

The Vicissitudes of Marriage Custom in Sichuan during the Period of the Republic of China

Yu Jianpeng

College of Marxism, Sichuan Normal University, Cheng Du, Sichuan Province, 610066, China

Keywords: The period of the republic of china, Sichuan region, The vicissitudes of marriage custom

Abstract: The interaction between marriage custom change and the development of society is a complex process. During the period of the republic of China and backwardness, the change of marriage custom is under the conflict between the traditional and the modern custom, which reflects the difficulty, chronicity and repeatability of custom and habits change in the tremendous social change. This also suggests that transforming social traditions should be based on political, economic, social and cultural progress to develop in the direction of the civilization. Generally speaking, the marriage custom in Sichuan during the Republic of China was mainly traditional, with new custom had emerged, showing the constant change of the old marriage custom and the wide spread of new marriage custom. The “elimination” of old marriage custom and the “establishment” of new marriage custom happened simultaneously, reflecting the development stage of the combination of Chinese and Western elements as well as the coexistence of the old and the new custom. The majority of rural areas still adopt traditional marriage custom, but it had a lot of changes. Meanwhile, the change of marriage custom in urban areas was faster than that in rural areas. Big cities led the change of marriage custom in small cities and towns.

1. Introduction

Fundamentally speaking, the change of marriage custom is restricted by the production mode of material. People's marriage behavior changes are based on material production. The development stage of production and consumption should align with the social system, family organization and hierarchical organization. The essential attribute of people's marriage behavior is the social attribute with the characteristic of historical change. Marriage custom is a type of cultural phenomenon in the process of historical development and people's life, and its inheritance has certain stability and repeatability, with some reasonable and good ingredients can be inherited and spread widely. On the other hand, some of the undesirable customs will endure under the protection of the old forces which could not have fundamental changes in the short run. As the traditional concept of marriage is deeply rooted, the change of marriage custom is not easy. Therefore, the new marriage custom did not take root in a short time after it was introduced into Sichuan during the Republic of China. For example, some new marriage ceremonies, concepts and institutions would inevitably be criticized by traditional forces and blocked by old custom after appearance. The change of marriage custom is also in a process of collision and compromise between the old and new forces and ideas. Overall,

during the period of the Republic of China, traditional marriage custom was still predominant in Sichuan, due to the backward productivity and political development, which was unable to provide the basis for the modern marriage concept and custom. But in the long run, the old power will eventually be replaced by advanced trend, society will be on the progressive path of democracy and civilizations.

The change of marriage custom in Sichuan during the republic of China is one aspect of the whole social change. During that time, the development of politics and economy influenced marriage custom. Political and economic changes have provided favorable conditions for the transformation of old custom and morals. New ideas and new classes have also provided support for the development of new marriage custom. Moreover, the improvement of the old marriage custom should be viewed objectively. It should not be simply divided into Chinese or Western custom, nor roughly classified into traditional or modern. It should be judged based on whether it is conducive to the development of economic and political civilization at that time, and whether it is conducive to the improvement of people's living conditions. Whether in Chinese or Western, the customs that hinder the development of social civilization should be discarded. The development of productive forces will inevitably lead to the change of ideas and custom. Hence, the production relations that do not adapt to its development will inevitably change. During the period of the republic of China, the modern industry and commerce had certain development in Sichuan. For example, productivity was greatly promoted and traditional small-scale agricultural economy was gradually disintegrated. As a result, those social and economic changes will inevitably cause the change of marriage custom, such as the transfer of the right of marriage by choice and the rise of all kinds of new wedding. Those changes in marriage custom are the result of a combination of political, economic, cultural, ideological and other factors, but the fundamental reason is the development of productive forces and the improvement of economic level.

2. Marriage Custom Changes and Political & Economic Background

The change of marriage custom has a symbiotic relationship with the political and economic reform. The inheritance and change of marriage custom also has the characteristics of stratification, which is not presented as a whole. Marriage custom stratification also included the public explanation and change, as people can be directly involved in the change of marriage etiquette, under the background of social change giving people the continuity of life. With the past experience and environment at that time, grassroots gained sense of social belonging, with affinity expanded and civil society constructed. The change of marriage custom in Sichuan during the Republic of China witnessed the constant change of the old marriage custom and the wide spread of new marriage custom. The “elimination” of the old marriage custom and the “establishment” of the new one happened simultaneously. The change of marriage custom was not exactly synchronized with the political and economic reform, but reflected the increasing combination of Chinese and Western culture and the coexistence of the old and the new custom. The majority of rural areas still adopt traditional marriage custom, but it had a lot of changes. For example, the wedding procedures were simplified, and marriage concept changed towards the direction of independence and civilization. Meanwhile, the change of marriage custom in urban areas was faster than that in rural areas. Big cities led the change of marriage custom in small cities and towns. A variety of new marriage custom first appeared in the big cities and spread to the surrounding areas, as the influence of the region was constantly expanding. However, there were some limitations on the respective of the depth and breadth, and as a result some marriage custom even rebounded in some areas.

On the whole, marriage custom has developed towards democracy and civilization. For example, divorce is no longer a rare and controversial thing, but has become a common phenomenon; and the

taboos in marriage custom have also been greatly reduced. Marriage custom reform at that period of time has the characteristics of complexity, chronicity, imbalance and incompleteness. History shows that, including marriage custom, the successful transformation of civilization custom must be based on political, economic, legal and social progress as a whole, as China was semi-colonial and semi-feudal during the period of the republic, with the inadequate development of economy, politic and society.

3. Characteristics of the Change of Marriage Custom in Sichuan

The changes of Sichuan marriage custom during the Republic of China showed obvious characteristics of complexity, imbalance and incompleteness. This was due to the social background of China at that time and the special social development situation of Sichuan. During the period of the republic of China, China is rare in the history of several thousand years of upheaval and transformation, during the great revolution, was a colonial semi-feudal and a half of transitional society, political instability and manipulation by Chinese and foreign strongmen forces, unbalanced economic development, new and old culture and mutual collision and fusion of Chinese and western civilization, social mass starvation, most ordinary people life level is very low. Sichuan area warlord scuffle, economy is depressed, social development is backward. The change of marriage custom has its own regularity, relative to the economy and politics, the change of marriage custom has a certain lag and repeatability. These factors determine the vicissitude characteristics of its complexity. In Sichuan, there are great differences in the development between urban and rural areas, basin and mountainous areas, among different classes and among different nationalities, and the development of the evolution and development of the old and new marriage custom and the integration of Chinese and foreign cultures is very unbalanced, which also leads to the imbalance and difference of the change of marriage custom. In the period of the Republic of China, Sichuan did not realize real modernization in politics, economy, culture, social development and many other aspects, advanced and backward, civilization and ignorance coexisted, and the society as a whole was a transitional, incomplete and unbalanced development state. Without the modernization of economy and politics, it is impossible to realize the modernization of society, and the change of marriage custom will also present a mixture of old and new rites and elements of Chinese and Western culture, showing obvious incompleteness.

The new wedding appeared in Sichuan in the Republic of China, showing the social progress trend of personality liberation and the improvement of women's status, and marriage began to show the tendency of contractual. In "civilized marriage", both men and women have a great deal of autonomy in their own marriage, and young men and women look for a partner based on their own pursuit and mate selection requirements, which reflects the liberation and freedom of human nature. In the traditional marriage custom of the Qing Dynasty, women were completely passive, and marriage was decided by their parents or the elders of the family, without any autonomy and discourse right. During the period of the Republic of China, more and more women went to work, which greatly improved the status of women. They began to love freely and communicate with the opposite sex in a civilized, equal and open way. All these reflected the progressive ideological trend of equality between men and women. The rise of modern wedding custom, such as collective wedding and notary marriage, also reflects the tendency of contractual and legalized marriage custom, which also reflects the social progress of Sichuan in the Republic of China and the transitional characteristics from traditional to modern.

References

[1] Fei Xiaotong(1947). *Folk China* [M]. Guancha Press, pp.13.

- [2] Bastid Bruguere, Marianne(1980). *Currents of social change*, in: Fairbank, J.K./Liu K.L.(Eds.),*The Cambridge history of China*,vol.11,*Late Ch'ing,1800-1911*,part 2[M].Cambridge, pp.121.
- [3] Kulcickij, Aleksandr, *Brak u Kitaicew*(1908). *Heirat unter Chinesen*[M]. Peking, pp.34.
- [4] Wollstonecraft, Mary(1967). *A Vindication of the Right of Women*[M]. New York, Cambridge, pp.45.
- [5] Burlington(2007).*Wedding Planning &Management: Consultancy for Diverse Clients*.MA[M].Butterworth-Heinemann, pp.67.
- [6] Edvard Westermarck(2009). *The History of Human Marriage*[J]. *Biblio Life*, no.10,pp.76.
- [7] Gennep. Arnold van (1960). *The Rites of Passage*[M]. Routledge and Kegan Paul,pp.89.
- [8] Liang Shuming (1963).*The Essential Features of Chinese Culture*[M]. Jicheng Book Company,pp.21-23.
- [9] Gray, John H. (1878). *China: a history of the laws, manners, and customs of the people*, 2 vols[M]. Dover Publications, Inc. Mincola, pp.56-58.