longer stay. During my five-month stay and two additional trips (September 2010 and July 2011) to Xinghai, I was able to learn more about the relationship of Xinghai to Japan from a local perspective. Initially, when

I first explained my research on "cross-border marriage" in Xinghai, the local officials' reactions were not enthusiastic. One deputy director at the foreign affairs office even displayed open hostility toward my research. A former local government official, to whom I was introduced by the director at the Japan-Xinghai Friendship Association, also conveyed that he viewed my research on marriage migration as an inappropriate topic. The early hesitation—even resistance—I encountered indeed hinted at the ambiguity of local feelings toward marriage migration. The local marriage brokers told me that marriage migration is a "sensitive" (*mingan* 敏感) issue and not many people would be willing to talk about it in public, or at least with an outsider.

Whereas charging fees for brokering transnational marriages is technically illegal in China, such illegality was not the only reason for them to hesitate to talk about it. Many of them, instead, strongly suggested that I study the history of war orphans in Xinghai. According to many locals in Xinghai, the history of war orphans was the basis for today's transnational flows. When I then reframed my study as research on marriage migration and its relation to the history of war orphans, the locals gradually started talking about not only war orphans, but also the details of marriage migration. Due to the topic's "sensitiveness," as the local marriage broker put it, structured interviews were difficult to implement. However, thanks to the small size of the town, it was relatively easy to engage in snowball sampling and meet participants through casual introductions. I met many brides at Japanese language schools I regularly visited. Dinners with local (both male and female) community members were another key site for gaining information as well as expanding my contacts. Inviting me, "a Japanese woman who spoke Chinese" to dinner was also seen as a sign of "friendliness" towards a source of curiosity by the locals.

In Xinghai, I was often portrayed as a "Japanese girl" (*Riben nuhaier* 日本女孩儿). As I spent more time in Xinghai, many locals told me that I was not a "typical Japanese woman" who, according to them, wears expensive brand-name clothing and a lot of make-up. In contrast, the locals often used the term *pushi* 朴实 (plain, simple, sincere, and honest) to describe me. Thus, whereas my nationality, namely Japanese, first triggered their interest to meet me in person, my not being a "typical Japanese" made it possible for me to further interact with them in casual settings.

It is through these interactions that I encountered the discourse of blood ties. For instance, a local resident who owns a Japanese school and sent many students and brides to Japan claimed, "Xinghai has familiar (*qinqie* 亲切) feelings toward Japan." Then he further explained that both the basis of this relationship and the motivation for people who want to go to Japan was based on blood ties between Japan and Xinghai. He said, "Japan and Xinghai have blood ties (*xueyuan guanxi* 血缘关系); almost all the families here in Xinghai have relatives in Japan. This is why many people from Xinghai go to Japan today; otherwise, people wouldn't go." The stories of blood ties were also observable on other occasions. A former local government official, who was running a Japanese language school, told me that of the relationship between Xinghai and Japan, "just across the narrow strip of water, blood is thicker than water" (*yi yi dai shui, xue nong yu shui* 一衣带水血浓于水). He went on to explain that due to this unique relationship, one out of four families in Xinghai had relatives living in Japan, a factor that further made women in Xinghai willing to marry Japanese men.

Importantly, the locals did not see blood ties as the natural product of a benevolent past colonial relationship between Japan and Manchuria. One night, I was having dinner with a local couple in their early thirties. The wife identified herself as the third-generation descendant of a war orphan; however, the Japanese government did not officially accept her grandmother's documentation as proof of her status as a war orphan. Nonetheless, she was still hoping to receive official permission to go to Japan with her Chinese husband. During the dinner, she explained, "The relationship between Japan and Xinghai is really unique (*teshu* 特殊). My grandmother is Japanese, and there is a blood tie between the communities." Yet, as time went on with beer and food, her husband started referring to the horrifying behavior of the Japanese against Chinese during the war, such as the Nanjing massacre and Unit 731. He claimed, "Can you believe that human begins were called "*maruta*" (log) and used for brutal experiments?" He was also critical of the recent textbook controversy and Japanese prime ministers visiting the Yasukuni Shrine. Nonetheless, he argued, Chinese people had saved their enemies' children for humanitarian reasons, even though it was difficult to feed themselves at that time. As he put it, "Chinese people are the only people in world history who saved the children of their enemy." To him, the war orphans memorial also symbolized Chinese people's generous attitude toward the "enemy." In talking about the monument for the Japanese war orphans, he claimed, "Who in the world would make a monument for the enemy except Chinese?" According to him, the Chinese locals incorporated the war orphans into their families as children or as wives, and as a result, they created blood ties with Japan.[19]

The significant point for the local narrative was that the Chinese people "voluntarily" rescued war orphans because of their humanitarian spirit (*rendao zhuyi* 人道主义). Indeed, I repeatedly encountered informants who described Japan as having invaded northern China and saw Japanese as having plundered their land. In other words, for the locals, the Japanese nationals who migrated to Xinghai were also cruel "colonizers" (*zhiminzhe* 殖民者). Thus, it was their humanitarian labor that created subsequent blood ties with Japan. In other words, it was not because of the nature of Japanese colonialism that friendship and familiarity existed between the two peoples, but in spite of it. It was kindness on the Chinese side occurring after colonialism that forged today's transnational blood ties.

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

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

It was on my third visit to Xinghai in July 2011 when I learned more about the issue of "fake" (*jia* 假) war orphans. The issue of fake orphans was not a welcome topic in Xinghai, especially in front of visitors. During a dinner with several local informants

[19]All able-bodied Japanese men were recalled to join army forces in early August 1945.

whom I had met a number of times since my first visit, I asked them to explain more about how people have migrated to Japan since the 1980s. One of them identified himself as a "fake" orphan who went to Japan in 1995 using a counterfeit household status. After spending three and a half years in Japan with his Chinese wife and two children, he decided to come back to Xinghai. Since he does not have any plans to go back to Japan, it was easier for him to talk about his "fake" status.

If blood ties were established when the orphans were incorporated into Chinese families, they did not immediately have transnational implications. Close to a decade after the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972, the possibility for the orphans to return to Japan remained uncertain. It was only first in early 1980s when the orphans who were able to identify their blood relatives in Japan started returning to Japan. After the PRC announced its opening policy, people in Xinghai also gradually experienced the transformation, starting in the early 1990s. The narrative presented by several locals over dinner showed an interesting picture of transformation in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

According to local informants, in the 1970s and 1980s, those who married Japanese first- or second-generation orphans had not even thought about the possibility of going to Japan. They told me that those who married Japanese female orphans were usually poor farmers who could not afford to receive a Chinese bride. One local provided an interesting comparison: "marrying a Japanese woman at that time was like marrying a Vietnamese woman today."[20]

Moreover, with few exceptions, the local people had little knowledge of Japan at that time, even as some with orphan status began to depart in 1981. One local stated, "We had only heard that there were televisions in Japan." Another local added, "It was also because there was not the idea that making money is a good thing at that time; everyone was the same." The first generation of war orphans started retuning to Japan in the 1980s; the second generation also began departing for Japan in the late 1980s to early 1990s. It was at this time that those who went to Japan really began reporting back that the difference between Japan and Xinghai was huge. During the early 1990s, those who had departed were described as the "real" descendants of orphans, and they were not necessarily motivated by the goal of earning money in Japan.

However, through personal connections people gradually became aware that the daily income in Japan was far higher than even the monthly income in Xinghai. The difference appeared enormous. Starting in the mid-1990s, after most of the "real" second-generation orphans had left for Japan, "fake" second-generationers also started emigrating to Japan as well. Wang, a "former" fake second-generationer, told me that from 1996 to 1998 the majority of those who went to Japan were fake.

According to the local residents at dinner, during the 1980s and 1990s, it was easy to manually change one's household status (*hukou* 户口) from Chinese to being a Japanese offspring. If they went to the police station (*pai chu suo* 派出所) and paid about 50,000 RMB, the officers changed their status right away. If people had friends at the police station, it could be cheaper, but they had to buy gifts when they returned to Xinghai. However, whether real or fake, when they returned to Xinghai, they all came bearing

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

impressive amounts of gifts and money. For instance, this self-identified fake orphan confessed that when he came back to Xinghai for the first time from Japan, he spent 2,000,000 yen in total to buy gifts for his relatives and friends in Xinghai. However, this era came to an end when Japanese local government officials started uncovering fraudulent orphan families, some of whom were deported and are now back in Xinghai. Since then, it has gradually become more difficult to counterfeit one's status, and with the introduction of a new computer-based *hukou* system, it is almost impossible to change a person's status manually. Consequently, marriage migration through brokers is now seen as the easiest way to go to Japan today.

I asked when people started to talk about blood ties between Xinghai and Japan. One local person said, "In the 1980s, when some war orphans started going back to Japan, no one actually wanted to go to Japan at that time. Among the second-generation orphans, usually single, unmarried people went to Japan." Apparently, going to Japan was not necessarily welcomed, and the discourse of blood ties was not common. Nevertheless, as more people went to Japan, more locals ended up having relatives in Japan. When encountering friends or relatives coming back from Japan, the idea of blood ties came to be deployed to demonstrate closeness to Japan and mitigate hostile feelings. As one local put it, "Well, because almost everyone has relatives living in Japan, it is not nice to criticize Japan in front of them. So we talk about blood ties to stress familiarity between Xinghai and Japan."

Therefore, although "blood ties" were established in 1945 between war orphans and the locals in Xinghai, these blood ties themselves did not have any real significance at the time. War orphans were raised as "Chinese," or in cases when the locals knew their Japanese identity, some locals mocked them as "*xiao riben guizi*" (小日本鬼子, small Japanese devils) (Okubo 2006, 18). During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), revealing one's Japanese identity could be risky, for one would be suspected as a spy (Ide 2008).

However, through migration the image of Japan as "unfamiliar" or an "enemy" has gradually transformed into one described as "familiar," a "better place," and, further, as a place where "blood-related relatives" live. Those historical pasts and imaginings were, as the locals described, relatively recent in origin and even invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). In the past, the Japanese war orphans in their community had been concealed or bullied. Nonetheless, as historical, political, and economic contexts shifted, the meaning of the connection with Japanese war orphans also changed and was used for different purposes: to legitimate migration flows or even smooth relations with relatives or others who had been to Japan. Although the notion of blood ties is not completely socially invented—many locals do indeed have blood-related relatives in Japan—existing deployment of the concept is contingent and came to manifest itself in the community on the basis of a changing context.

For Money or Blood?

While the notion of blood ties is crucial to local understandings of contemporary marriage migration, not all of the local people viewed these marriages positively. Some locals even criticized those who married Japanese men by saying that "they are marrying for money and don't understand emotion" (*bu dong ganqing* 不懂感情). When I was

invited to dinner in the first week of my stay in Xinghai, one of the local people even responded to my question by saying, "That can be described in one word: money" (*jiu shi yige zi: qian* 就是一个字：钱).

The idea that Chinese women marry Japanese men for money was widespread in the community, and some women openly talked about it. I met Tang Xiaoli at a Japanese language school in March 2010. Xiaoli was in her late twenties, divorced from her Chinese husband, and had a seven-year-old son. She married a Japanese man in December 2009 and was at the time attending a language school while waiting for a spousal visa. She seemed to be really excited about going to Japan and asked me what kinds of jobs would be available for her.

In fact, the perception that one could go to Japan and find a job was not totally false. Especially during Japan's boom years, Japanese dependence on foreign workers made it feasible for those without linguistic skills to find a job and earn a decent wage. Many workers at the time also had multiple jobs. And the local economy of Xinghai benefited from the remittances of those who went to Japan. Recent research in this area (Yamashita et al. 2013) demonstrates that the remittances from those who went to Japan contributed to the local economy, in particular in the amount of savings held.[21]

Yet, knowing that Xiaoli was going to a town in the countryside of Japan and considering Japan's economic recession and her limited language skills, I was not optimistic about her chances of finding a job. However, she had heard many stories from her relatives, friends, and their friends that "people can earn 10,000 yen per day in Japan." Xiaoli left Xinghai in April 2010, called me from Japan, and expressed her frustration with not being able to find a job yet.

Another bride, also in her twenties but at a different language school, Xie Hui, was a young and charming woman with a number of boyfriends in Xinghai. When we were hanging out in the market, we often met male friends who would ask her to dinner. Yet, she confessed, she never seriously thought about marrying any of them. Her cousin had married a Japanese man a couple of years earlier and lived in Osaka. Seeing how whenever she came back home in Xinghai she brought nice gifts, Hui's father also asked the same broker to introduce a Japanese man to his daughter. Eventually, Hui married a man from Tokyo.

For younger Chinese brides, the conceptions of familiarity were manifested on yet a different scale. For many women, like Xiaoli and Hui, who did not always show an interest in the colonial past, familiarity with Japan was experienced on a more private level, through having relatives or friends in Japan. In many cases, due to geographic dispersion, brides would only meet their relatives in Japan infrequently once they themselves arrived. Nonetheless, women's familiarity with Japan was felt as more personal due to their actual relatedness with others already residing there, not because of community "blood ties" with war orphans whom some of them had never met. Because they would be marrying into a "familiar" place, Japanese men, seeming strangers they met only for a short time, came to be seen as marriageable persons. Indeed, many women did not feel there was

[21]Whereas local production was less than that of all of Harbin city, the local savings were twice as much as those of the entire city of Harbin. From 1980 to 2010, the savings at local banks increased by 357 percent (Yamashita et al. 2013).

anything terribly unconventional about marrying a Japanese man, as many of their friends and relatives had done so already.

For many Chinese women I met, "fake marriage" was not their goal. Put more precisely, none of them originally planned for what is commonly perceived as "fake" marriage, namely one where women run away as soon as they arrive in Japan. While earning money, they intended to (and many did) stay with their Japanese husbands.[22] That said, marriage to Japanese men and marriage migration provoked mixed feelings in the community. On the one hand, these marriages were often criticized as being motivated by money. Some Chinese women contributed to these images and, like Xiaoli, openly discussed the benefits of marrying Japanese men. Some local men joked that, since many young and pretty Chinese women were marrying Japanese men, the poor Chinese men had to go to Vietnam to find brides. On the other hand, marriage migration seemed to be, to some extent, accepted within the discourse of various forms of blood ties. Those who were not fond of marriage migration also employed the notion of blood ties to stress the unique connection between Xinghai and Japan, partially explaining why women are willing to marry Japanese men. Depending on the context, money or blood became the rationale to justify migration patterns.

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

Conclusion: Same Bed, Different Dreams?

On the surface I encountered seemingly similar terms, yet behind them were divergent meanings mobilized as part of very different strategies to legitimate the phenomenon of Japanese-Chinese cross-border marriages. In this memory site, historical subjectivity and colonial memories were reconstructed and, simultaneously, marital

[22]The meaning of "fake marriage" becomes blurred. If the existence of "love" determines the boundaries between fake and genuine marriages (cf. Eggebø 2013; Fernandez 2013), many Japanese-Chinese unions might be seen as "fake" marriages. However, when commitment to stay together, regardless of the existence of "love," is a form of marriage, many Chinese women did not see themselves engaging in a fake marriage.

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

Sara Friedman (2010b, 75) claims, due to the shared racial, ethnic, and linguistic features, as well as the threatening political tensions between Taiwan and mainland China, Chinese spouses marrying a Taiwanese person are positioned on the ambiguous boundaries between insider and outsider. Because of such ambiguity, however, she argues, citizenship policies highlight key differences otherwise hidden by their similarities (see also Friedman 2013). The tactical negotiation of differences and similarities or familiarities was also observable within Japanese-Chinese marriages, although in a converse manner. Whereas scholars have documented the ways in which differences between Japan and China were historically stressed (e.g., Tanaka 1993; Young 1998), the practices in these marriages of highlighting familiarity or "blood ties" reveals another set of historical dynamics that inform contemporary transnational linkages.

That said, it should be noted that the discourses of familiarity or "blood ties" did not always work at the immigration stage. These marriages could be easily denied by immigration officers pointing out other differences—not only cultural and linguistic dissimilarities, but also differences in age. In particular, the rejection rate for spousal visas from Xinghai anecdotally appeared to be higher than for other places in China. Many women in Xinghai also waited for longer than average (three to six months) to receive a spousal visa. Some women never obtained a visa. As local officials in Xinghai admitted to me, after the Japanese government discovered many cases of fake war orphans, overstayed workers, and fake marriages from Xinghai, the name "Xinghai" had become notorious at the immigration bureau in Japan. In particular, marriages brokered with women from Xinghai were often suspected as being motivated by money and thus "fake." Japanese-Chinese couples, especially those involving brides from Xinghai, thus had to work hard to craft their legitimacy and authenticity on paper, with copious evidence of visits, phone and e-mail conversations, and photos of moments together.[23]

All the same, this essay has sought to contribute to further complicating the logic of desire. Going beyond the discussions of "difference," "exotic others," or "possibilities of love" that generate imaginings and transnational desires, this essay demonstrates how the deployment of "familiarity" offers an alternative reading of transnational intimate relations. The conceptions of familiarity, although understood and deployed differently, shaped and reshaped the marriageability of certain others. Against this background,

[23]In order to receive a spousal visa, Chinese brides first had to obtain a certificate of residency from Japan and then a spousal visa from the Consulate-General of Japan in China. There were no personal interviews. In analyzing marriages between Taiwanese men and women from mainland China, Sara Friedman (2010a, 174) claims "the sign of authenticity index shared social understandings about what constitutes conventional marriage practices (how one courts and decides to marry) and proper deportment and appearance for a married women."

apparent strangers who had met only in the context of a short matchmaking meeting with the help of brokers and translators came to be perceived as appropriate potential spouses. The analysis of transnational marriages within East Asian contexts complicates discussion of the West-East dynamics where the fantasy for the West (or the East) plays a major role in reproducing power inequalities. This illustrates the ways in which multiple layered notions of familiarity, shaped by colonial legacies in East Asia, are at work in rendering transnational intimate relations possible.

Epilogue: A Further Wrinkle, the National-Local Disconnect

In early August 2011, a couple of weeks after I left for the United States, I encountered a Japanese newspaper article about Xinghai. It stated that the local government in Xinghai had established a monument for Japanese pioneer groups in late July 2011. They also held a ceremonial event, inviting people from Japan. The symbolic representation of "friendship" with Japan was severely criticized by people in other parts of China, particularly on the Internet. These critics argued that the establishment of the monument opposed China's basic national principles and values. Consequently the local government demolished the monument only ten days later. The Japanese newspaper article editorialized, "This incident showed that the generation who received anti-Japan education during the Jiang Zeming era remain a dominant population in Chinese society, and at the same time, it also revealed one aspect of Chinese society, which prioritizes national/ethnic emotion over laws."[24]

This incident also was featured in Chinese media. One Chinese media source ran an article entitled, "Xinghai: For the Japanese Pioneer Groups, [It] Embodied Chinese National Generosity."[25] Under this almost sarcastic title, the article continued with criticism of the memorial: "The Xinghai government built a memorial for the Japanese military invaders, in order to attract investment from Japan by spending 700,000 RMB." The article also cited attacks from the Internet: "Why do we need them [Japan] for the GDP?"; "For investment, what are we begging for?"; and "For little Japan's dirty money, are generous Chinese nationals shaking their tail and begging for pity while forgetting national humiliation and discarding dignity?" The local officials in Xinghai responded to such criticism by stating that the monument was not for economic purposes but for promoting peace and war remembrance. On the whole, however, the Xinghai government did not mount much of a challenge to their detractors and demolished the monument almost immediately.

The local narrative in Xinghai was engaging in what James V. Wertsch (2000, 525) calls a "dialogic relationship" with the national historical account. Wertsch argues that historical narratives are dialogic responses to other narratives, and responses might be clarification, rebuttals, friendly extensions, and so forth (525). Dissimilar historical narratives between people in Xinghai and Japan existed simultaneously, each seemingly in ignorance of the other, yet interacting through the space created by surface similarities. However,

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

the local historical narratives also remained in dialogue with another narrative, namely the national historical narrative. As Ted Swedenburg (1991, 175) states, mainstream nationalism has imprinted specific national histories in people's minds; however, many local versions of the past may exist "as long as they do not directly contradict the official story." The local narrative of Chinese people's generosity towards Japanese war orphans did not challenge national discourses of the wartime past. It highlighted Chinese munificence as the basis for current ties to Japan. Yet, when the surface similarities between this and the Japanese discourse of benevolent colonialism became visible on the national level, thus introducing a third audience, it became unsustainable.

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