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Russian-Chinese families in the 20th century: Emergence and characteristics

Vladimir G. Datsyshen^a, Larisa A. Kutilova^a

^aSiberian Federal University; 82 A, Svobodny Av., Krasnoyarsk, 660041, Russia;
generalhistory2005@yandex.ru

Русско-китайские семьи в СССР: история возникновения и некоторые характеристики

В.Г. Дацышен^а, Л.А. Кутилова^а

^аСибирский федеральный университет; 660041, Россия, Красноярск,
проспект Свободный, 82 А; generalhistory2005@yandex.ru

Abstract: This may well be the first article about the history of mixed Russian-Chinese families in Russia and the USSR. The study is based on sources in federal, regional and local archives, mainly of Siberia and the Far East, statistics, and the press. It notes that the great gender imbalance in almost exclusively male Chinese migrant community meant that Chinese men chose Russian women as life partners. The decline of Russia's male population during the First World War and the Civil War only exacerbated this trend. First recorded in the late nineteenth century, this phenomenon became widespread during the twentieth, not only in the Far East, but also in other areas with large populations of Chinese workers, such as Donbass. Wives in such marriages were mainly peasant women, although on occasion Cossack women and even noblewomen, often widows, took Chinese husbands. The brides were invariably younger than their spouses and tended to be housewives. However, some worked with their husbands in small businesses. These mixed couples tended to have fewer children than those that were fully Russian. The vagaries of Sino-Soviet relations during the twentieth century led to several waves of deportations of such families. Thus, in 1938 some were exiled from their places of residence to Xinjiang, Kazakhstan or the Amur region. While forced migrations considerably reduced the size of the Chinese community, they did not destroy it. The authors conclude that new Chinese immigration to Post-Soviet Russia follows the pattern set in the twentieth century's first half, as do mixed marriages.

Keywords: Russian-Chinese interaction, Chinese migration, Chinese community, mixed marriages, Russian-Chinese families, features of mixed families

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Аннотация: В статье практически впервые объектом исследования стала история смешанных русско-китайских семей в России и СССР. Исследование основано на анализе материалов феде-

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ральных, региональных и местных архивов главным образом Сибири и Дальнего Востока, данных статистики и материалов газет, в том числе брачных объявлений. Подчеркивается, что резкий гендерный дисбаланс в составе общины китайских мигрантов (преобладание холостых мужчин трудоспособного возраста, практически полное отсутствие женщин) привел к выбору китайцами в качестве спутниц жизни русских женщин. Убыль мужского населения в России в ходе Первой мировой и гражданской войн только усилили указанную тенденцию. Зафиксированные впервые в конце XIX в. такие брачные союзы становятся реальностью в XX в. не только на Дальнем Востоке, но и в других местах сосредоточения китайских рабочих, например в Донбассе. Анализ социального происхождения жен в таких браках позволил сделать вывод, что это главным образом крестьянки, иногда казачки и даже дворянки; зачастую вдовы. В таких браках женщины всегда моложе мужей. По роду занятий они – домохозяйки, но иногда ведут с мужем совместный мелкий бизнес или торгуют. Количество детей в смешанном браке несколько меньше, чем в традиционной русской семье. Раскрывая тему исследования через сложные обстоятельства русско-китайского взаимодействия в XX в., авторы приходят к выводу о том, что напряженность в отношениях двух стран привела к нескольким волнам депортаций смешанных русско-китайских семей. Например, в 1930-е гг. они стали объектом репрессий, в 1938 г. некоторые были высланы из мест своего проживания в Синьцзян, Казахстан или Амурскую область. Эти обстоятельства серьезно сократили, но не уничтожили китайскую общину. В результате новая китайская миграция в постсоветской России во многом опиралась на предыдущую миграцию и заложенный ею в первой половине XX в. фундамент смешанных браков.

Ключевые слова: русско-китайское взаимодействие, китайская миграция, китайская община, смешанные браки, русско-китайские семьи, характеристики смешанных семей

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Introduction

Until now, historians have paid little attention to mixed Russian-Chinese families. At times, the subject was touched upon in histories of Sino-Russian relations,¹ or the regional problems of interaction between the two countries.² The only work that specifically considered the matter was an article about the area between the three rivers of the Khaul, Gann, and Derbul in North Manchuria, where the descendants of mixed Russian-Chinese families reside as a national minority.³ This is the name of the territory between the three rivers (Haul, Gann, Derbul) in northern Manchuria, where the descendants of mixed Russian-Chinese families live as a national minority.⁴ Its authors note that at present there are ‘several villages where the descendants of Russian settlers

¹ T.Z. Poznyak, “Polovozrastnaya struktura i semeynoye polozheniye kitayskikh immigrantov na rossiyskom Dal’nem Vostoke (vtoraya polovina XIX – nachalo XX vv.),” in *Rossiya i Kitay na Dal’nevostochnykh rubezhakh* (Blagoveshchensk: Amur State University Publ., 2002), 391–396.; O.V. Zaleskaya, “Integratsiya kitayskikh trudyashchikhsya v sotsial’no-ekonomicheskuyu zhizn’ Dal’nego Vostoka Rossii (1920–1930-ye gg.)” *Via Evrasia*, no. 4 (2009), <https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=12981593>.

² V.G., Datsyshen, L.A., Kutilova, A.V., Nizovskikh, and M.G. Tarasov, *Priyeniyskaya Sibir’ v sovetsko-kitayskikh otnosheniyakh (1917 – nachalo 1980-kh gg.)* (Krasnoyarsk: Sibirskiy federal’nyy universitet Publ., 2016).

³ A.P. Zabiako, A.A. Zabiako, “Istoriya pokoleniy rusско-kitayskikh semey v memoratakh Trekh-rech’ya,” *Ural Historical Journal*, no. 1 (2017): 65–73; A.G. Yankov, “Dva serdtsa russkikh kitaytsev,” *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University*, no. 2 (2014): 168–177.

⁴ Alexey G. Yankov, “‘Two hearts’ of the Chinese Russians,” *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Seriya 12. Psikhologiya. Sotsiologiya. Pedagogika*, no. 2 (2014): 168–177.

live, mostly born in mixed marriages (or ‘half-blood,’ as they call themselves).⁵ Other scholars have considered modern Russian-Chinese marital unions.⁶ At the same time, this topic is of great interest to the media and the Internet community. Indeed, some have argued that a mixed Russian-Chinese marriage is an ideal formula, since it combines the best qualities of a Chinese husband and a Russian wife.⁷ They argue that the advantages of a Chinese husband include diligence, responsibility, discipline, care for the family, and a healthy lifestyle. This image is occasionally featured in advertisements and can become the subject of heated debate. Media claims that marriage agencies and sites where Chinese men and Russian women can get acquainted ‘are experiencing a boom,’⁸ encouraging Chinese migration to Russia.

We believe that Chinese migration in post-Soviet Russia is largely based on the patterns of migration and mixed marriages in the first half of the twentieth century. Studying the current phenomenon is impossible without knowing more about their history and evolution.

The emergence of mixed Russian-Chinese families, as an example of Russian-Chinese rapprochement, should be of interest to scholars of ethnology, demography and history. Its anthropological aspect raises questions about the problems of family and marriage. In this regard, cross-cultural marriages are more interesting because they present new approaches to the mutual influence of traditions, parenting and other related issues. At the same time, for some Russians, a mixed Russian-Chinese family is a variant of Chinese expansion, which until recently was perceived as a serious danger to Siberia and the Far East. Analyzing cross-border migration in the 21st century, E.I. Filippova rightly notes that ‘public opinion, politicians, journalists’ still use ‘old clichés’ and ‘see migrants as a lot of poor, uneducated people.’⁹ Other researchers point out that, today, the Chinese obviously pose no threat to the Russian Far East. On the contrary, they argue that ‘the esteem and popularity of China are consistently growing.’ V.L. Larin believes that the ‘humanitarian factor and personal interests and needs’ seem to play a ‘key role’ in Sino-Russian relations,¹⁰ which highlights the relevance of studying the history of mixed Russian-Chinese families.

Foreign scholars have also neglected mixed families. In a study of Chinese migration in Russia and Eastern Europe, P. Nyíri only briefly mentions mixed marriages

⁵ A.P. Zabiako, A.A. Zabiako, *Istoriya pokoleniy rusko-kitayskikh semey*, 65.

⁶ Ye.V. Dyatlova, “Chislennost’ i struktura brachnykh svyazey kitaytsev sovremennogo Irkutska (1989–1995 gg.),” in *Vostok i Rossiya: Vzglyad iz Sibiri* (Irkutsk: Tsentral’naya Dal’nevostochnaya biblioteka RAN Publ., 1996), 340–342; V.L. Larin, “Kitayskiy faktor v obshchestvennom soznanii rossiyskogo prigranich’ya: srez 2003 goda,” *Far Eastern Affairs*, no. 4 (2004): 67–81; D.A. Vladimirova, “Smeshannyye braki rossiyan i grazhdan KNR v Primorskom kraye,” *Vestnik of the Far East Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, no. 2 (2005): 111–117.

⁷ “Kitayskiy muzh i russkaya zhena – ideal’naya para,” Inosmi.ru, accessed April 20, 2019, <https://inosmi.ru/social/20180118/241220757.html>.

⁸ Zh. Golubitskaya, “Zamuzh za kitaytsa: sayty znakomstv s rossiyankami perezhiyayut bum,” *Moskovskiy komsomolets*, January 8, 2018.

⁹ Ye.I. Filippova, “Transgranichnyye migratsii novyye realii i staryye klishe,” *Siberian Historical Research*, no. 3 (2018): 209–216.

¹⁰ V.L. Larin, “Rossiya i Kitay: uroki proshlogo, otkroveniye nastoyashchego, gorizonty budushchego,” *Russia and the Pacific*, no. 3 (2007): 5–10.

of Chinese men in Siberia, noting that sometimes they already had a family in China.¹¹ Researchers abroad are much more interested in cross-cultural marriages with Chinese women. Thus W. Pan analyzes the way the media of mainland China present such unions, inspiring national myths of progress.¹² Pan's study draws attention to the role of gender in these representations. Women leaving China to marry foreigners are seen as greedy and unprincipled; whereas those who invite their foreign partner to China are praised as a model modern woman, who embodies the economic and cultural power of China. Most of the stories the author analyzes are about women who marry Western men. Only a few touch on Russo-Chinese marriages, and they focus on those where the wife is Russian.¹³

Some foreign studies examine the phenomenon of East Asian brides, who migrate through marriage both within the continent and to the West. Thus, A. Kayanus analyzes the relationship between China and the international education market, noting that marrying a foreigner is one of the 'cosmopolitan strategies' for female students Chinese abroad.¹⁴

The relevant scholarly literature in the West tends to focus on cross-cultural marriage as a tool of mobility for Chinese women. In contrast, this article presents the other side of the picture by considering the Russian case, where Chinese men usually take local women as brides.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the emergence and spread of Russian-Chinese mixed families in settlements of Chinese migrants in Russia and the Soviet Union, to identify their main characteristics, as well as to examine the practice in the context of Russo-Chinese relations in the 20th century, mainly based on sources from Siberia and the Far East.

The main sources consist of documents of federal, regional and local archives, mass media, and statistical data, including various censuses. The former includes registration sheets, trade licenses, certificates, which for many Chinese migrants in Russia served as identity cards, as well as lists of deported Chinese and their families, etc. As for newspapers, marriage advertisements are an important source as well.

General characteristic of mixed Russian-Chinese families and their geography

The Chinese migrant community in Russia was typically composed of single working age men. Thus, the census of 1926 recorded 1,360 Soviet Chinese men and only 49 Soviet Chinese women; as for foreign Chinese, it counted 2,129 men and 22 women.¹⁵ However, almost half of these 'Chinese women' considered Russian to be their mother tongue. Therefore, the census likely considered Russian wives of Chinese migrants to be Chinese as well. In her study of the situation in Khabarovsk in 1900, D.A. Vladimirova noted an even wider disparity: 'there were 2,100 men and only 7 women of Chinese nationality.'¹⁶ In the early 1930s, at a factory in Baley, a town in the East-Siberian re-

¹¹ Nyíri Pál, *Chinese in Eastern Europe and Russia: A Middleman Minority in a Transnational Era* (London: Routledge Publ., 2007), 41–42.

¹² Pan Wang, *Love and Marriage in Globalizing China* (London: Routledge Publ., 2014).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 58–59.

¹⁴ Kajanus Anni, *Chinese Student Migration, Gender and Family* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Publ., 2015), 119–123.

¹⁵ *Vsesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1926 g.* (Moscow: TSSU SSSR Publ., 1928).

¹⁶ D.A. Vladimirova, 'Smeshannyye braki rossiyan i grazhdan KNR v Primorskom kraye,' *Vestnik of the Far East Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, no. 2 (2005): 111.

gion, there were 243 Chinese registered workers and ‘one Chinese woman who did not work.’¹⁷ Most of the men were single, although some mentioned that they had a family in China.¹⁸

The first mixed Russian-Chinese families appeared in the Far East in late 19th century, but according to T.Z. Pozniak, they were rare.¹⁹ When going to Russia to work, married men left their families in their native country. Only occasionally in the Russian Far East, Chinese men married Russian women or lived with Japanese women. He rightly notes that the number of Chinese men having a family in Russia was small, and reliable details are rare.²⁰

The first decades of the 20th century witnessed a rise in mixed Chinese-Russian marriages. In Krasnoyarsk, for example, only one Chinese man, Liu Kinhai, had a non-Russian wife, Ota Ku. The predominance of men in the Chinese community forced them to seek in marriage with local women, primarily Russians. Two examples in early 20th century Tomsk are the family of Peter Mikhailovich Liu-Bo-Nyan, Elena, and their daughter Antonina, as well as Vasily Yang-Jing-Li and Lukia.²¹ There were mixed marriages elsewhere in Siberia. In 1916, in Yenisei province the 39-year-old Orthodox Chinese merchant Chi-Zun-do lived with his 25-year-old wife Evdokia Ivanovna,²² and in Achinsk that year, the 27-year-old Orthodox Chinese man Andrey Syuzosin (Syui-So-Si) married 17-year-old Alexandra Matveevna Boychenko.²³

Mixed marriages increased in the 1920s, most likely due to the high mortality rate of Russian men during wars and revolution. At the same time, a reputation for diligence and self-discipline also made Chinese men attractive partners. Indeed, proverbs described Chinese peasants as hard workers.²⁴ Even during the Civil War there were many more marriages between Chinese men and Russian women.

The number of mixed families in Siberia as well as in other parts of the USSR increased in 1923–1924. The archives provide many examples. In 1923, a 30-year-old laborer from Minusinsk, Chjon-Yu-Min married Klavdiya Andronovna.²⁵ The following year, Li Xiang-Fu, aged 32, concluded the marriage with the native of Samara province, Pelagia Petrovna Lipukhova, in the Chita registry office. However, Pelagia had already taken Chinese citizenship in 1922.²⁶

¹⁷ GANIIO, f. 123, op. 2, d. 24, l. 12 ob.

¹⁸ T.Z. Poznyak, ‘Polovozrastnaya struktura i semeynoye polozheniye kitayskikh immigrantov na rossiyskom Dal’nem Vostoke (vtoraya polovina XIX – nachalo XX vv.),’ in *Rossiya i Kitay na Dal’nevostochnykh rubezhakh* (Blagoveshchensk: Amur State University Publ., 2002), 395; V.G. Datsyshen, L.A. Kutilova, A.V. Nizovskikh, and M.G. Tarasov, *Priyeniyeyskaya Sibir’ v sovetsko-kitayskikh otnosheni-yakh (1917–nachalo 1980-kh gg.)* (Krasnoyarsk: Sibirskiy federal’nyy universitet Publ., 2016), 99.

¹⁹ T.Z. Poznyak, ‘Polovozrastnaya struktura,’ 395.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ K.K. Klipka, ‘Kitaytsy v Tomske v XIX–nachale XX v.,’ *Tomsk State University Journal of History*, no. 6 (2013): 163.

²² State Archive of the Krasnoyarsk Territory (thereafter – GAKK), f. P-1813, op. 1, d. 16, l. 59.

²³ *Ibid.*, d. 6, l. 152.

²⁴ Ye.I. Nesterova, ‘Etnicheskoy predprinimatel’stvo vo Vladivostoke (konets XIX – nachalo XX v.),’ *The Bulletin of Irkutsk State University: Political Science and Religion Studies*, no. 10 (2014): 74.

²⁵ GAKK, f. P-49, op. 3, d. 19, l. 585.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, d. 87, l. 22.

The archival also contain records of such mixed marriages in the 1930s. Thus, in 1933 an instructor of the Communist Party's Chita City Committee reported that there were between 60 and 100 Chinese children in the area, but all had Russian mothers.²⁷ Around the same time, according to the intern Erofeev at the Baley plant, the factory employed several hundred Chinese workers, 76 of whom were married, to Russian women.²⁸

There were mixed Russian-Chinese families west of the Urals as well. In 1923, a significant number of Chinese workers in the Donbas had Russian wives and children. For instance, at Mine №1 almost all 21 Chinese men had Russian spouses, while all Chinese men employed at Mine № 2, almost all Chinese men had married Russian women, and some had small children.²⁹ At the same time, at two Izvarinsky mines, between half and two-thirds of its 80 Chinese miners were single.³⁰ At the time most mixed families were young, since the vast majority had no children yet, and the rest had one child not more than three years old. The 'Report for 3 months (October-December 1925) on the Work among the Chinese and Koreans men of Stalin District' also confirmed the existence of mixed marriages, Of the 210 Chinese and 27 Korean workers in Stalin District (formerly Yuzovsky district) in Donetsk province, 82 % were married to Russian women.³¹

Social background of women marrying Chinese men. Analysis of specific examples of mixed marriages

In early 20th century Transbaikalia, some Chinese men took Cossack widows as wives. For example, in Undinsky, a village in Nerchinsk District, the Chinese citizen Shausan Logo, who was engaged in farming and manufacturing, was married to the daughter of a Cossack of Shelopuginsky stanitsa, the widow Daria Kuzminichna Guseva,³² but had no children. Meanwhile, in 1910 in Krasnoyarsk, Nikolai Spiridonov Van-Chao-Lin married a noblewoman, E. L. Luchinskaia.³³ He later divorced his first wife and then wed the widow of a priest, Margarita Arturovna Korgapolova.³⁴

However, most wives of Chinese men were peasant women. In his application for Russian citizenship, 'the Chinese citizen Than-Jen-Chin, named George in holy baptism,' who came from Shandong to work, wrote that when living in Transbaikalia for several years and working at mines and the railway, he had gotten along with Russians, learned the language, and, to prove his eligibility for Soviet citizenship, noted that 'he was married to a peasant of Tyrgotuiev volost and had a son.'³⁵

Since most Chinese men came to Russia and the Soviet Union as temporary migrant workers, the vast majority retained Chinese citizenship. After earning a considerable amount of money, they always sought to return home, even from remote areas.

²⁷ GANIIO, f. 123, op. 4, d. 86, l. 17.

²⁸ Ibid., op. 2, d. 24, l. 12 ob.

²⁹ State archive of Donetsk region (thereafter – GADO), f. P-1146, op. 2, d. 270, l. 26–27.

³⁰ Ibid., l. 29.

³¹ GADO, f. P-2109, op. 1, d. 287, l. 67.

³² State Archive of the Trans-Baikal Territory (thereafter – GAZK), f. 1, op. 1, d. 385, l. 3.

³³ GAKK, f. P-49, op. 3, d. 97, l. 106.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ GAZK, f. 1, op. 1, d. 14364, l. 2.

In 1924, Zhang-Zyn-Lu, a laborer from Shandong who had moved to Transbaikalia 10 years earlier, completed a registration form when he moved to Krasnoyarsk. To the question, ‘Do you want to leave the RSFSR?’ he responded: ‘When I have money, I will return home,’ and two years later indeed went back to his native land.³⁶

After the 1917 Revolution, the authorities began to deport Chinese workers. Tens of thousands of Chinese workers and their families were sent from European Russia and the Urals through Siberia back to their homeland. However, when in 1918 the railway on the Trans-Baikal section was destroyed, trainloads of Chinese men were stuck at Dauria station.

As the Bolsheviks consolidated their hold on Siberia, more Chinese men wanted to return home. Some returned with their Russian wives and children. Thus, according to the 11 November 1920 report of the instructor-agitator of the International Department of the Instruction section of the 5th army of Zhang-Zhey-Hai, by the end that year the freight cars at Irkutsk Station held 190 Chinese men, including 24 disabled old men, 15 Chinese women, 3 Russian women and 35 children up to 12 years old. These workers had left Yekaterinburg and by then they had been held up in Irkutsk for more than two months.³⁷

The extreme poverty of some Chinese men hindered their return. In Yenisei, many had no money to go home, some having lost their savings during the searches.³⁸ Therefore, the number of Chinese men in Yenisei decreased only slightly and the question of mixed marriages there remained relevant. At the same time, for many Chinese who had lost all hope of leaving the Soviet Union, taking a Russian wife became a way to adapt to their new circumstances. Whereas in European Russia or the Far East, Chinese men often enlisted in the army, in Siberia they tried to survive by marrying local women and setting up small family businesses. For example, in December 1919, on Petropavlovskii Street in Tomsk, Chinese migrants together with their Russian wives organized an ‘Artisan cigarette workshop Liu-Bo-Fa, Van-Tsey-Li.’³⁹ By early 1920, this enterprise employed 10 Chinese men and 19 Russian women.

Marriage advertisements in newspapers also attest to the desire of Chinese men to take Russian wives. Irkutsk’s *Marriage Newspaper* announced

A wealthy young Chinese man wants to get acquainted with a beautiful Russian lady with the purpose of marriage. Responses should be sent to: *Marriage Newspaper* for Hao.⁴⁰

In another advertisement, a Chinese man who describes himself as a very interesting person

wants to get acquainted with an intelligent Russian young lady. Write to the *Marriage Newspaper* for ‘Hoachan.’⁴¹

Yet another one, which was placed by a Chinese man who announced that he owned a business in Irkutsk, put some exacting conditions on prospective brides:

³⁶ GAKK, f. P-49, op. 3, d. 52, l. 126.

³⁷ GAIO, f. P-42, op. 1, d. 163, l. 11.

³⁸ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (thereafter – RGASPI), f. 495, op. 154, d. 44, l. 159.

³⁹ GATO, f. P-65, op. 1, d. 20, l. 3.

⁴⁰ *Brachnaya gazeta*, July 20, 1919.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, August 13, 1919.

I am referring only to Russian women who are good-looking, modest and not older than 22-25...⁴²

Most such advertisements were placed by Chinese men who decided to settle down in Russia. However, there were those who intended to take their bride back China:

A rich young respectable Chinese man offers his services as a husband. A photo is not required. Only those women who are willing to go to China should answer...⁴³

One unusual case was the ‘Chinese citizen Van Khesin named Alexander Nikolaev Popryaduhin in holy baptism,’ who did not intend to return to his homeland, but instead decided to stay in Russia. Having lived in Barnaul for over 15 years, he had converted to Orthodoxy and married the 27-year-old A. L. Shtki. In a petition to the commissioner he reported his wish to adopt ‘the son of Barguzin widow (Domna) Fevroniya Malygina’ and to give him his surname. He most likely undertook this step to help his application for citizenship.

The influence of Soviet-Chinese interstate relations on mixed families

During the Soviet era, the ties between Chinese migrants who stayed in Russia and their homeland began to fray. In the 1920s, the border between the two countries gradually closed, and it became more difficult to cross it after the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) conflict in 1929, and the establishment of the Japanese Manchukuo puppet state in the 1930s. Having lost any hopes of returning home, Chinese men who came to the Soviet Union began to settle down and start a family. The vast majority of migrants married local women, mostly Russian. Since there were virtually no Chinese women, they almost never wed compatriots and cultural differences discouraged taking Korean women as wives.⁴⁴ The archives suggest that the farther a Chinese migrant was away from the border, the more often he started a family. Whereas in Irkutsk, less than 500 kilometers from the border, in 1922 out of 7 Chinese men applied for the right to trade, 5 were single,⁴⁵ among a similar group the previous year in Krasnoyarsk, which lies over 1,500 kilometers China, about half were married to Russian women.

Details about the nature of mixed marriages are more difficult to obtain, although other sources might shed some light. For example, a survey of the domestic problems of Chinese workers at Baley plant revealed that

All are married exclusively to Russian women, in some cases, they beat their wives. So far none of them men have been in show trials.⁴⁶

As already noted, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, due to domestic and foreign political turmoil, the Soviet-Chinese state border was virtually closed. Tensions inten-

⁴² *Brachnaya gazeta*, August 23, 1919.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, August 13, 1919.

⁴⁴ D.A. Vladimirova, “Smeshannyye braki rossiyan i grazhdan KNR v Primorskom kraye,” *Vestnik of the Far East Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, no. 2 (2005): 111.

⁴⁵ ГАИО, ф. Р-145, оп. 1, д. 258, л. 113.

⁴⁶ ГАНИО, ф. 123, оп. 2, д. 24, л. 12 об.

sified after the conflict of 1929 involving the Chinese Eastern Railway. As a result, the ties with the homeland for Chinese migrants were severed and those who had planned to return had little hope. Those who planned to return to their homeland had less and less hope for it. Consequently, more Chinese men in the Soviet Union's eastern regions took wives. According to records of the *East Siberian regional Committee of the Communist party at Ust-Carian district for 1933*,

The vast majority of Easterners came from the provinces of Shandong, Zhili and the three Eastern provinces (Manchuria). They have been living on Soviet territory for 5–15 years. About 30% are married to Russian women.⁴⁷

At the same time, statistics for Chinese migrants allow us to draw preliminary conclusions about the geography of mixed Russian-Chinese families: the closer to the border with China, the fewer of them, and vice versa: the further they reside from the border with their homeland, the greater their number is. Thus, the *List of the Soviet citizens, who left for China with Chinese nationals in 1938* and the *List of identified persons without citizenship residing in the city of Vladivostok in 1938* indicate that most Chinese men who stayed in Vladivostok in the late 1930s had no families, being 'single.'⁴⁸

Consequently, it seems likely that those migrants who intended eventually to go back to their homeland moved close to the border and therefore they did not want to settle down to married life, which would it harder for them to return. By the same token, those Chinese men who lived far away from the Soviet-Chinese border had apparently either lost hope or decided not to return to China and sought to settle down in the new place of residence and start a family.

The records of 1938 of Chinese men deported from the Ussuri region to Xinjiang and the Amur region shed light on mixed marriages in the 1930s. Thus, the *List of Chinese and Soviet Citizens Living in the Ussuri Region and Deported to Xinjiang* contains information about 71 Russian women and their children. Meanwhile, the *List of Chinese Nationals and Their Families Living in Voroshilov* for that year counted 135 heads of households along with 192 family members. Among the latter, there were 34 women, not to mention children, of whom 20 Russian.⁴⁹ Similar records for Chinese men in Voroshilov (Ussuri) district listed 136 heads of households, with a total of 203 people. Among the 33 women, 15 were Russian.⁵⁰ Russian wives were also on the lists of Chinese defectors and Soviet farmers of Chinese origin.

In the late 1930s, the share of mixed Russian-Chinese still decreased as the distance to the border with China grew shorter. However, now this was the result of forced deportations of such couples. There are detailed lists of deportees in the archives.⁵¹ D.A. Vladimirova provides information of the mixed families that were deported in 1938–1939 from the Ussuri region to Kazakhstan, the Amur region and China.⁵²

⁴⁷ GANIIO, f. 123, op. 4, d. 53, l. 59–60.

⁴⁸ State Archive of Perm Region (thereafter – GAPK), f. 163, op. 1, d. 2, l. 4.

⁴⁹ GAPK, f. P-163, op. 1, d. 20, l. 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., d. 3, 4, 17, 20, 21, 40.

⁵² D.A. Vladimirova, "Smeshannyye braki rossiyan i grazhdan KNR v Primorskom kraye," *Vestnik of the Far East Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, no. 2 (2005): 112.

During the ‘Great Terror’ in the second half of the 1930s, considerable numbers of Chinese men living in the USSR not only became victims of deportations, but also suffered from repression. The records for repressed Chinese men who were subsequently rehabilitated also provide insights into the history of mixed families. For example, in 1938–1939, eight Chinese men with the surname Pan, from different provinces, who lived in the Chita region, were arrested. Among them, six were married to women with Russian names, one was single (there was no information on the marital status of the other man).⁵³ Among approximately 80 Chinese men named Yang arrested in the Chita region in the prewar years, only 20 were listed as single. While there was no data on the marital status of some of them, others had wives with Russian names, sometimes with Russian surnames, such as Efrosinia Cherepanova, Praskovia Sholokhova, Evdokia Kolesnikova, Fiokla Turkina, Elena Vasilevna Pelmeneva, Olga Isaakovna Bondarenko, Ksenia Leontevna Rustina, Daria Pavlovna Shaydurova, Uliana Spiridonovna Popova, among other.⁵⁴

What was the attitude to mixed families in the period under consideration? A confidential letter of 1931 to the district committees of the Communist Party and the Party cells of the East Siberian region reported rising hostility in the region to mixed Russian-Chinese marriages, which were seen, as unhealthy ‘miscegenation.’ The public believed that ‘such unions yield offspring with weakened viability and greater mortality.’⁵⁵ The letter’s author condemned this line of reasoning ‘as a great-power [bias].’⁵⁶ In addition, the regional prosecutor’s office complained about the ‘cynical mockery not only of Eastern workers, but also their wives’⁵⁷ by Russian workers. Thus, at the Chernovsk coal mine in Transbaikalia, the worker Sorokin ‘mocked the wives of Chinese workers,’ for which he was sentenced to six months’ hard labor.⁵⁸

Characteristics of mixed Russian Chinese families

Chinese migrants who married Russian women in the 1920s remained citizens of the Republic of China. Moreover, we found no cases of Chinese migrants who had children by Russian women who expressed any wish to take Russian citizenship. This made many of them vulnerable to deportations or worse due to accusations of sabotage or ‘Japanese espionage.’

In addition to Chinese and even Chinese Soviet citizens, some were classified according other categories, such as ‘undocumented,’ administratively expelled, defector. In June 1934, the Krasnoyarsk operations sector of the OGPU in the areas that became part of the regions

took into account the Chinese colony of 224 people, most of whom had settled in Krasnoyarsk, Kansk and a small number in rural areas. This population included 124 Soviet citizens, 58 foreign citizens, 30 ‘defectors’ and 3 ‘administratively expelled.’⁵⁹

⁵³ A. Solov’yev, *Kniga pamyati zhertv politicheskikh repressiy v Vostochnom Zabaykal’ye* (Chita: Poisk Publ., 2007), 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, l. 16, 372, 400.

⁵⁵ GANIIO, f. 123, op. 2, d. 24, l. 39–40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 39, 40, 73 ob., 75.

⁵⁹ S.M. Silonov, *Internirovannyye kitaytsy v Sibiri (1930-ye gg.)* (Krasnoyarsk: Izdatel’stvo Sibirskogo federal’nogo universiteta Publ., 2015), 100.

According to the archive's materials, some of 'defectors' had Russian wives.⁶⁰

In documents of the 1920s, Russian spouses of Chinese migrants were most often listed as housewives; although some were quite active in business and trade, such as making and selling light consumer goods like cigarettes and toys. In Krasnoyarsk, for example, many Chinese men sold groceries on Novobazarnaia square in the city center. Meanwhile, in January 1922, licenses for sales of tobacco products in the city were given to 12 Chinese men, 6 Russian wives and 1 widow.⁶¹

Chinese husbands tended to be older than their Russian wives. The *List of Chinese subjects and their families living in Voroshilov and Voroshilov district* details families where Russian wives were 38 years, 17 years, 16 years, 8 years, 4 years, etc., younger than their Chinese husbands.⁶² Meanwhile, the *List of Chinese Citizens to Be Deported from the Ussuri Region* in 1938, also shows significant disparities in age, ranging 12 to 13 years.⁶³

The specific data for some Russian-Chinese families of Krasnoyarsk in the first half of the 1920s provide an even more detailed picture. Thus, 41-year-old Go-Shin-Tyan from Shandong had a 26-year-old wife, Feodosia Ivanovna Tychkova, and an 11-month-old daughter, Nadezhda. Meanwhile, 36-year-old Innokenty Ivanovich Van-Yun-Chun had a 31-year-old wife Anna Leonidovna and 3 children: Klavdia, aged 10, Evgeny, and Leonid, who was 3.⁶⁴ In 1924, 32-year-old Li Xiangfu married 21-year-old Pelageia,⁶⁵ while the 28-year-old Chinese merchant Wan-Mon-In from Shandong was married to 23-year-old Alexandra⁶⁶ and a native of Zhili, 28-year-old Pai-Dy-Chen, was wed to 19-year-old Klavdiya.⁶⁷

The wives of the Chinese men arrested in the late 1930s were also much younger than their husbands. For example, one repressed Chinese, Cho Si, was born in 1887, and his wife Evdokiya Danilovna Sidorova was born 15 years later.⁶⁸ Another arrested Chinese, Chu Lizhi, was born in 1883, while his wife Elena Iakovlevna Dmitrieva was born in 1917 and his son Mikhail was born in 1936. Cho Tsai, was born in Beijing in 1880 and had a 35-year-old wife Maria, as well as two children aged 4 and 3.⁶⁹ And 46-year-old Chinese Tong Xiang had a 30-year-old wife, Staritsina, and 4 children ranging in age from 8 years to 8 months old;⁷⁰ 48-year-old Chinese Chu Favyn had 24-year-old wife Lyudmila and a 3-year-old son, the 50-year-old gardener from Sretensky district, Go-Sitsy, a native of Shandong, had 26-year-old wife Nadezhda and 4-year-old son Ivan,⁷¹ etc. All of them were repressed in 1937–1938.

⁶⁰ GAKP, f. P-163, op. 1, d. 20, l. 3.

⁶¹ Ibid., f. P-49, op. 3, d. 187, l. 10.

⁶² Ibid., f. P-163, op. 1, d. 20, l. 3.

⁶³ Ibid., d. 17, l. 5.

⁶⁴ GAKK, f. P-49, op. 3, d. 19, l. 739.

⁶⁵ Ibid., d. 87, l. 324.

⁶⁶ Ibid., d. 19, l. 266.

⁶⁷ Ibid., l. 585.

⁶⁸ A. Solov'yev, *Kniga pamyati zhertv politicheskikh repressiy*, 255.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 255–256.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁷¹ A. Solov'yev, *Kniga pamyati zhertv politicheskikh repressiy*, 84.

According to Soloviev, in the Chita region alone more than 3,000 Chinese men were arrested before the Great Patriotic War. In 1937–1938, 766 were shot, 89 died under investigation, and the vast majority of the remaining detainees were sent to prison.⁷² N.A. Potapova rightly notes that “both in Western and Eastern Siberia, the operation to cleanse the territories of Chinese men was total⁷³.” The Great Terror certainly reduced the number of Chinese men in the Soviet Union, and, accordingly, there were fewer mixed families. It also changed their composition, leaving many wives without husbands and children without fathers.

The archival documents contain information of the composition of mixed families. Most often families had 1 or 2 children, sometimes no children at all. Other cases were as follows: 35-year-old Dia-Min-Xiang in Irkutsk had 2 daughters;⁷⁴ in 1924, 36-year-old Innokenty Ivanovich Van-Yun-Chun and his 31-year-old wife Anna Leonidovna had 3 children (Klavdiya, Evgeny, Leonid).⁷⁵ 43-year-old Irkutsk doctor Lev Alexeevich Burlakov (his real name was Jin) was married to 33-year-old Kristina Fyodorovna, he had 10-year-old son Anton and 8-year-old daughter Ksenia.⁷⁶

There is little information about larger families, with only a few records for cases of rehabilitation of Chinese men who had four or more children.⁷⁷ The *List of Chinese Citizens of the USSR Resettled to the Amur region. 1938* includes details for 70 families with 130 children, or an average of 2 children per family. Meanwhile, the *List of Chinese Subjects and Their Families living in Voroshilov* in 1938 counts 135 heads of households, including single men, who had only 26 children. On the similar list on Voroshilovsky area, 136 men had 43 children.⁷⁸

The data from the *List of Chinese Citizens to be Deported from the Ussuri Region* generally confirm this trend, but there were some large families with 4, 5, 7, 8 children. However, this does not change the picture. Thus, Russian-Chinese mixed families had a small birth rate, which is slightly different from that of the traditional Russian family of the time. The demographer A. G. Vishnevsky noted that in the 1920s the average size of a rural family prevailing in Russia was 5–6 persons, and only from the end of the decade birth rates declined.⁷⁹

Children from mixed marriages usually went to school with Russian children.⁸⁰ E.I. Nesterova notes that in the 1920s in the Far East there were 4 Chinese state schools, and in Blagoveshchensk in one of the schools

⁷² A. Solov'yev, “Repressii kitaytsev v vostochnom Zabaykal'ye.” In *Kniga pamyati zhertv politicheskikh repressiy*, 76.

⁷³ N.A. Potapova, ‘Kitaytsy v fokuse repressiy Bol'shogo terrora v Sibiri i na Dal'nem Vostoke,’ *Vestnik of Orenburg State Pedagogical University*, no. 1 (25) (2018): 136.

⁷⁴ ГАИО, ф. Р-145, оп. 1, д. 258, л. 115.

⁷⁵ ГАКК, ф. Р-49, оп. 3, д. 19, л. 739.

⁷⁶ ГАИО, ф. Р-145, оп. 1, д. 20, л. 42.

⁷⁷ A. Solov'yev, *Kniga pamyati zhertv politicheskikh repressiy v Vostochnom Zabaykal'ye*, vol. 5 (Chita: Poisk Publ., 2007), 16.

⁷⁸ ГАКК, ф. Р-163, оп. 1, д. 20, л. 2.

⁷⁹ A.G. Vishnevskiy, ‘Evolutsiya rossiyskoy sem'i,’ *Ecology and Life*, no. 8 (2008): 11.

⁸⁰ ГАНИО, ф. 123, оп. 2, д. 24, л. 12 об.

there was specially organized a group of Chinese children for 50 people. 2 Chinese teachers and 1 Russian teacher worked with them.

However, these schools were for pure Chinese children, rather than those of mixed parentage.⁸¹

The Russian wives of ‘enemies of the people’ were also subjected to repression during the 1930s. Since their husbands had no relatives living in China, assuming the average mixed family had 2–3 children, in the Chita region alone up to 10 thousand children from such families grew up without one or both parents.

While the Great Terror significantly reduced the number of mixed families, some survived into the 1940s and subsequent years. For example, the household books of the Muy village council of the Bauntovsky district of Buryatia in the early 1940s included the family of the 52-year-old Chinese collective farmer Georgy Ivanovich Wang-Gan-Chen, whose family consisted of Maria Mikhailovna Van-Gan-Chen, born in 1901, and their son Ivan Georgievich, born in 1929. The same records for 1949, listed the details of a lumber depot worker, Alexander Vladimirovich Zan-Fun-Chin, who was born in 1933. While his nationality was listed as Russian, he was undoubtedly, a descendant of an interethnic Russian-Chinese marriage.⁸²

The postwar vicissitudes of Sino-Soviet relations led to an even greater reduction in the USSR’s Chinese community. Nevertheless, although small in number, it survived. Since the children of mixed marriages often took the Russian surname of their mother, many of them either did not know or hid their Chinese origins. There are a number of examples of Soviet Chinese men. Vasily Lu-Chan-San, who had served time in jail and worked as a stove-maker, lived in the village of Bogachevo, Irbey district, Krasnoyarsk region in the 1970s. He kept in touch with his homeland, corresponded with relatives, and even went to China several times. However, his four children bore the surname of the mother – Gribushin. They did not know any Chinese language, and neither they or others considered them to be anything but Russian. Another typical fate was that of Liu Xue, a native of Heilongjiang province who lived in Krasnoyarsk during the second half of the twentieth century. After serving 10 years in prison, she arrived at the village of Dolgy Most of the Krasnoyarsk region, joined her relatives there, and then, after marrying a Chinese, got a job as a cook in the regional center. In Siberia during the 1970s up to perestroika, and in the Soviet Union in general, Chinese migrants were isolated from the homeland and most of them assimilated.

Conclusions

This article analyzed the history and details of mixed Russian-Chinese marriages. Such unions appear to have begun in the late nineteenth century, but there is little reliable information about them. However, much more is known about the twentieth cen-

⁸¹ Ye.I. Nesterova, “Kitaytsy na rossiyskom Dal’nem Vostoke: nekotoryye aspekty sotsial’noy zhizni (seredina XIX – nachalo XIX vv.),” in *Rossiya i Kitay: istoriya i perspektivy sotrudnichestva. Materialy mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii* (Blagoveshchensk: Blagoveshchensk State Pedagogical University Publ., 2014), 94–99.

⁸² Archive of the municipality of Muy district of the Republic of Buryatia (AAM MR RB), f. 24, op. 1, d. 2., l. 5–7.

tury. Due to the gender disparities in the migrant Chinese community in Russia, we only considered marriages of a Chinese husband and a Russian wife. The decline in Russia's male population during the First World War and the Civil War encouraged Russian women to marry hardworking Chinese men. The social background of the former varied, and they included Cossacks, peasant women, and even noblewomen. After being married, they mainly did housework, although some ran small businesses or traded along with their husbands. Chinese men invariably took younger Russian wives – in some cases considerably so – and had fewer children than fully Russian couples. Their children were brought up according to Russian traditions and they attended Russian schools.

Beginning in 1929, mixed families became subject to deportation, typically to Xinjiang, Kazakhstan, and the Amur region. As the Great Terror erupted, they were often repressed. At the same time, the vagaries of Sino-Soviet relations also had their effect. Despite these hardships, the Chinese community in the Far East and Siberia survived and later became the basis of Chinese migration in the post-Soviet period.

The history of mixed Russian-Chinese families requires further research. As scholars examine a wider range of sources, they will shed more light on the history of such families as well as their demography and ethnography, not to mention acculturation and subsequent assimilation. Ego documents and oral histories are particularly valuable for studying this phenomenon, since they also yield important insights into their daily lives.

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Информация об авторах / Information about the authors

Дацышен Владимир Григорьевич, доктор исторических наук, профессор, заведующий кафедрой всеобщей истории Сибирского федерального университета, профессор кафедры всеобщей истории Красноярского государственного педагогического университета

Vladimir G. Datsyshen, Doktor istoricheskikh nauk [Dr. habil. hist.], professor and head of the Department of World History, Siberian Federal University, Professor of the Department of World History, Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University.

Кутилова Лариса Александровна, кандидат исторических наук, доцент кафедры всеобщей истории Сибирского федерального университета.

Larisa A. Kutilova, Kandidat istoricheskikh nauk [Ph.D. in History], Associate Professor at the Department of World History, Siberian Federal University.