

ROMANTIC LOVE AND FREE MARRIAGE IN TAIWAN UNDER JAPANESE RULE:
WRITINGS FROM *TAIWAN YOUTH*, 1920-1921

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ABSTRACT

One of the remarkable effects of the appointment of Den Kenjirō 田健治郎 (1855-1930) as the first civilian Governor-General of Taiwan in 1919 was the establishment of the first Taiwanese-owned newspapers and journals, which would soon become important platforms for the emerging feminist movement in Taiwan. At the same time, student participation in the May Fourth movement was in full force in mainland China, and in Japan, feminist intellectuals passionately debated the “woman question” and its role in the development of the Japanese nation-state. In my research, I consider the arguments put forth by Taiwanese feminists for a system of free marriage 自由結婚 (*ziyou jiehun/jiyū kekkon*) based on romantic love 戀愛/恋愛 (*lian'ai/ren'ai*) between 1920 and 1921 in the Taiwanese journal *Taiwan Youth*. Rather than drawing comparisons between general feminist discourses in China, Japan and Taiwan, which all were influenced to a great extent by globally circulating ideas about gender and the emancipation of women, I suggest taking love and marriage as a lens through which to understand how *Taiwan Youth* writers simultaneously critiqued traditional Chinese practices and beliefs while looking to Japan and the West as examples of modernity. I argue that for *Taiwan Youth* writers, emphasizing the spiritual, transcendental nature of love in relation to marriage enabled them to juxtapose a modern ideal with a retrogressive past and express dissatisfaction with their colonial condition. In doing so, *Taiwan Youth* writers marked a distinct break from their Chinese roots while embracing an ideal offered by Western and Japanese models of modernity, a move that reflects their perception of Taiwanese identity and the precarious nature of colonial Taiwan’s relationship to China, Japan and the West at the time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHINESE AND JAPANESE INFLUENCE ON TAIWANESE FEMINIST DISCOURSE.....	4
LOVE AND MARRIAGE: NOT JUST ANOTHER “WOMEN’S ISSUE”.....	9
ROMANTIC LOVE IN <i>TAIWAN YOUTH</i>	11
CONCLUSION.....	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	24

Introduction

On the fourth of May in 1919, Taiwanese students in Tokyo received news of a major uprising in Beijing. The efforts of young New Culture intellectuals and activists to transform Chinese society following the 1911 Revolution culminated in the May Fourth movement, a student-led protest criticizing China's concessions to Japan under the Twenty-One Demands and attacking traditional Confucian values believed to be obstacles to China's transformation into a modern nation-state. At the same time, debates in Japan over racial equality and possession of the Shandong peninsula, as well as Japan's subsequent entry into the League of Nations, shaped the way in which Japanese citizens understood Japan as a member of a new global order, and gave rise to new international organizations and internationalist movements among the Japanese public.¹ Looking to mass movements in China and Japan, Taiwanese students, activists and intellectuals in Tokyo began contemplating the applicability of mass mobilization for Taiwan, which at the time had been under Japanese colonial rule for more than twenty years.²

Inspired by an atmosphere of cultural self-criticism, radical social change, and political mobilization, a group of Taiwanese students in Tokyo called the Enlightenment Society 啟發會 (*Qifahui*), later renamed the New People's Society 新民會 (*Xinminhui*) in 1920, began looking for ways to bring messages of self-determination, liberation and political awareness to an audience of both Japanese and Taiwanese intellectuals.³ In July 1920, the New People's Society began publishing the bimonthly journal *Taiwan Youth* 臺灣青年 (*Tai-oan chheng lian*), and

¹ Thomas W. Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations: Empire and World Order, 1914-1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), xii-xiii.

² Edward I-te Chen, "Formosan Political Movements Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1914-1937," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31 no. 3 (1972), 481.

³ Liao Ping-hui, "Print Culture and the Emergent Public Sphere in Colonial Taiwan, 1895-1945," in *Taiwan Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1895-1945* ed. Liao Ping-hui and David Der-wei Wang (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 93.

from the very first volume they called on their readers to reflect on their backward practices and aspire to a new standard of progressive thought, rejecting elements of colonial rule that stripped them of their autonomy and free will.⁴ Many members of the Taiwanese Cultural Association 臺灣文化協會 (*Taiwan wenhua xiehui*), founded in 1921 by anti-colonial nationalist Chiang Wei-shui 蔣渭水 (1890-1931), also contributed articles, written in both the Japanese and Chinese languages. Early *Taiwan Youth* contributors to advocated political representation for Taiwanese civilians and the preservation of Taiwanese language and culture in the face of increasing Japanese cultural and linguistic influence in the daily lives of Taiwanese people. *Taiwan Youth* changed its name to *Taiwan* 臺灣 (*Tai-oan*) in 1923, and later that year again to *Taiwan People's News* 臺灣民報 (*Taiwan minbao*), and during the 1920s and 1930s it was one of the only two indigenous newspapers owned and managed by Taiwanese people.⁵

Much of the writing by Taiwanese intellectuals on “women’s issues” (婦女問題 *funü wenti*, 婦人問題 *fujin mondai*) during the 1920s can be found in *Taiwan Youth*. Contributors to *Taiwan Youth* believed solving “women’s issue,” which encompassed issues such as education, marriage, legal rights and political participation, was a crucial step toward emancipation from colonial domination, escape from patriarchal oppression, and progress toward modernization.⁶ Among the topics most enthusiastically debated by *Taiwan Youth* writers was the importance of romantic love 戀愛 / 恋愛 (*lian'ai/ren'ai*) between the sexes as the foundation of free marriage 自由結婚 (*ziyou jiehun/jiyū kekkon*) in a modern society and independent nation. Although there

⁴ Lu Hsin-yi, “Imagining ‘New Women,’ Imagining Modernity: Gender Rhetoric in Colonial Taiwan,” in *Women in the New Taiwan*, ed. Catherine S. Farris, Anru Lee and Murray A. Rubinstein (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 82.

⁵ Doris T. Chang, *Women's Movements in Twentieth Century Taiwan* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 21-22.

⁶ Ibid.

have been a number of influential works that cover the history of feminism in Taiwan, the topic of love and marriage in Taiwan, especially during the period of Japanese colonial rule, remains understudied in the English language scholarship. This is surprising, given the importance of this issue to the Taiwanese writers who published articles about it, as well as its significance to broader feminist arguments and the formation of Taiwanese national identity.

Historians who have written in English on feminism in colonial Taiwan have focused primarily on tracing elements of Taiwan's feminist movement back to Chinese, Japanese and Western influences. This paper instead directs the spotlight onto a pivotal moment in Taiwan's colonial history: the transition of Taiwan's government-general from military rule to a more liberal civilian rule in 1919 that allowed for a more diverse range of voices and opinions to be published in the popular press. I focus specifically on the writings in *Taiwan Youth* between 1920 and 1921, examining how *Taiwan Youth* writers argued for a system of free marriage that would allow for women and men to choose to marry independently of their parents' wishes, as was the case in the traditional system of arranged marriage. Rather than drawing comparisons between general feminist discourses in China, Japan and Taiwan, which all were influenced to a great extent by globally circulating ideas about gender and the emancipation of women, I suggest taking love and marriage as a lens through which to view the complicated way in which *Taiwan Youth* writers simultaneously pulled away from traditional Confucian practices and beliefs while looking to Japan and the West as models of successful modernization. I argue that for the authors of *Taiwan Youth*, emphasizing the spiritual, transcendental nature of love in relation to marriage was a way for them to express their perception of Taiwanese identity and reject colonial oppression by juxtaposing a modern ideal (represented by a loving marriage) and a retrogressive past (represented by a loveless—or arranged—marriage). In doing so, *Taiwan Youth* writers

mark a distinct break from the past while offering an idealized vision for the future, a move that reflects their understanding of Taiwan's relationship to Japan, its colonial oppressor, China, which represents a past it seeks to escape, and the West, a model for modernity that challenges the very values at the core of Taiwanese society.

Chinese and Japanese Influence on Taiwanese Feminist Discourse

Fortunately, although there is a dearth of scholarship on feminism in colonial Taiwan, developments in the field of feminist history in China and Japan have made it possible to identify areas where the feminist discourse in Taiwan reflects Chinese and Japanese influence. Research on feminism in early twentieth-century China has been greatly aided by the opening of Chinese libraries and archives to Western researchers in the 1980s; pre-1980 studies on feminism in China tend to reflect the availability of limited resources dominated by the post-1949 Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s perception of the incompatibility of Marxism and feminism.⁷

Since the 1980s, scholars have expanded their research to include more local sources, and many attempts have been made to explain why feminist movements during this period ultimately failed to achieve the emancipation of women. Christina Gilmartin points to the Chinese CCP's use of the rhetoric of women's emancipation to contrast China's traditional past with a new image of a modern nation-state, employing Marxist theories of liberation from capitalist exploitation and Leninist theories of class-transcendence to generate support for its agenda among women's groups.⁸ Despite this rhetoric, however, Gilmartin writes, "at the core of [the

⁷ Christina K. Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3-4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

Party's] ideology was the conviction that men were the ultimate arbitrators of women's issues."⁹ Wang Zheng emphasizes this point in *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, in which she presents the argument that women were compelled to seek a "masculinist gender equality" rather than seeking respect for the *personhood* of women themselves. Only through deft navigation of this inherently patriarchal system were women able to improve their status in the face of traditional restraints.¹⁰ Since publication of Wang's book, there has been some effort to recover evidence of women's agency in the May Fourth movement and highlight areas in which women were able to venture beyond the bounds of patriarchy to participate more freely in the public discourse on women's issues. Yong Z. Volz writes about female journalists who ventured into the public sphere between 1898 and 1926 and joined nationalist campaigns as agents of political transformation.¹¹ Gail Hershatter describes the entry of women into public political activity by writing for magazines, attending schools, participating in labor strikes and establishing women's groups.¹²

Scholarship on feminism in Japan in the 1920s has seen a similar effort to highlight women's participation in discussions of women's issues while accounting for the role of nationalist state rhetoric in this endeavor. While the emancipation of women was considered to be part of a nation-building project in both China and Japan, feminist discourses look slightly different in each context. May Fourth feminism in China emerged in the climate of the post-1911 New Culture movement as part of a broader rewriting of traditional practices and an emergence of new ideas of citizenship and national identity. In contrast, Japan's first wave of feminism was

⁹ Christina K. Gilmartin, "Gender in the Formation of a Communist Body Politic," *Modern China* 19, no. 3 (July 1993), 322.

¹⁰ Zheng Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 18-19.

¹¹ Yong Z. Volz, "Going Public Through Writing: Women Journalists and Gendered Journalistic Space in China, 1890s-1920s," *Media, Culture & Society* 29 no. 3 (May 2007), 485.

¹² Gail Hershatter, "Imagined Futures, 1912-27," in *Women and China's Revolutions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 93-128.

less about revolution than it was about *inclusion*—specifically, for many feminist activists, expansion of women’s rights and recognition of women’s personhood would allow for the involvement of women as equal participants in both public (societal) and private (familial) domains.¹³

A number of historians have provided insight into the contributions of female feminist leaders in Japan. Barbara Sato has described the concept of *shūyō* 修養 (self-cultivation), a kind of self-reflection that would enable middle-class women to achieve upward mobility and personal success.¹⁴ Sumiko Otsubo demonstrated that women were also interested in the improvement of the race just as much as the improvement of the individual, pointing to the spread of eugenics theories within feminist circles in Japan.¹⁵ The emancipation of women also involved a revision of the traditional principle of *ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母 (good wife, wise mother), which Kathleen Uno writes was modified and reimagined by women according to their own dynamic notions of womanhood.¹⁶ More recently, Andrea Germer argues that after the end of World War I and the Paris Peace Conference, Japanese women began to see themselves as full members of the nation-state, a self-consciousness that developed in tandem with new cultural feminist theories calling for an “ethnic awakening” to womanhood.¹⁷ Germer describes two main bodies of feminist positions: “statist”, which emphasized the connection between elevating the status of women in the Japanese domestic realm and forging international ties, relating concepts

¹³ Barbara Molony, “The Quest for Women’s Rights in Turn-of-the-Century Japan,” in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, ed. Barbara Molony and Kathleen S. Uno, 463-492 (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 464.

¹⁴ Barbara Sato, “Commodifying and Engendering Morality: Self-Cultivation and the Construction of the ‘Ideal Woman’ in 1920s Mass Women’s Magazines,” in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, 111-12.

¹⁵ Sumiko Otsubo, “Engendering Eugenics: Feminists and Marriage Restriction Legislation in the 1920s,” in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, 225-6.

¹⁶ Kathleen S. Uno, “Womanhood, War, and Empire: Transmutations of ‘Good Wife, Wise Mother’ before 1931,” in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, 493-499.

¹⁷ Andrea Germer, “Japanese Feminists After Versailles: Between the State and the Ethnic Nation,” *Journal of Women’s History* 25 no. 3 (Fall 2013), 92.

of family, motherhood and community to the super-structure of the state; and “anti-statist” or “ethno-cultural”, which emphasized the need for separation between the individual and the state, arguing for women’s rights as individuals rather than as part of an international trend.¹⁸ Germer’s framework, while contextualized by Japan’s unique political and social circumstances, shares some similarities with Wang Zheng’s distinction between “liberal feminism” and “nationalist feminism” in China. This similarity suggests that significant overlap exists between feminist discourses in China and Japan, the effect of which can be seen in the Taiwanese discourse as well.

Taiwan, transferred from the hands of the Qing empire to Japan in 1895, was greatly influenced by the feminist discourses circulating among May Fourth intellectuals in China and disseminated by mass media from Japan, as well as translations of Western feminist writings in Chinese and Japanese media consumed by a Taiwanese audience during the colonial period. Many of the same themes sounded by Chinese, Japanese and Western activists appear in the arguments used by Taiwanese feminist writers in *Taiwan Youth* at this time. Two notable studies on feminism in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial era shed light on some of the main approaches taken by feminist intellectuals in advocating women’s emancipation, and serve as a point of departure for my own research.

Doris Chang’s *Women’s Movements in Twentieth Century Taiwan* is the first book written in English to examine the political factors that contributed to the emergence of a Taiwanese women’s movement in the 1920s. Chang presents her work as “a case study of a non-Western society’s selective appropriation of Western feminist ideas to meet the needs of women in a Confucian culture.”¹⁹ This selective appropriation of Western feminism, Chang argues,

¹⁸ Germer, 99-101.

¹⁹ Chang, 1.

emerged in the early 1920s as the new civilian government-general allowed for greater tolerance of political and social movements, and an elite minority of Taiwanese students furthered their studies in Japan and China, where they became familiar with cosmopolitan concepts of liberal feminism and transmitted these ideas to the Taiwanese public upon their return.

Based on her analysis of feminist discourses from the colonial period, Chang argues that there were two predominant strands of feminism in Taiwan: first, a Western-inspired liberal feminism 自由派女性主義 (*ziyoupai nüxing zhuyi*) that idealized personal independence, woman's rights, and individual freedom; second, what Chang calls "relational feminism," an offshoot of liberal feminism that balances women's self-realization in the public arena and fulfillment of domestic obligations within the family. Socialist feminism 社會主義派女性主義 (*shehui zhuyi pai nüxing zhuyi*), Chang claims, did not become an explicit category of analysis in Taiwanese feminist discourse until 1988.²⁰

Chang's work is useful in that it examines the various ways in which Taiwanese feminists incorporated a Western model of liberal feminism into existing Taiwanese beliefs and practices, many of which originated from Confucian family-centered ideology. Chang finds significant Chinese and Japanese influence on the Taiwanese feminist discourse, and she argues that Taiwan launched its own New Culture movement in the 1920s in response to Japanese concepts of socioeconomic egalitarianism and universal suffrage, as well as the Chinese New Culture movement's criticism of what were perceived to be outdated Confucian rituals.²¹

Another important work on gender in Taiwan during the colonial period informs my own study of feminist writings in *Taiwan Youth*: Hsin-yi Lu's chapter "Imagining 'New Women,'

²⁰ Chang, 9-10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

Imagining Modernity: Gender Rhetoric in Colonial Taiwan” in the volume *Women in Taiwan*. Much like Doris Chang, Lu examines gender issues discussed in Taiwanese enlightenment journals to “contextualize their arguments and show how these arguments were inspired by similar discussions in earlier periods in Japan and China.”²² Lu pushes the argument further by stating that “what was specific to Taiwanese feminist thought was its concurrence with the encounter of colonial power and knowledge.”²³ Indeed, for *Taiwan Youth* writers, the emancipation of women, to be achieved primarily through education and marriage reform, was closely intertwined with anti-imperialist sentiment. However, Lu does not address love and marriage in depth, and her assessment that “women’s issues were one of the new ways of thinking that [Taiwanese intellectuals] felt compelled to deal with”²⁴ diminishes the extent to which *Taiwan Youth* writers actively used their arguments related to love and marriage to juxtapose the old with the new, and does not give enough attention to the specific way in which they use these arguments to position themselves on a path to modernity.

Love and Marriage: Not Just Another “Women’s Issue”

Building on Chang and Lu’s work, an in-depth examination of articles that appeared in *Taiwan Youth* between 1920 and 1921 reveals that love and marriage is not just another “women’s issue,” but rather a lens through which we can better understand how *Taiwan Youth* writers viewed this subject in a way that was fundamentally different from feminist writers in China and Japan, particularly in its importance to the articulation of a Taiwanese identity distinct

²² Lu Hsin-yi, “Imagining ‘New Women,’ Imagining Modernity: Gender Rhetoric in Colonial Taiwan,” in *Women in the New Taiwan*, ed. by Catherine S. Farris, Anru Lee and Murray A. Rubinstein, 76-98 (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 80.

²³ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁴ Chang, 02.

from its Chinese and Japanese counterparts. Ruled by a foreign empire with no strong sense of national identity or immediate hope for independence, Taiwan was socially and politically different from its neighbors. Republican China, struggling to regain its footing after a revolution that left it without strong institutions or a sound political structure, faced the challenge of building a new nation that would follow through on the reforms envisioned by Republican revolutionaries while also recovering full territorial sovereignty. At the same time, transforming the family unit was understood as a critical part of strengthening the nation, and emancipating women was key to overthrowing the Confucian family system. Similarly, the Meiji Japanese state sought to carry out reforms that would secure Japan's position of prestige on the international stage, equal to the modern and enlightened nation-states of the West. Japanese feminists were also greatly influenced by Western liberal feminism, particularly ideas of respect for women's individual personhood and recognition of women's rights as human beings.

Taiwan, however, as a colonial subject of the Japanese empire, was in no position to compete for a place among the great powers or to conceptualize itself as an emergent nation-state. In this context, rather than arguing for gender equality as a means for strengthening the nation or creating a socialist system in which women's rights are elevated alongside those of the lower class of laborers, *Taiwan Youth* writers instead simultaneously criticized elements of their traditional Chinese past while embracing of Western and Japanese models of modernity, grappling with ideas of Taiwanese identity in the colonial context. Nowhere was this more apparent than in their discussion of love and marriage in *Taiwan Youth*.

Romantic Love in *Taiwan Youth*

As feminist thinkers in China, Japan and Taiwan began grappling with what it meant to be a “new woman” 新婦女 / 新しい女 (*xinfunü/atarashii onna*) in a rapidly evolving society, novel ways of conceptualizing love began to emerge in the popular press. The term *lian'ai/ren'ai* (戀愛/恋愛), which appears most frequently in writing on love in the 1920s, connotes a relationship that transcends close friendship and is fundamentally different from the love between a parent and a child. Use of this word in Chinese feminist discourse in the early twentieth century indicates a break from more traditional interpretations of the relationship between the sexes.

While usage of the term *lian'ai* in the Chinese language does appear in ancient Chinese texts and in translations from English by foreign missionaries in the nineteenth century, it was not used in Chinese writing in reference to love between men and women until the early twentieth century.²⁵ Yang Lianfen traces the first dictionary entry for the definition of *lian'ai* in its contemporary usage to 1908, where it is defined in the *Complete English Chinese Dictionary* (edited by Chinese scholar Yan Huiqing) as a “passion between men and women” as well as “‘love’ in the broad sense.” In 1915, *lian'ai* was defined in *Ci Yuan* (*Origin of Words*, The Commercial Press) as “mutual love between the sexes.”²⁶ Yang argues that this usage of *lian'ai* was likely adopted from Japan, where the term *ren'ai*, which uses the same Chinese characters, was already in popular use at the turn of the century.²⁷

Yang Lianfen also points to a shift in popular conceptions of sexual morality that accompanied the introduction of *lian'ai* into the modern Chinese language. Before *lian'ai*, the

²⁵ Yang Lianfen, “‘Love’ as the Key Word: New Sexual Morality and New Literature in the Late Qing and Early Republican Years (1900-1920),” *Social Sciences in China* 35 no. 4 (2014), 66.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

term *qing* (情) was most commonly used to describe “affections” between people, but *qing* lacked the connotations of individual will and equality between the sexes that were associated with *lian'ai*. With these positive associations, however, came negative associations for many traditional thinkers, who Yang argues saw *lian'ai* to be code for illicit sex or adultery, a conception that persisted through the May Fourth era as many conservative writers continued to use *qing* in literature.²⁸

Yang’s work on the origins and evolution of *lian'ai* provide the background for my study of how Taiwanese feminist writers understood *lian'ai*. I now turn to the writings in *Taiwan Youth* to examine how these writers describe the role of *lian'ai* in marriage.

The first Taiwanese author to write about women’s issues in Taiwan is Peng Hua-ying 彭華英 (1893-1968), who published the article “Does Taiwan Have Women’s Issues?”²⁹ in 1920. As a young adult, Peng studied in the Department of Politics and Economics at Meiji University 明治大學政治經濟科, during which he travelled back and forth frequently between Taiwan and Japan. At the time of his publication in *Taiwan Youth*, Peng was active in the Enlightenment Society 啟發會 and joined the Japanese Socialist League 日本社會主義者同盟 in 1921. He then traveled to Shanghai to represent Taiwan in discussions of colonial independence movements, and later returned to Taiwan in 1924 and married Cai A-shin 蔡阿信, Taiwan’s first female physician. Three years later, he was elected as a member of the Central Committee of the Taiwanese Cultural Association 臺灣文化協會, after which he devoted his career to the affairs of the Taiwan People’s Party.³⁰

²⁸ Yang, 70-72.

²⁹ Peng Hua-ying 彭華英, 台湾に婦人問題があるか (*Taiwan ni fujin mondai ga aru ka*) “Does Taiwan have women’s issues?” *Taiwan Youth* 1 no. 2 (Aug 15, 1920): 60-67.

³⁰ “彭華英” 臺灣歷史人物小傳, *National Central Library 國家圖書館* (Dec 2003): 560.

“Does Taiwan Have Women’s Issues?” addresses some of the topics debated in Japanese feminist circles at the time of Peng’s writing, such as marriage, education and political participation, and points to parallel issues present in Taiwanese society. In his article, Peng takes issue with the subjugation of women in the traditional marriage system. While some Taiwanese writers argued that women are the basis of the family system, Peng believed that women did not have an inherent obligation to serve in domestic roles. Rather, Peng saw freedom of marriage as one of the ways women could achieve independence and cultivate free will.³¹ This is not only a matter of personal freedom to Peng, but also matter of importance to Taiwan’s relative modernity vis-à-vis the rest of the civilized world; as Peng writes, referring to women’s issues, “We should be concerned with these kinds of issues to avoid being deserted by world civilization.”³² Describing women’s issues as one of the most urgent problems facing Taiwanese society, Peng situates her discussion of women’s issues in the context of the “great spirit of freedom and equality” (自由平等なる大精神, *jiyū byōdō naru dai-seishin*). Describing a widespread awakening to changing circumstances across the world, Peng writes that alongside the development of enlightenment, the spirit of self-awareness, independence of men and women’s personhood, and emphasis of individual free will are “rising like a lake” (湖の如く起りつつある, *mizūmi no gotoku okoritsutsu aru*).

In contrast with his description of this global awakening, Peng criticizes Eastern society as chauvinistic (男尊女卑, *danson jōhi*) and patriarchal, where women’s greatest responsibility is serving the home and her greatest joy is raising a child. Peng condemns the traditional practices of arranged marriage, concubinage and prostitution, all of which entail disregard of

³¹ Lu Hsin-yi, 83.

³² Ibid.

women's humanity (人間性, *ningen-sei*) and treatment of women as commodities or slaves to be traded between families. Often unable to see each other's faces until their wedding day, many couples are forced into unhappy relationships from which there is no escape. Peng writes that such a system is not only oppressive but illogical. Encouraging readers to turn away from beliefs of the past, Peng blames the subjugation of women in the patriarchal system generally on "old thinking" and "old morals", and more specifically on Confucian values, citing the Confucian proverb that "boys and girls shall not sit together after they turn seven" (男女七才不同席). Peng argues that women have been oppressed for too long by ancient values that no longer are appropriate in modern times. This is not only tragic for women trapped in undesirable arranged marriages, but also poses an impediment to the progress of enlightened society.

Rather than following in Confucian tradition, Peng suggests that morals and customs (道徳習慣, *dōtoku shūkan*) ought to be dynamic, evolving alongside the cultivation of free will. Peng argues that abolishing arranged marriages, concubinage and prostitution in favor of a system of free marriage that respects the free will of both sexes and is based on a foundation of love (自由意志を尊重し、恋愛を基礎とする自由結婚, *jiyū ishi o sonchō shi, ren'ai o kiso to suru jiyū kekkon*) is essential for a harmonious family and idyllic society, and will aid in the evolution of society, the development of the race, and the progress of the enlightened world (世界文明の発達進歩, *sekai bunmei no hattatsu shinpo*).

Two months after Peng Hua-yin's article appeared in *Taiwan Youth*, Chen Kun-shu 陳崑樹 published "A Critique of Women's Issues and a Call for the Breaking of Old Customs"³³

³³ Chen Kun-shu 陳崑樹, 婦女問題の批判と陋習打破の叫び (*Fujo mondai no hihan to rōshū daha no sakebi*) "Critique of Women's Issues and a Call for the Breaking of Old Customs," *Taiwan Youth* 1 no. 4 (Oct 15, 1920): 24-31.

arguing that materialism has cast a shadow over love. Love is sacred (神聖, *shinsei*), Chen writes, but a love that transcends the material (超物質的恋愛, *chō busshitsu-teki ren'ai*) is hard to find. Much like Peng, Chen situates her discussion of marriage in the context of the “new trend of thought” (新思潮, *shin shichou*) around the world and the “enlightenment of the spirit” (精神的文明, *seishin-teki bunmei*) of modern people.

Chen also criticizes the practices of arranged marriage and concubinage, tracing them back to the traditional patriarchal family and social class structure. Chen writes that Taiwan’s civil law does not adequately enforce limitations on parents’ control over their children; under this system, parents can choose to sell their daughter to another family regardless of their daughter’s disapproval. Moreover, Taiwan’s tradition of ancestor worship, a ritual which Chen traces back to Chinese culture, contributes to the perpetuation of inequality between men and women by emphasizing the concept of filial piety. According to this traditional belief, after death, one can expect their spirit to be worshipped by their descendants; thus, if a man is unable to have children by his own wife, it is considered only natural that he engage in concubinage to ensure the honor of his own spirit after death, and more broadly, the continuation of the race. These practices, Chen argues, stand as a huge impediment to the development of culture (文化の発達に一大障害, *bunka no hattatsu ni ichidai shōgai*).

Chen contrasts the image of arranged marriage as backward and outdated with a vision similar to Peng Hua-ying’s of free marriage based on love. A love that transcends physicality, Chen writes, is based on the joining together of spirits (ラブの本領は双方のスピリットの合致に根ざし, *rabu no honryō wa sōhō no supiritto no gatchi ni nezashi*). Interestingly, Chen chooses to use *rabu* (ラブ) and *supiritto* (スピリット), Japanese loan words from English

meaning “love” and “spirit,” reinforcing the notion of Japan and the West as models for modern thinking on marriage, as opposed to the traditional Chinese model.

Female intellectual Su Yi-chen 蘇儀貞 advocated freedom of marriage as a way for women to resist coercion by rejecting traditional power dynamics within the family system. She understands reform of the marriage system to be part of more comprehensive societal reforms designed to bring daily life into alignment with modern values. Her article, “New Age Women and Marriage of Love”³⁴ written in Chinese and published one year after Peng Hua-ying’s article, describes the enthusiasm of scholars in Europe, Japan and the U.S. in debating women’s issues. After the war, Su writes, European society saw rapid development in science, the arts, manufacturing, commerce, and agricultural industry. The marriage system, too, was adapted to meet the demands of the new society. Unlike the situation in Europe, Su suggests, Taiwanese people’s thinking on the issue of love and marriage has not yet adapted to the needs of modern society. Su writes, “For a long time, people understood love to be a kind of mysterious thing, not thinking about it sincerely; they just believed it was something to be feared.” Rather, Su suggests, we ought to think of love as something powerful, something that is closely connected to the natural desires that ground our entire existence.

Part of this natural desire is concern for the continuation of the race (種族的繼續, *zhongzu de jixu*) and the enhancement of society and culture (增進社會文化, *zengjin shehui wenhua*). After all, Su writes, the marriage system evolved from ancient times to its current form to ensure continued reproduction and the proper care and rearing of children. While Su does not suggest eradicating the marriage system entirely, she argues that the system cannot continue in

³⁴ Su Yi-chen 蘇儀貞, 新時代的婦女和戀愛結婚 (*Xin shidai de funü he lian'ai jiehun*) “New Age Women and Marriage of Love,” *Taiwan Youth* 3 no. 1 (Aug 15, 1921): 12-16.

the way it has. The traditional family system, Su argues, simply serves to satisfy man's arrogant need for power while subjugating the woman to the role of a machine. Su further argues that women deserve the same freedoms as their husbands, not only legally but also on a spiritual level (在精神上, *zai jingshen shang*). It is this spiritual connection that Su argues should be the basis for a free marriage.

Moreover, whereas love was once considered to be a personal matter (個人的事, *geren de shi*), Su argues that the issue is of great importance to the progress of civilized society. By describing women as creators (創造者, *chuangzaozhe*) and masters of evolution (進化的主人, *jinhua de zhuren*), Su argues that marriage based on love is not simply a matter of personal happiness, but also the foundation of the happiness of society. Refuting the criticism that women are selfish to seek liberation, Su writes:

Humanity has always had a kind of altruistic spirit — that is, if we encounter someone who is injured, elderly or disabled, or someone who cannot bear to continue to live, we have a kind of impulsive desire to take them in and comfort them. This is a kind of altruistic spirit. We ought to put this spirit to good use, develop our own strengths, take care of each other, and change our circumstances. We don't have just our bodies or just our intellect, we also have the grandest spirit of creation. We not only have the ability to develop in the arts, religion and technology, but we also have the capability to take ourselves to the greatest, highest, most beautiful realm. We have sanctioned our own dignity, and we eagerly look forward to reaching the highest path. We ourselves can be creators, not just following the trends of the era. We are masters of evolution. We rise with our spirit of innate freedom to create our own destiny. We have the willpower to ascend the summit of creation despite all difficulties. Women who possess this kind of willpower ought not to be ashamed.³⁵

Su's rhetoric of creation and rising up in the face of hardship suggests that women's pursuit of freedom is not simply about individual rights, but rather a means to advancing society.

³⁵ Translation is my own.

When taken to refer to all Taiwanese people, rather than just women, Su's language of creating one's own destiny suggests her perception of the autonomy and innate freedom of Taiwanese people, and their capacity to resist colonial oppression.

Peng Hua-ying, Chen Kun-shu and Su Yi-chen are responsible for the majority of the discussion of love and marriage in *Taiwan Youth* between 1920 and 1921, but two other writers, Chen Zeng-fu 陳增福 and Lin Shuang-sui 林雙隨, also comment on free marriage without explicitly using the term *lian'ai*, and their insights are useful in understanding how *Taiwan Youth* authors connected free marriage to Taiwanese identity.

Lin Shuang-sui is best known as the spouse of Tu Tsung-ming, the first Taiwanese person to earn a Doctor of Medicine degree who, as a medical student, was involved in an assassination attempt on Yuan Shikai in 1913.³⁶ Before marrying Tu in 1924, Lin studied abroad in Tokyo, where she authored a piece titled "My View of Taiwanese Women" in *Taiwan Youth*, reflecting on the condition of Taiwanese women under the traditional system of arranged marriage. She argues that women struggled to speak out for recognition of women's personhood, women's emancipation, or the expansion of women's rights, due to a deeply ingrained belief that submission to men is virtuous.

Lin criticizes the role of parents in choosing spouses for their children, but finds a more fundamental problem in the lack of opportunities for men and women to socialize, leaving them with no choice but to leave the decision of who to marry to a parent or older brother. Lin argues for expanding opportunities for men and women to socialize so they can freely choose a satisfactory spouse without the mediation of their parents. In this way, Lin's article suggests that

³⁶ Han Cheung, "The Frail Assassin," *Taipei Times: Taiwan in Time*, Dec 13, 2015, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2015/12/13/2003634676/1>.

reform of the marriage system begin not with an abrupt abandonment of traditional practice, but rather with improvements to women's education and the expansion of opportunities for the social mingling of men and women.³⁷

Chen Zeng-fu, another contributor to *Taiwan Youth*, taught briefly at the Taiwan Government-General Mandarin Language School 短期擔任學校教員後 before traveling to Japan's Meiji University 明治大學 to study law. He later returned to Taiwan and married a Japanese woman, taking a Japanese name and obtaining what was called "mainlander" status (內地人, *neidi-ren/naichi-jin*).³⁸ His article in *Taiwan Youth* focuses on the hotly debated subject of Taiwanese-Japanese intermarriage, arguing that Taiwanese-Japanese ought to be officially recognized under the household registration as husband and wife. Chen writes that the married couple is the most fundamental unit of the nation, and that kinship (親族關係, *shinzoku kankei*) is the basis of marriage. This kinship depends on mutual love (相愛, *sō'ai*) and mutual effort (相勞, *sōrō*), and is not exclusive to only couples of the same race. Although Japan's strength is built on the foundation of the family system, Chen writes, it would be hypocritical of the Japanese colonial government to prohibit intermarriages when the mixing of blood between Taiwanese and Japanese people would be essential for assimilation. While Chen's article discusses a different kind of freedom of marriage—marriage outside one's own race—Chen's ideas about the relationship between the family and the state reflect Chen's understanding of how

³⁷ Lin Shuang-sui 林雙隨, 私の臺灣婦女觀 (*Watashi no Taiwan fujo-kan*), "My View of Taiwanese Women," *Taiwan Youth* 1 no. 4 (Oct 15, 1920): 43-45.

³⁸ Cai Jintang 蔡錦堂, "陳增福家族菁英群與臺北高等學校初探" (*Chen Zengfu jiazu jingyingqun yu taibei gaodeng xuexiao chutan*), *Taiwan Studies* 《臺灣學研究》 12, (Dec 2011): 1-16. National Taiwan Library, Taiwan Branch 國立中央圖書館臺灣分館.

this kind of freedom of marriage would enable Taiwanese people to gain equal status with their Japanese counterparts, thereby establishing a degree of autonomy even under colonial rule.³⁹

Writing on love and marriage in *Taiwan Youth* reflects not only influence from China, Japan and the West, but also suggests that there was something unique about Taiwanese feminism due to Taiwan's position as a colony of the Japanese empire. This was articulated by *Taiwan Youth* authors in their embrace of certain elements of feminism from their neighbors while rejecting elements of traditional culture that were perceived to impede Taiwan's modernization. In their discussions of love and marriage, *Taiwan Youth* writers grapple with notions of Taiwanese identity vis-à-vis China and Japan. Their writing suggests their understanding that by engaging in their own conversations about women's issues in Taiwan, they were participating in a broader global dialogue.

References to women's movements in Japan and the West appeared frequently in articles on women's issues in *Taiwan Youth*. Peng Hua-ying, for example, praises Western nations' recognition of women's individuality and capabilities, juxtaposing this with the "old thinking" of Eastern societies. Peng cites women's participation in politics and representation of women in Parliament in England after the war as an example of gender equality in the West. Peng also comments on the increasing political consciousness of women in Japan, citing the founding of the New Women's Association 新婦人協会 (*Shin-fujin kyōkai*) in Japan by Hiratsuka Raichō. Similarly, Su Yi-chen cites scholars in Europe, the U.S. and Japan who have taken up the subject of love and marriage in their own debates. Comments such as these reflect an awareness of *Taiwan Youth* writers of their own role in the global feminist discourse.

³⁹ Chen Zeng-fu 陳增福, 臺灣の共婚と自治 (*Taiwan no kyōkon to jichi*), "Taiwanese Inter-marriage and Autonomy," *Taiwan Youth* 1 no. 4 (Oct 15, 1920): 45-47.

At the time these articles were published in *Taiwan Youth*, the concept of a free marriage based on romantic love was no more than an idyllic vision for a modern Taiwan. While *Taiwan Youth* writers looked to Japanese and Western feminist ideas of love and marriage as models to aspire to, they simultaneously encouraged readers to question and often criticize Confucian tradition, creating a distinction between Taiwan and its Chinese roots.

Collectively, articles that critiqued Confucian tradition while encouraging resistance to colonial oppression reflected Taiwan's precarious relationship between China and Japan at the time. With the appointment of Taiwan's first civilian governor-general, Den Kenjirō, restrictions on the Taiwanese media were relaxed under a series of relatively liberal reforms, and Taiwanese intellectuals suddenly became free to criticize the Japanese colonial government in the public press. While censorship was still prevalent to an extent, new voices of dissent and dissatisfaction resonated not only throughout Taiwanese publications but within Taiwanese-run columns of Japanese publications as well. However, criticizing elements of Japanese colonial rule did not mean embracing traditional roots; on the contrary, many Taiwanese people found themselves somewhere in between, embracing Western and Japanese ideals while grappling with the idea of a unique Taiwanese identity.

Conclusion

Taking love and marriage as a lens enables us to better understand how *Taiwan Youth* writers reflected on Taiwan's position in the world by promoting Japanese and Western ideals of modernity while critiquing traditional Confucian values. In this way, authors of *Taiwan Youth* contributed to a distinctly Taiwanese feminist discourse that, while sharing similarities with May Fourth and Japanese discourses, reflected Taiwan's unique position in the world at the time.

It must be acknowledged that a narrow focus on a selection of writers who discuss love and marriage in *Taiwan Youth* between 1920 and 1921 excludes much of the discourse on other related women's issues, such as education and political participation. When it came to broader discussions of women's role in the family, Doris Chang's research suggests that many Taiwanese feminists pushed back against Western liberal feminism, seeking to synthesize modern concepts of romance with the Confucian idea of filial piety or the practice of polygamy.⁴⁰ It is important to recognize that while many *Taiwan Youth* writers critiqued Confucianism and looked to Japan and the West for examples of women's emancipation, this was not true across the board for all Taiwanese feminists and that a broader perspective reveals the extent of the diversity of views expressed during this period.

This paper, however, has shed light on a previously underresearched subject in Taiwanese feminist history—love and marriage—which will hopefully provide a starting point for further research on women's romantic lives during Taiwan's colonial period. Scholars of Taiwanese history will perhaps take an interest in tracing the other works of *Taiwan Youth* writers, many of whom went on to become prominent social and political figures in Taiwan during and after Japanese rule. Others might take up the topic of sex, exploring how sexual desire was included in discourses on chastity or sexual freedom. One topic of particular relevance to feminism during this period—one that is also underresearched—is the introduction of contraceptives to the general public Japan, and how this influenced Taiwanese discourses on birth control and child rearing during the colonial period.⁴¹ These topics, among others, provide a

⁴⁰ Chang, 26-7.

⁴¹ For more on sex and birth control in Japan, see Sabine Fruhstuck, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

wide range of possibilities for the scholarship on feminist history in Taiwan to become as rich as its Chinese and Japanese counterparts.

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