International Journal of Asian Studies, **2**, 1 (2005), pp. 111–133 2004 Cambridge University Press
DOI: 10.1017|S1479591405000057 Printed in the United Kingdom

MARRIAGE IN TAIPEI CITY: REASONS FOR RETHINKING CHINESE DEMOGRAPHY

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The only pre-1950 Chinese cities for which reliable demographic records exist are those in Taiwan. Analysis of two samples of the records from Taipei City produces surprising results. Urban women were far less likely to marry than rural women and consequently had markedly lower fertility. This was due to a greater demand for female labor in the city but not because employment outside of the home freed women to refuse marriages arranged by their parents. Parental authority was as strong in the city as in the country. The difference was that given the possibility of remunerative employment for their daughters many parents chose to keep them at home rather than giving them to another family in marriage.

> [L]ow and declining urban-reproduction rates suggest that the city is not conducive to the traditional type of family life, including the rearing of children . . . In cities mothers are more likely to be employed, lodgers are more frequently part of the household, marriage tends to be postponed, and the proportion of single and unattached people is greater.
>
> Louis Wirth, 1938[1]

For the historical demographer and family historian, the most important Chinese cities are not in China, but in Taiwan. The evidence needed to reconstruct family forms and population dynamics do not become available for any city in the People's Republic until 1964, long after the changes induced by the 1949 revolution had fundamentally altered social conditions throughout the country.[2] In Taiwan, by contrast, the evidence the historian requires appears sixty years earlier, in 1905, when social conditions on the island were still a recognizable version of those characteristic of late traditional China. Moreover, this evidence is of exceptionally high quality, arguably the best available for any society.

The Taiwanese evidence is of two kinds – island-wide censuses conducted in 1905, 1910, 1915, 1920, 1930, and 1935, and household registers established in 1905 and maintained through to 1945. Both are creations of the Japanese colonial administration

1 Wirth 1938, pp. 20–21.

2 See Bannister 1987.

and evince the meticulous – and sometimes harsh – methods of a government determined, on the one hand, to demonstrate that it could govern a colony as effectively as any European power, and, on the other, to control a population with a well-earned reputation for rebelliousness. The household registers were, in fact, police registers, created by a system that required household heads to report within ten days all events that altered the composition of their household. These events included adoptions as well as births, divorces as well as marriages, and the loss of members by family division as well as by death.

In *Colonial Development and Population on Taiwan*, George Barclay reports findings that appear to confirm many generalizations made by Louis Wirth, pioneer in the study of urban demography. There is, Barclay argues, evidence of "a clear-cut distinction" in marriage rates "between the people in the major cities and those in the surrounding countryside."

> When all the cities that were of Municipal rank in 1935 are grouped together, and the remainder of the population collected in another group, the women in cities are found to have lagged behind the others by a considerable margin in getting married. The gap in proportions married was greatest for the young women in the age interval 20–24, narrowing with advancing age.[3]

Barclay's calculations, reproduced in Table 1, deserve a great deal more attention than they have received. "A clear-cut distinction" between urban and rural marriage rates suggests that the most widely accepted models of late traditional China's demographic regime are in need of revision.[4] Built as they are on rural research like John Lossing Buck's famous Farm Survey, they assume that almost all Chinese women married, and married young.[5]

This assumption, in turn, depends on the common perception that "the rural component of Chinese civilization was more or less uniform . . . It was like the net in which the cities and towns of China were suspended . . . the stuff of Chinese civilization, sustaining it

Table 1. Percent of Taiwanese women currently married in 1925 and 1935 by age and residence inside or outside major cities

	1925		1935	
Age	Inside cities	Outside cities	Inside cities	Outside cities
15–19	24.4	29.4	23.9	28.3
20–24	73.3	83.5	73.8	82.4
25–29	85.9	93.5	87.3	93.7
30–34	87.2	92.7	87.6	93.1
35–39	83.4	88.3	84.6	90.1
40–44	74.8	80.1	78.6	83.5
45–49	63.0	68.9	69.1	75.0

Source: George W. Barclay, *Colonial Development and Population in Taiwan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), Table 72, p. 233.

3 Barclay 1954, pp. 233–34.

4 For a recent summary of this model see Harrell 1995.

5 See Barclay *et al.* 1976.

and giving it its fundamental character."[6] From a different perspective, G. William Skinner undercut any sharp division between China's rurality and urbanness by emphasizing their gradation in a smoothly nested hierarchy of central places.[7] Much subsequent research has emphasized that family law was widely and forcefully implemented, resulting in remarkable uniformities in kinship and gender behavior throughout the imperium. Given the sparsity of demographic evidence for urban life, it made sense to guess that urban women were like their rural sisters.

Barclay's and our own evidence, however, shows that women in cities married later and at lower frequencies than rural ones. They therefore suggest that an alternative model is needed to take account of population dynamics in Chinese cities. Because China was so highly urbanized – an estimated 8 percent of the population of the country in the 1840s and a much higher proportion of the population in regions like the Yangtze and Pearl River deltas[8] – distinctively lower urban marriage rates for women would require significant revisions in demographic conclusions based on the model assuming their universal marriage. China may conform better to Wirth's generalizations about rural-urban distinctiveness than many decades of scholarship have assumed.

The major problem in constructing such models is that it is not clear how far urban marriage rates "lagged behind" rural ones. Barclay is uncertain. He presents Table 1 as evidence that "the extent of marriage among women in [Taiwan's] cities is one of the principal features that set them off from the rural sections." But he then qualifies his position substantially, suggesting that "the sharpness of the difference is misleading, and gives an impression of contrast between country and city that is unwarranted."[9] His calculations, reproduced in Table 2, show that cities appear less distinctive when compared with their own hinterlands than they do when compared with rural districts in general.

> The notion of "urban" as distinct from agrarian conditions does not accurately characterize cities that are so little urbanized as those in Taiwan. Some of the difference in [Table 1] comes, not from their distinctness as cities, but from the characteristics of people in their surrounding areas. It turns out that cities were less unlike the rural sections of the island when they are compared with those parts from which they drew many of their people (see [Table 2]). One city actually had a *higher* proportion of its women 20–34 married than the rest of the Prefecture in which it was located.[10]

In this paper we will use data drawn from household registers to argue that Barclay is too cautious.[11] In our view the figures displayed in Table 1 are misleading, but in the

6 Mote 1977, p. 150.

7 See Skinner 1977.

8 Skinner 1977, p. 28.

9 Barclay 1954, p. 234.

10 Barclay 1954, pp. 234–35.

11 These registers are described in detail in Wolf and Huang 1980, pp. 25–33. The book also contains descriptions of the various forms of marriage and adoption practiced in northern Taiwan during the period covered by this paper. Further analysis of these institutions is available in Wolf 1995.

Table 2. Percent of Taiwanese women aged 20–34 currently married in 1925 and 1935 by residence inside or outside major cities

	1925		1935	
City	Inside cities	Outside cities	Inside cities	Outside cities
Taipei	76.2	88.4	76.1	88.3
Chilung	79.0	88.4	84.0	88.3
Hsinchu	84.7	87.3	84.0	87.2
Taichung	86.8	90.2	86.1	89.8
Changhua	85.5	90.2	87.1	89.8
Tainan	80.2	92.2	78.6	92.1
Chiayi	86.1	92.2	87.5	92.1
Kaohsiung	87.9	87.6	87.1	85.8
P'ingtung	87.1	87.6	85.7	85.8

Source: George W. Barclay, *Colonial Development and Population in Taiwan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), Table 73, p. 234.

direction of underestimating rather than overestimating the difference between city and country. An advantage of using Taiwan's household registers to test this argument is that rates can be built up from individual cases, thus freeing the analysis from boundaries set for convenience by the census taker. A disadvantage is that because handcrafting data sets from individual cases is slow, demanding work, the analysis cannot cover all the ground covered by a census. One has to make strategic choices. Ours has been to focus our efforts on Taipei City because it is Taiwan's largest city and because we have done extensive field work in the city and its environs.[12]

Taipei City emerged as an amalgam of three urban places – Meng-chia, Ta-tao-ch'eng, and Tai-pei-fu. Meng-chia is the oldest member of the triad. It began life as a trading post in the seventeenth century, grew as the Han population of the Taipei Basin grew, and came of age as an urban place with the founding of the famous Lung-shan temple in 1741. The Tao-kuang period, 1831–1850, was Meng-chia's golden age. Contemporary sources depict Tao-kuang Meng-chia as "crowded with four and five thousand houses and with merchant ships." It was then "a city in full flourish."[13] In his history of Meng-chia, Ikeda Toshio notes that during the Tao-kuang period almost all commercial traffic in northern Taiwan passed through the city. Its streets were "splendid."

> Ta-ch'i-k'ou, Wang-kung-kuan-k'ou, and Hu-wei-tu-t'ou were lined with the masts of junks. Au-tao-ah *chieh*, near Ta-ch'i-k'ou, was the center of the gay quarters. The streets there shone brightly every night. The courtesan's music and songs were sad. Stores were open at night in Ting-hsin *chieh* and Hsia-hsin *chieh* where soldiers, officials, wealthy merchants, and many others strolled.[14]

12 See Gates 1987.

13 Ikeda 1944, p. 374.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 234–35.

Until the 1860s Ta-tao-ch'eng was just a river-bank village two miles downstream from Meng-chia. There was an anchorage, but "most boats went on to Meng-chia." When a man named Lin Lang-t'ien moved there from Keelung and built a store "there were paddy fields in front and paddy fields in back."[15] Then, later in the same year, the situation changed dramatically, primarily as a result of ethnic strife. In Meng-chia the most lucrative jobs and the best building sites were monopolized by immigrants from the so-called "Three Counties" in Fukien's Ch'uan-chou Prefecture – Chin-chiang, Hui-an, and Nan-an. Although immigrants from T'ung-an on the Ch'uan-chou/Chang-chou border constituted a substantial minority, they were confined to menial, poor-paying jobs. They were not even allowed to work as stevedores on the riverfront docks. Resentful, they revolted and were driven out of the city, moving downstream to Ta-tao-ch'eng where they joined with immigrants from Chang-chou to create the basis of a new city.

The timing was propitious. What Robert Gardella calls "the second tea revolution" reached Taiwan in the 1860s.[16] The leader, John Dodd, an American entrepreneur, attempted to establish tea-processing facilities in Meng-chia, but was forced out of the city by the conservative leaders of its three great clans – Huang, Wu, and Lin. He therefore followed the T'ung-an rebels downstream to Ta-tao-ch'eng where he led the way in creating a thriving international trade. Between 1869 and 1898 Taiwan's tea exports grew from 720,234 lbs to 20,532,407 lbs, almost all of which was processed and packed in Ta-tao-ch'eng.[17,18] The result was that it quickly replaced Meng-chia as northern Taiwan's wealthiest city and its commercial capital.

The third member of the triad was T'ai-pei-fu – a walled city built in the paddy fields between Meng-chia and Ta-tao-ch'eng.[19] It became the ranking administrative center in northern Taiwan in 1875, the temporary provincial capital in 1886, and finally the provincial capital in 1894. It contained a Confucian temple, government offices, schools, and barracks, but only a few residences and even fewer commercial establishments. When the Japanese seized Taiwan in 1895 a large part of the area within T'ai-pei-fu's walls was still occupied by paddy fields and vegetable gardens. It was here that the Japanese constructed the office buildings from which they governed Taiwan and from which it is still governed today.

The evidence we use to reexamine marriage rates in Taipei City consists of household registers compiled in 1905–45 in five neighborhoods in Ta-tao-ch'eng and three in Meng-chia (see Map 1). We include no evidence from T'ai-pei-fu or from the new Japanese-style neighborhoods built after 1895. Thus our figures are not representative of the city as defined in the census reports that are the basis of Barclay's calculations. They are, however, representative of the oldest and most commercialized parts of the city. In theoretical terms, we are missing those parts of the city created by the tributary mode of production with its government offices, military barracks, and administrative housing. What we have is a good

15 Wang 1996, pp. 43–45.

16 See Gardella 1994.

17 Davidson 1903, p. 394.

18 For a recent account of the tea industry in Ta-tao-ch'eng, see Ch'en 1999.

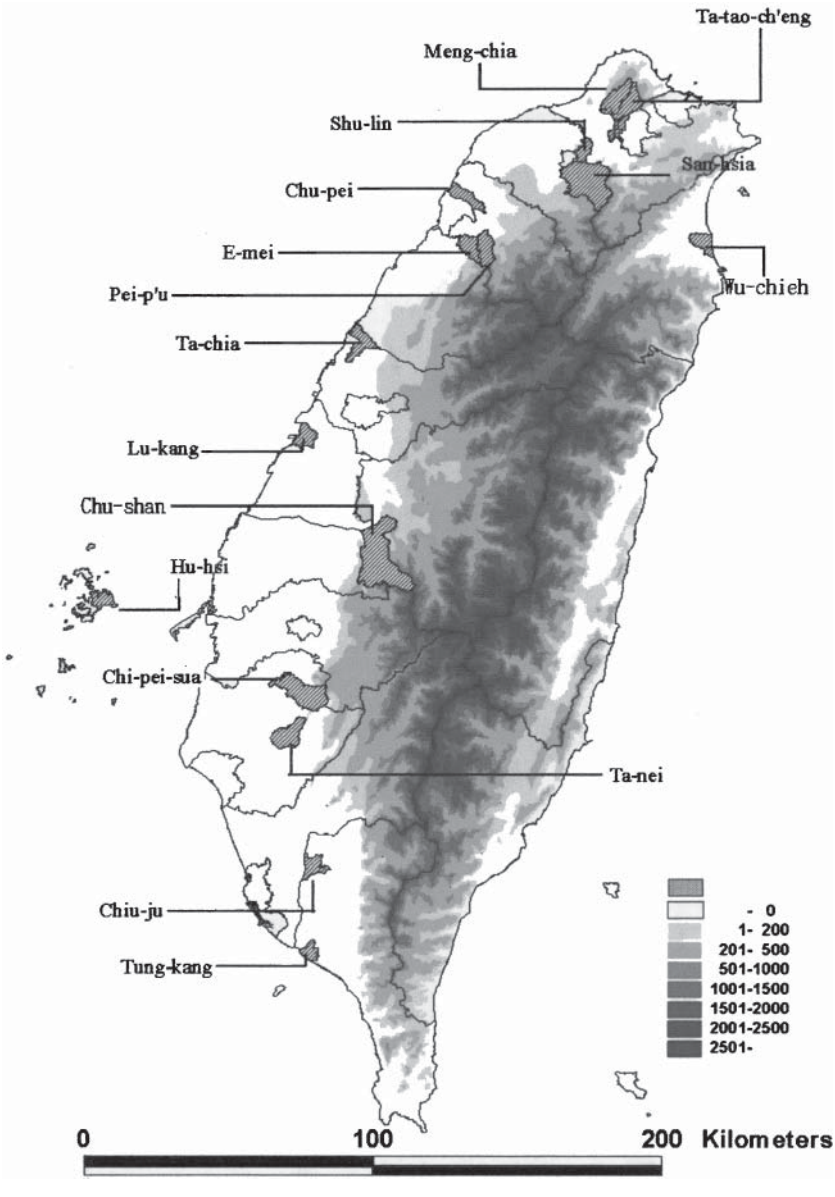
19 The founding of Ta-tao-ch'eng is recounted in detail in Lamley 1977.

Map 1. Taipei City in 1914

sample of those parts created by the petty capitalist mode of indigenous merchants, artisans, shopkeepers and laborers.[20]

We use two sets of rural household registers to assess the distinctiveness of Taipei City's marriage pattern – one set from within Taipei Prefecture and one from more rural prefectures to the south. The first set consists of all the registers compiled for two small towns and eleven villages located in San-hsia *chen* and Shu-lin *chen* on the middle reaches of the Ta-k'e-k'en River a few miles southwest of Taipei City (see Map 2). This is an area of the Taipei Basin known since Ch'ing times as Hai-shan. Wang Shih-ch'ing's study of river transport in the Taipei Basin demonstrates that it was an integral part of an economic

20 See Gates 1996, pp. 13–41.



Map 2. Location of Rural Field Sites

system centered first in Meng-chia and later in Ta-tao-cheng.[21] In the 1890s one of the villages included in our study had "more than thirty red-headed cargo boats" devoted to river transport. The goods transported included lumber, charcoal, and rice wine, but the most important by far was tea from the hills along the southwestern rim of the Taipei Basin.

Our second rural sample consists of all the households in twenty-one villages outside of the Taipei Basin and well beyond the reach of Taipei City. Eighteen of these are located in

21 See Wang 1996, pp. 43–45 and 92–93.

Chu-pei *chen*, E-mei *hsiang*, and Pei-pu *hsiang* in Hsin-chu *hsien* and three in Chu-shan *hsiang* in Yun-lin *hsien* (see Map 2).[22] They are communities of the kind included in John Lossing Buck's famous Farm Survey and thus represent the rural populations that gave rise to the view that with very few exceptions Chinese women married, and married at an early age.

Barclay concludes an extended discussion of fertility by arguing that "over the island as a whole . . . it is not possible to explain the variation that existed in fertility by saying that it reflected differences in the desire or opportunities of women to marry." He has, however, to admit one exception, Taipei City, where "it does appear that conditions preventing women from being married may have offered some interference with their childbearing."

> Many of its women avoided marriage and abstained from remarriage, and gross reproduction rates there were the lowest of Districts or cities . . . Taipei's low fertility might even be said to have depended on preventing potential mothers from marrying, for those who did marry exceeded the rural women of the same Prefecture in childbearing – the gross reproduction rate for *married* women in Taipei City was very slightly higher than that for the remainder of the Prefecture in 1935. Lower fertility, *where found*, was hence not a matter of fewer children among the married, but of absence of children among those who did not marry."[23]

Barclay expresses his puzzlement at this unexpected finding in the oddly contradictory terms he uses to describe it. Were women "prevented" from marrying? Or did they "avoid" or "abstain from" it? It was not Barclay's job as a demographer to clarify their intentions, but an interpretation of them will enter our argument shortly.

We will leave until another time the question of whether or not Taipei's low fertility was entirely due to its low marriage rate. Our concern here is the magnitude of the marriage rate. Figure 1 addresses the question of how many women "avoided marriage" by comparing the probability of ever marrying by age fifty in our three populations. To eliminate the possibility that differences between these populations are due to differential migration by widows and divorcees we have limited our sample to women who appear in the household registers by age twenty. Thus women born before 1885 and those who moved into one of our sites after age twenty are not included. The only remaining sources of error are women who were born after 1885 and widowed or divorced before 1905 and women who were widowed or divorced and then moved into one of our study sites before age twenty. The number cannot be very large.

As was to be expected given the evidence reproduced in Table 2, the difference between Taipei City and Hai-shan is less than the difference between Taipei City and our other rural localities. We do not, however, accept this as evidence that Taipei was "little urbanized." In

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22 We are indebted for the use of these data to our long-time friend and colleague Chuang Ying-chang who has done research in all these communities. Chuang and Arthur Wolf serve as co-directors of a project aimed at computerizing and analyzing an island-wide sample of household registers. Map 2 notes all the sites included in the study. The work is now part of the Historical Demography Project of the Academia Sinica's Tsai Yuan-pei Center for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

23 Barclay 1954, p. 253.

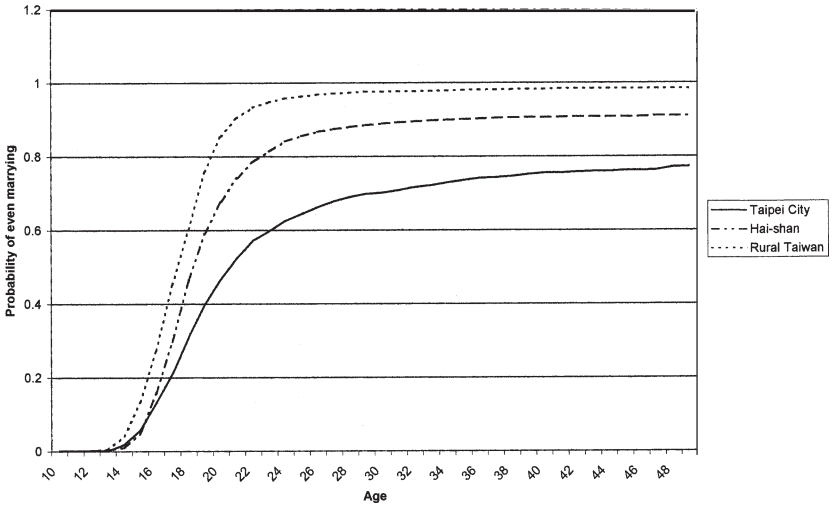

Figure 1. Cumulative probability of ever marrying by age

our view, marriages in Taipei City and Hai-shan are more alike because, in many respects, Hai-shan was part of Taipei City. The similarity stands as evidence that the entire Taipei Basin was highly urbanized. The city itself was not large by contemporary standards, but it cast a distinctly urban shadow over its surroundings. We should not, in Louis Wirth's words, "identify urbanism with the physical entity of the city, viewing it merely as rigidly delimited in space, and proceed as if urban activities abruptly ceased to be manifested beyond an arbitrary boundary line."[24]

Figure 1 demonstrates beyond all doubt that women in Taipei City did not conform to the norms that governed marriage in rural China. Whether one takes Hai-shan or our more distant rural localities as the standard, the difference between Taipei City and rural Taiwan is huge. Where the probability of marriage by age twenty-five was 0.841 in Hai-shan and 0.958 in our more rural population, it was only 0.625 among women living in Taipei City. And it was not just that women in the city married later than women in the rural areas. A surprisingly large proportion never married. Where the probability of ever marrying by age fifty was 0.984 in our rural localities and 0.910 in Hai-shan, it was 0.772 in Taipei City. This is larger than the differences that led John Hajnal to distinguish between marriage in Europe and "the rest of the world."[25]

Figures 2 and 3 address the question of how many Taipei City women "abstained from remarriage" by comparing our three populations in terms of the probability of remarriage among women widowed or divorced before age thirty. The figures show that while the differences between Hai-shan and our rural populations are less marked in the case of remarriage than marriage, the differences between Taipei City and the other two populations are even more marked. In fact, they are enormous. For widows the probability of remarriage within two years was 0.672 in our rural population, 0.695 in Hai-shan, and only

24 Wirth 1938, p. 4.

25 See Hajnal 1965.

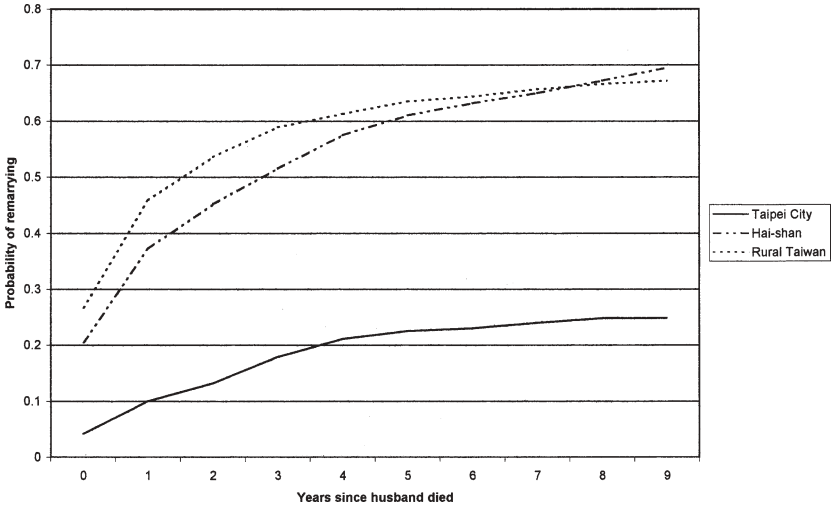

Figure 2. Cumulative probability of remarrying among women widowed before age 35

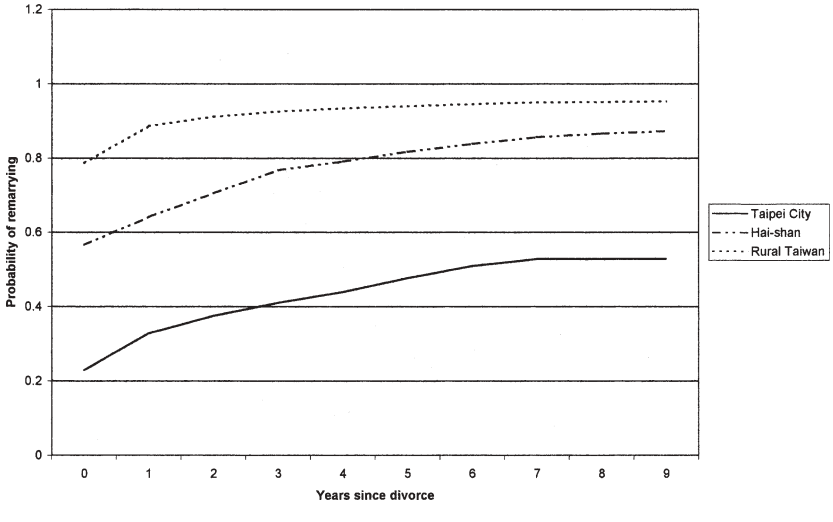

Figure 3. Cumulative probability of remarrying among women divorced before age 35

0.248 in Taipei City. For divorcees the probability was 0.953 in our rural population, 0.872 in Hai-shan, and only 0.528 in Taipei City. We have therefore to conclude that whatever the forces were that made marriage unavoidable for most Chinese women, they were weakened or countermanded by conditions in Taipei City. The next question is: what were those conditions? Were they conditions peculiar to Taipei City? Or were they conditions that are likely to have obtained in other Taiwanese cities and perhaps Chinese cities generally? In other words, what lesson does Taipei teach?

The possibility that women in Taipei failed to marry because they could find no one to marry can be eliminated. In 1905 the sex ratio was 110 in Meng-chia and 114 in Ta-tao-ch'eng. Since many of the men were Chinese or Japanese sojourners, the ratio was

not so favorable for women who insisted on a Taiwanese husband. But even if there was a shortage of Taiwanese men in the city, this could easily have been made good by drawing on the surplus of men in the nearby countryside. Barclay's analysis of the census reports shows that "the chances of surviving through infancy and childhood had been extremely poor for girls born before 1895, and that this handicap disappeared only gradually in later years."

> As a result, by the time they were nearing age 20 – the range when most of them married – there were not enough women to furnish wives for the eligible men . . . In 1905, for example, there were more than 20 surplus males for every 100 females in the age group 15–19.[26]

Our explanation of Taipei's low marriage rate was suggested by the large number of girls and women employed by the tea industry in Ta-tao-ch'eng. In the late 1890s an American journalist, James Davidson, counted "about one hundred and fifty Tea manufactures, big and small, in Twatutia [Ta-tao-ch'eng], besides the half dozen foreign establishments." The largest firms employed "from one hundred to three hundred Tea picking girls during the busy months; but, if there is much tea on hand and it is desired to rush matters, the number of tea pickers, working in one establishment, may reach, for a few days, four or five hundred." Davidson estimated that on average the total number of women daily employed in Ta-tao-ch'eng exceeded "some twelve thousand." "During the summer months, nothing is more striking than the crowds of girls, who at noon and night simply overrun the place."[27]

According to Davidson, these women were "paid each day according to the amount of work done." The average worked earned from "9 to 10 cents per day, 'a bright worker' as much as 15 cents."[28] This was less than half the amount earned by male workers, but it was enough to support a woman living alone and could make the difference between a family's going hungry and getting by. We therefore hypothesized that Taipei's low marriage and remarriage rates were partly, perhaps even entirely, byproducts of the tea industry. This may have been because the industry created alternatives for young women who did not want to marry and older women who, having married, did not want to try it again. Or it may have been because the industry gave parents the possibility of enlarging their income by sending their unmarried daughters and widowed daughters-in-law to work as tea sorters. In either case the result would have been that marriage was delayed and sometimes forgone.

To test this hypothesis we examined the household registers to determine the occupations of women who failed to marry by age thirty. Unfortunately, most of the registers only record the occupations of household heads, so our sample is limited to female-headed households and may not be representative of the population of women who married late or failed to marry. Nonetheless, it testifies to a strong link between employment in the tea industry and propensity to marry. Our sample of 320 women who failed to marry by age

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26 Barclay 1954, p. 212.

27 Davidson 1903, pp. 385–86.

28 Davidson 1903, p. 385.

thirty includes 141 women – 46.2 percent of the total – whose registered occupation was tea sorter. These women were among the hundreds of women Davidson observed crowding the streets of Ta-tao-ch'eng during the tea season.

We began our work in Taipei City with the Ta-tao-ch'eng household registers. Thus, when we discovered that marriage rates there were exceptionally low, it was natural to attribute them to the tea industry's employing large numbers of women and girls. We still think this attribution was correct, but it led to a mistake. Barclay's discussion of fertility suggests that Taipei City was a special place. It was, in his view, only in Taipei City that "conditions preventing women from being married may have offered some interference with their childbearing."[29] This, we surmised, was primarily due to Ta-tao-ch'eng's very particular connection with the tea industry. In other words, we accepted Barclay's characterization of Taipei as a special place and attributed this to the tea industry. The fact that tea sorters were so visible made the argument appear more plausible than it really was. Davidson describes the beginning of the tea picking season as like "the opening of the social season."

> . . . a younger sister is brought out with considerable *eclat*, not unlike that of the debut of a young lady attending her first social function at home . . . The best clothes are none too good, and her toilet is most carefully prepared. The coiffure is oftimes a work of art and is extensively decorated with the strongly scented blossoms of the magnolia, while, with her feet bound up in the very smallest compass, she is prepared to dazzle the community.[30]

We only discovered our mistake when we shifted the focus of our research effort upstream from Ta-tao-ch'eng to Meng-chia. Knowing that there were no tea-processing or packing facilities in Meng-chia, we expected to find marriage rates substantially higher than in Ta-tao-ch'eng. Instead, we found the rates displayed in Figures 4, 5, and 6, which, if one averages the remarriage rates, are almost exactly the same as the rates found in Ta-tao-ch'eng. Our initial reaction was to think that this was because many women in Meng-chia worked as tea sorters in Ta-tao-ch'eng. It is less than two miles from Meng-chia's Lung-shan temple to Ta-tao-ch'eng's tea sheds. Thus it was reasonable to suppose that many Meng-chia residents walked or bicycled to tea-sorting jobs. The fact is, however, that this was rare. The women whose occupations were recorded in the household registers included only two tea sorters. What, then, were Meng-chia women doing that prevented them from marrying?

In 1942 an amateur historian, Huang Liang-ch'uan, published in the *Minzoku Taiwan* a sentimental account of the great mansions of old Meng-chia.[31] By then they were almost all in an advanced state of decay, their once magnificent gardens occupied by poor squatters. "Where," Huang asks, "could a traveller find evidence of the days when Meng-chia was a great city?" "Nowhere," he answers, "if [the traveller] did not did know the history of the city." Meng-chia's decline was not entirely due to Ta-tao-ch'eng's rise. Silting destroyed the port on which the city's once prosperous trade depended, and the creation of T'ai-pei-fu

29 Barclay 1954, p. 253.

30 Davidson 1903, pp. 385–86.

31 Huang 1942.

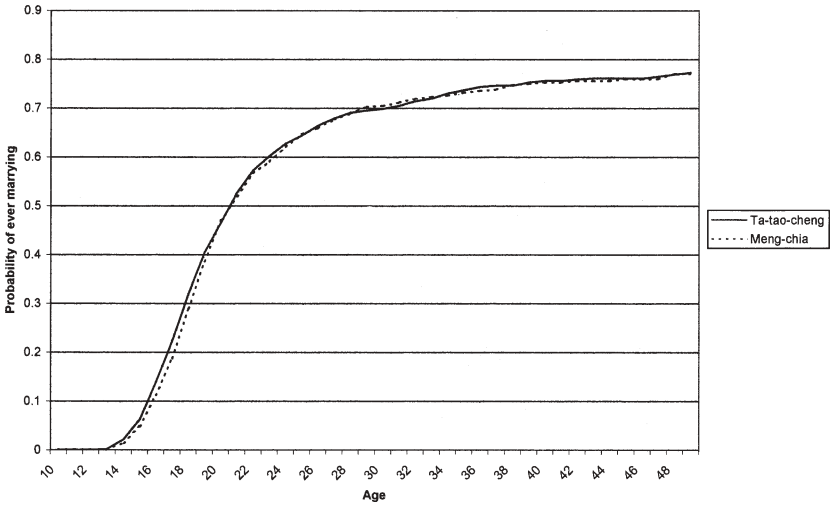

Figure 4. Cumulative probability of ever marrying in Ta-tao-cheng and Meng-chia

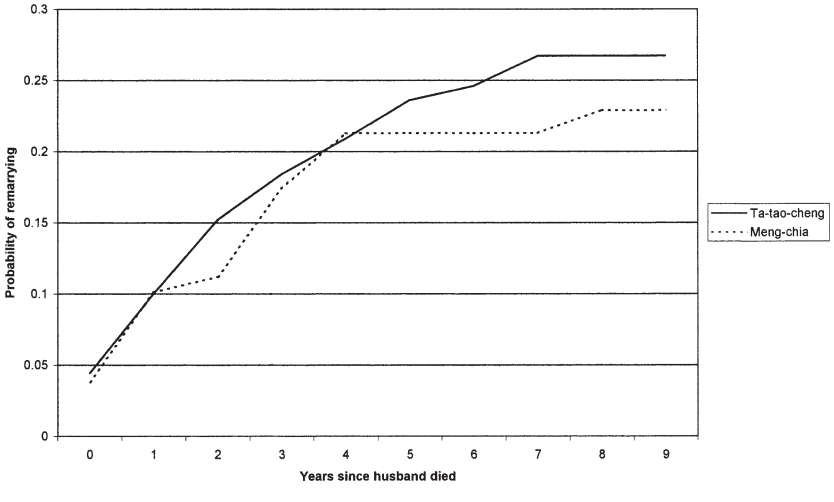

Figure 5. Cumulative probability of remarrying among women widowed before age 35 in Ta-tao-cheng and Meng-chia

deprived it of government offices and many of its wealthiest residents. After 1880 the city's economy largely depended on wood products and prostitution. Silting did not prevent landing logs on the waterfront, and the old mansions were easily recycled as brothels. According to Huang, Meng-chia's brothels, the fame of which led to the city's being renamed Wan-hua, "Ten Thousand Flowers," were mostly located in the area once occupied by the homes of high officials.[32]

32 It is likely that a large proportion of the women employed in these brothels were adopted daughters. In the 1930s Li T'eng-yu surveyed 105 *geisha* and 57 *shakufu* and found that 92 of the *geisha* and 57 of the *shakufu* were adopted daughters. See Li 1943.

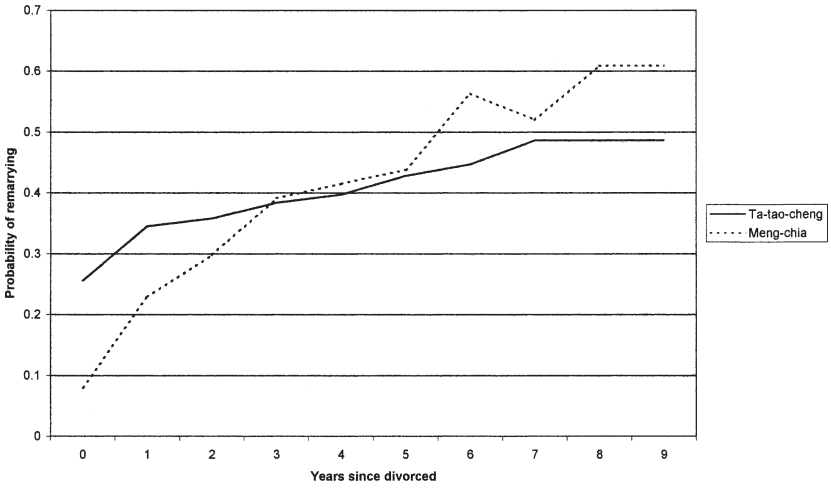

Figure 6. Cumulative probability of remarrying among women divorced before age 35 in Ta-tao-cheng and Meng-chia

It is impossible to determine how many women were employed in Meng-chia's gay quarters, but the city's reputation argues that it was a very large number. Davidson's account of the mainland tea specialists who came to work in Ta-tao-ch'eng every spring suggests that they spent much of their time and most of their money in Meng-chia's brothels.[33] Prostitution was not, however, the only employment the Meng-chia offered women. The city also developed a number of handicraft industries employing women, most notably silver plating for jewelry – bracelets, necklaces, hair ornaments, and the like. Forty-six of the 148 never-married women included in our Meng-chia sample were registered as *yin-chih-t'ieh*, "silver platers." Table 3 shows that they were almost as common in Meng-chia as tea sorters were in Ta-tao-ch'eng.

Table 3 also lists the occupations of eight Meng-chia women as "money lender." We suspect that this occupation was a spin-off from Meng-chia's sex trade. Discreet private investment by women was found everywhere but may have been particularly common in Meng-chia because the madams and their staff were women.[34] It likely that the sex trade is also responsible for the larger number of seamstresses listed in Table 3. The table also suggests, not surprisingly, that women in Meng-chia could find work as laundresses, cooks, waitresses, and, if nothing else, as laborers. Prostitutes, madams, money lenders, silver platers, laundresses, and laborers – the list argues that one reason women in Meng-chia did not walk to Ta-tao-ch'eng to work as tea sorters was because there were ample employment opportunities closer to home. With all this work, Meng-chia's marriage rates were as low as Ta-tao-ch'eng's.

We suggest that, like Taipei, many – not necessarily all – Chinese cities offered subsistence careers for women other than marriage. As a consequence, the urban marriage will generally have been lower than the rural rate. We can say with confidence that this was the

33 Davidson 1903, p. 385.

34 See Gates 1991.

Table 3. Occupations of female household heads in Ta-tao-ch'eng and Meng-chia

Occupation	Ta-tao-ch'eng Number of women	Percent of total	Meng-chia Number of women	Percent of total
Boarding house	2	0.7	4	2.8
Craftsperson	5	1.7	0	—
Cook	2	0.7	2	1.4
Laborer	16	5.3	9	6.3
Laundress	9	3.0	2	1.4
Masseur	2	0.7	0	—
Money lender	0	—	8	5.6
Silver platers	2	0.7	46	33.7
Seamstress	91	29.8	56	39.4
Shopkeeper	8	2.7	1	0.7
Tea sorter	141	46.2	2	1.4
Wai-tress	2	0.7	1	0.7

Note: Table includes all occupations with two or more persons in either locality. "Percent of total" refers to percent of total recorded occupations. These totals are 305 in Ta-tao-ch'eng and 148 in Meng-chia.

Table 4. Comparison of the vital characteristics of Taiwan's nine largest cities in 1930

Cities in order of size	Size in 1930	Proportion women never married in 1935	Rural/urban difference in proportion married in 1935*	Growth rate 1920 to 1940	Sex ratio 15–39
Taipei	215,307	76.1	12.2	2.05	106
Tainan	91,307	78.6	13.5	1.97	110
Chilung	69,878	84.0	4.3	2.07	112
Kaohsiung	60,725	87.1	−1.3	3.56	120
Chiayi	56,190	87.5	4.6	2.58	112
Taichung	52,645	86.1	3.7	2.92	115
Hsinchu	44,463	84.0	3.2	1.76	101
Changhua	42,724	87.1	2.7	1.67	102
P'ingtung	33,731	85.7	0.1	2.55	11

Source: George W. Barclay, *Colonial Development and Population in Taiwan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), Tables 24, 30, and 73, pp. 116, 127, and 234.
*The rural women are the women living in the countryside belonging to the administrative district in which each city is located. The difference in proportions is the proportion of rural women currently married minus the proportion of urban women currently married.

situation in Taiwan. Table 4 shows that when the island's nine largest cities are ordered by size from largest to smallest the result is a regularly diminishing difference between urban and rural marriage rates. The only exception is Kaohsiung, but it was an exceptional city in many respects. It was new, growing fast, and had an acute shortage of women. The strongest evidence for our hypothesis is that Taiwan's oldest and second largest city, Tainan, had a marriage rate very like the rate found in Taipei.

Louis Wirth includes among "the distinctive features of urban life" "the weakening of the bonds of kinship," "the declining social significance of the family," and "the undermining of the traditional basis of social solidarity." A low reproduction rate and a tendency

to postpone marriage are, in his view, merely "objective indices" of these fundamental features of urban life. This view of urban life suggests an explanation of our central finding. The possibility of employment outside the home lowered women's probability of marrying because it undermined parental authority. With the possibility of earning an independent income, many women insisted on arranging their own marriages, the result being that they married later and sometimes not at all. It is a plausible argument, especially to a sociologist of Wirth's generation. A more informed argument, however, takes into account the documented strength of Chinese parental authority.[35] Given the possibility of finding remunerative employment for their daughters, many parents might have chosen to delay their marriages and perhaps even retain their services indefinitely. People had always to be concerned to have someone to support them in their old age and provide for their souls after death.[36] The fact that urbanism delayed marriage in Chinese as well as Western cities does not mean that it was delayed for the same reasons. It could be that what Wirth would have seen as evidence of "the declining social significance of the family" should actually be seen as evidence of its stubborn persistence.

The great advantage of working with household registers rather than censuses is that they contain the evidence needed to decide between such possibilities. One can reconstruct the composition of people's families to ferret out the forces that set the course of their lives. The critical evidence in the case of the question just posed is the composition of women's sibling sets as they approach age at marriage. Although many city women did not marry, most did. Thus it is reasonable to assume that if the initiative came from the women themselves, those who did not marry were among the most independent, rebellious women in the population: individuals who did not want to marry and who were strong enough to defy custom and their parents. Evidence from the study of Western families suggests that in this case they were disproportionally later-born children.[37] More likely, they would look like a random selection of the female population.

The second possibility suggests a very different pattern. Whether a family retained a daughter as a source of income depended partly on their other resources. A family with one or more able-bodied, adult sons would have had little economic reason to retain a daughter past customary marriage age. Instead, they would probably want to marry her out as soon as possible to make room for daughters-in-law. The family with no sons or one whose only sons were still children would view a marriageable age daughter very differently. For them, her earnings might be vital. Such families had reason to keep her at home indefinitely or delay her marriage until their sons were old enough to provide. In either case the result might well be that their daughter would never marry.[38]

We can determine who was responsible for women's marrying late or not marrying – the women themselves or their parents. If it was the women themselves, there should be little or no difference between those with and without brothers. If, however, the parents

35 Chinese parental authority is discussed in detail in Wolf in press.

36 See Stockard 1989 and Chuang 1993 for striking examples of how their economic ability could reduce women's chances of marrying.

37 See Schachter 1959 and Sulloway 1996.

38 The strategies adopted by Taiwanese parents to provide for their old age and the comfort of their souls are described in detail in Wolf and Huang 1980 and Wolf 1995.

were responsible, brothers should make a substantial difference. The women who married late or not at all should include a disproportionately large number of women who had no brothers or only younger brothers. Thus – contrary to what research on Western families predicts – they should be predominantly first-born children. The dynamic of parental authority, not that of personality, has shaped the Chinese case.[39]

How do the Taiwan data support this claim? We will take age fifteen as the age at which most Taiwanese women were considered marriageable and count as late marrying or never marrying all women who failed to marry by age thirty. To be absolutely certain of the accuracy of our results we should insist that both of these events fall within the period covered by the household registers in our possession. Since the registers were established in 1905 and some families moved into our study area after 1905, this would require limiting our sample severely. We could only admit women born after 1890, who were living in one of the research sites at age fifteen, and who remained living there until they married or reached age thirty. Because these criteria exclude most women who were married before the changes initiated by the Japanese took effect, we decided to relax the first criterion to include all women born after 1885. They probably include a few women who were married and widowed or divorced before 1905 (and who are therefore mistakenly classified as never married), and a few women with an older brother who was present at age fifteen but died before 1905 (and who are therefore mistakenly classified as having no older brothers).

In rural Taiwan parents decided how and when their children were to marry. The question is: Was this authority undermined in the cities where young women could find employment outside of the home? Figure 7 answers the question by comparing the influence of sibling position on marriage in our three populations. It demonstrates that in all populations the chances of a woman's marrying by age thirty was strongly influenced by her sibling position. In fact, it is likely that the strength of the influence was even stronger than is indicated by the data on display. Close examination of the household registers

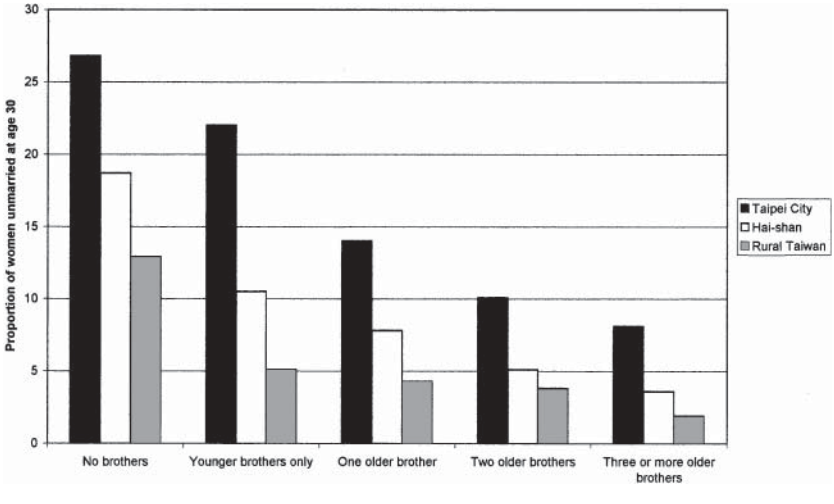

Figure 7. Proportion of women unmarried at age 30 by number of younger and older brothers at age 15

39 The Taiwanese attitude toward the use of daughters is documented in Wolf 2003.

reveals that many of the older brothers of women who failed to marry did not marry themselves. Thus it is likely that they were unhealthy, unfilial, or unreliable in some other way, so that in effect the parents had no son and had to keep their daughter at home.

The more important point made by Figure 7 is that the differences among our three populations cannot be attributed to a rural-urban difference in effective parental authority. The differences are striking but are entirely due to the fact that the number of women who failed to marry was larger in Taipei than in Hai-shan and larger in Hai-shan than in our more distant rural populations. Parental authority is not implicated. The ratios of proportions marrying in the different sibling positions is the same in all three populations. For women without older brothers and those with older brothers it is 2.02 in Taipei, 2.27 in Hai-shan, and 2.10 in our rural localities. We therefore conclude that Taipei's low marriage rate was not the result of women's taking advantage of the employment opportunities offered to avoid marriage. It was instead the result of parents using their authority over their daughtersAu:' labor.

Because Taiwanese cities offered employment opportunities for women, urban parents used their authority differently than rural parents. Instead of pushing their daughters to marry at or shortly after menarche, they commonly delayed their marriages or retained their services indefinitely. Whether or not this was also the case in cities like Shanghai, Peking, and Canton we do not know, but there is reason to think that it was. The great authority enjoyed by Chinese parents did not depend on local conditions. It was guaranteed by the Chinese state. Given then that cities everywhere needed large numbers of seamstresses, laundresses, prostitutes, etc. it is likely that the rural-urban difference we find in Taiwan was general. Thus it is also likely that there were two demographic regimes in China – a rural regime characterized by exceptionally high marriage rates and an urban regime characterized by exceptionally low rates. In the essay from which we take our epigraph Louis Wirth emphasizes the extent to which size, density, and functional differentiation create a distinctive "urban mode of life." Although the evidence he cites to make his case comes exclusively from studies of Western cities, his general point holds for Taiwanese cities. Small as they were compared to New York and Chicago, they had many features that set them apart from Taiwan's rural communities. These included lower marriage and remarriage rates and, consequently, lower reproduction rates. They were, however, distinctively Chinese as well as distinctively urban. Their lower marriage and reproduction rates were not the result of the declining social significance of the family, as was undoubtedly the case in American and European cities. In China the family was as strong in cities as it was in villages. What differed were the economic opportunities available and thus the uses to which children could be put.

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APPENDIX

Details of Data Represented in Figures 1–7

Figure 1. Annual and cumulative probability of ever marrying by age

	Taipei City			Hai-shan			Rural Taiwan		
Age	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. Prob.	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.
10	3,520	0.001	0.001	3,887	0.000	0.001	7,593	0.000	0.000
11	3,440	0.000	0.001	3,368	0.000	0.002	7,352	0.000	0.000
12	3,405	0.000	0.001	3,363	0.000	0.002	7,079	0.001	0.001
13	3,325	0.001	0.001	3,356	0.000	0.003	6,809	0.004	0.005
14	3,233	0.017	0.018	3,339	0.006	0.010	6,446	0.037	0.041
15	3,033	0.039	0.057	3,265	0.039	0.049	5,805	0.097	0.134
16	2,767	0.076	0.129	3,029	0.113	0.156	4,871	0.161	0.273
17	2,433	0.092	0.209	2,601	0.167	0.297	3,759	0.246	0.452
18	2,083	0.125	0.308	2,086	0.236	0.463	2,768	0.273	0.602
19	1,601	0.129	0.397	1,640	0.237	0.590	1,851	0.394	0.759
20	1,350	0.114	0.466	1,300	0.212	0.677	1,254	0.399	0.855
21	1,157	0.107	0.523	1,037	0.199	0.741	755	0.339	0.904
22	1,024	0.099	0.571	845	0.167	0.785	517	0.302	0.933
23	966	0.062	0.597	712	0.136	0.814	368	0.209	0.947
24	883	0.068	0.625	615	0.145	0.841	297	0.202	0.958
25	806	0.051	0.644	533	0.088	0.855	241	0.133	0.963
26	727	0.052	0.662	483	0.082	0.867	199	0.126	0.968
27	658	0.043	0.678	440	0.056	0.874	173	0.092	0.971
28	604	0.038	0.690	413	0.043	0.880	160	0.075	0.973
29	563	0.027	0.698	385	0.044	0.885	137	0.095	0.976
30	518	0.010	0.701	363	0.030	0.889	118	0.034	0.976
31	487	0.023	0.708	340	0.026	0.892	115	0.009	0.977
32	447	0.027	0.716	300	0.026	0.895	111	0.009	0.977
33	412	0.017	0.721	265	0.022	0.897	106	0.047	0.978
34	374	0.027	0.728	234	0.021	0.899	101	0.060	0.979
35	336	0.024	0.735	211	0.014	0.901	88	0.023	0.980
36	310	0.023	0.741	186	0.016	0.902	81	0.050	0.981
37	284	0.007	0.742	169	0.017	0.904	76	0.026	0.981
38	273	0.015	0.746	151	0.006	0.905	64	0.062	0.982
39	251	0.020	0.751	136	0.014	0.906	58	0.034	0.983
40	224	0.013	0.755	120	0.000	0.906	57	0.000	0.983
41	203	0.000	0.755	105	0.000	0.906	56	0.036	0.984
42	187	0.011	0.757	94	0.021	0.908	53	0.000	0.984
43	168	0.006	0.759	84	0.000	0.908	49	0.000	0.984
44	147	0.000	0.759	73	0.000	0.908	45	0.000	0.984
45	131	0.008	0.761	65	0.000	0.908	44	0.000	0.984
46	119	0.000	0.761	62	0.000	0.908	42	0.024	0.984
47	112	0.009	0.763	55	0.018	0.910	40	0.000	0.984
48	104	0.029	0.770	47	0.000	0.910	39	0.000	0.984
49	95	0.011	0.772	42	0.000	0.910	36	0.000	0.984

Figure 2. Annual and cumulative probability of remarrying among women widowed before age 35

Years since husband died	Taipei City			Hai-shan			Rural Taiwan		
	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.
0	263	0.041	0.041	645	0.205	0.205	1,445	0.267	0.267
1	229	0.062	0.100	526	0.211	0.372	961	0.262	0.459
2	203	0.035	0.132	444	0.126	0.452	737	0.141	0.536
3	177	0.054	0.179	395	0.116	0.515	612	0.114	0.589
4	166	0.039	0.211	348	0.123	0.575	527	0.059	0.613
5	147	0.017	0.225	315	0.082	0.610	467	0.058	0.635
6	131	0.007	0.230	393	0.054	0.632	416	0.024	0.644
7	123	0.014	0.240	278	0.050	0.650	371	0.038	0.657
8	117	0.010	0.248	261	0.061	0.672	341	0.023	0.666
9	110	0.000	0.248	250	0.072	0.695	309	0.019	0.672

Figure 3. Annual and cumulative probability of remarrying among women divorced before age 35

Years since divorce	Taipei City			Hai-shan			Rural Taiwan		
	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.
0	124	0.243	0.229	258	0.566	0.566	875	0.787	0.787
1	86	0.112	0.328	179	0.173	0.641	400	0.462	0.886
2	70	0.070	0.375	147	0.177	0.705	261	0.219	0.911
3	63	0.056	0.410	124	0.209	0.767	197	0.162	0.925
4	58	0.051	0.439	107	0.103	0.791	161	0.124	0.934
5	51	0.068	0.477	94	0.127	0.817	131	0.084	0.940
6	42	0.064	0.509	86	0.117	0.838	108	0.083	0.945
7	37	0.036	0.528	75	0.107	0.856	90	0.100	0.950
8	33	0.000	0.528	69	0.072	0.866	80	0.013	0.951
9	32	0.000	0.528	65	0.046	0.872	70	0.043	0.953

Figure 4. Annual and cumulative probability of ever marrying in Ta-tao-ch'eng and Meng-chia

	Ta-tao-ch'eng			Meng-chia		
Age	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.
10	2,284	0.000	0.000	1,235	0.001	0.001
11	2,221	0.000	0.000	1,223	0.000	0.001
12	2,178	0.000	0.000	1,226	0.000	0.001
13	2,108	0.001	0.001	1,217	0.000	0.001
14	2,048	0.020	0.021	1,185	0.013	0.014
15	1,924	0.042	0.062	1,109	0.034	0.048
16	1,743	0.081	0.138	1,024	0.067	0.112
17	1,516	0.097	0.222	917	0.084	0.187
18	1,295	0.125	0.319	788	0.126	0.289
19	1,090	0.125	0.404	672	0.137	0.386
20	929	0.100	0.464	561	0.137	0.470
21	789	0.117	0.526	472	0.091	0.519
22	685	0.099	0.573	421	0.100	0.567
23	603	0.066	0.602	363	0.055	0.591
24	550	0.064	0.627	333	0.075	0.621
25	500	0.040	0.644	306	0.069	0.647
26	454	0.062	0.664	273	0.037	0.660
27	410	0.044	0.679	248	0.048	0.677
28	372	0.038	0.691	232	0.039	0.689
29	343	0.015	0.695	220	0.046	0.703
30	313	0.013	0.699	205	0.005	0.705
31	295	0.020	0.705	192	0.026	0.712
32	275	0.029	0.714	172	0.023	0.719
33	247	0.020	0.720	165	0.012	0.723
34	220	0.036	0.730	154	0.013	0.726
35	195	0.026	0.737	141	0.021	0.732
36	180	0.028	0.744	130	0.015	0.736
37	168	0.006	0.746	116	0.009	0.738
38	159	0.000	0.746	114	0.035	0.748
39	145	0.028	0.753	106	0.009	0.750
40	128	0.016	0.756	96	0.010	0.753
41	119	0.000	0.756	84	0.000	0.753
42	111	0.009	0.759	76	0.013	0.756
43	100	0.010	0.761	68	0.000	0.756
44	84	0.000	0.761	63	0.000	0.756
45	73	0.000	0.761	58	0.017	0.760
46	67	0.000	0.761	52	0.000	0.760
47	64	0.016	0.765	47	0.000	0.760
48	60	0.017	0.769	44	0.045	0.771
49	56	0.018	0.773	39	0.000	0.771

Figure 5. Annual and cumulative probability of remarrying among women widowed before age 35 in Ta-tao-ch'eng and Meng-chia

	Ta-tao-ch'eng			Meng-chia		
Years since husband died	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.
0	159	0.044	0.044	104	0.038	0.038
1	137	0.058	0.100	92	0.065	0.101
2	122	0.057	0.152	81	0.012	0.112
3	106	0.038	0.184	72	0.070	0.174
4	97	0.031	0.209	64	0.047	0.213
5	88	0.034	0.236	59	0.000	0.213
6	78	0.013	0.246	54	0.000	0.213
7	71	0.028	0.267	52	0.000	0.213
8	68	0.000	0.267	49	0.020	0.229
9	64	0.000	0.267	46	0.000	0.229

Figure 6. Annual and cumulative probability of remarrying among women divorced before age 35 in Ta-tao-ch'eng and Meng-chia

	Ta-tao-ch'eng			Meng-chia		
Years since divorce	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.	Woman years	Annu. prob.	Cum. prob.
0	94	0.255	0.255	50	0.080	0.080
1	66	0.121	0.345	43	0.162	0.229
2	54	0.019	0.358	34	0.088	0.298
3	49	0.041	0.384	30	0.133	0.391
4	45	0.022	0.397	25	0.039	0.415
	39	0.051	0.428	25	0.040	0.438
6	31	0.032	0.447	22	0.045	0.563
7	28	0.072	0.486	19	0.106	0.520
8	24	0.000	0.486	16	0.186	0.609
9	24	0.000	0.486	14	0.000	0.609

Figure 7. Proportion of women unmarried at age 30 by number of younger and older brothers at age 15

	Number of brothers at age 15				
Location	No brothers	Younger brothers only	One older brother	Two older brothers	Three or more older brothers
Number of women					
Taipei City	501	549	465	198	111
Hai-shan	603	916	818	492	390
Rural Taiwan	629	1,503	1,107	740	647
Proportion unmarried at age 30					
Taipei City	26.8	22.0	14.0	10.1	8.1
Hai-shan	18.7	10.5	7.8	5.1	3.6
Rural Taiwan	12.9	5.1	4.3	3.8	1.9