TRANS-NATIONAL MARRIAGE IN CHINA

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A whole book would be required to answer all of the questions, and offer all of the advice needed, for successful marriages between Chinese and people from other countries, and I do intend to write such a book, but for now, you will have to settle for this compilation of resources about trans-national marriages.

But first, let me give you a brief introduction. I am an American and my wife is Chinese. We have been married for 17 years. At time it has been challenging, and at other times it seemed absolutely impossible. But, I would not trade my beautiful Chinese wife for anyone else in the world. Of course, in my case, I am fanatical about culture research, so my marriage has been a real-life laboratory. No, that is not the reason I married her, but our relationship has been a very enlightening cultural experience.

I have had many western friends, who plan to marry a Chinse person, ask me for advice. I answer with just one word: "Don't"

But, I know people who are in love will not listen to that, so I finally end up spending a lot of time sharing personal experiences and talking about cultural differences that they need to be aware of in order to have successful cross-cultural marriages. I have also known of too many trans-national marriages that failed. Often, although not always, the failure is due to lack of understanding each other's cultures.

Culture cannot be blamed for every problem, and when it is, the couple is doomed to give up too easily. Many of the broken cross-cultural relationships are cause by problems that also happen to couples who are from the same culture. For example, lack of respect, selfishness, drinking and drug addictions, infidelity, in-law conflicts, etc., can ruin any marriage, although adding cultural differences to the mix of challenges intensifies the conflict. For most marriage relationship problems, seeing a good marriage counselor is an important first step.

Both extreme views can negatively affect a cross-cultural marriage; blaming every problem on culture, as we just discussed, and the opposite extreme; denying the existence of cultural conflicts.

Many of the cross-cultural couples I have known over the years have started with the emotional, "we are so in love" stage, where the saying, love is blind" is written all over their faces. Everyone, except for the two of them, can see it. When I try to warn them of potential cultural conflicts, common responses are: "We will not have conflicts because she is so 'westernized,'" "If we really love each other, culture will never be a problem," and "We both understand each other's cultures." Sometimes, "understand," just means the foreign partner knows how to use chop sticks and understands that they will be celebrating Chinese New Year, and the Chinese partner can speak English and is attracted to western pop culture. It does not mean they really understand the ins and outs of each other's cultures. Sooner or later, in most cases, this lack of genuine understanding comes back to haunt them.

Until I finish that book about trans-national marriage, you will have to settle for this compilation of resources.

For the first resource, let's start with a book, which is available in both Chinese and English. This book is not specifically for cross-cultural situations, but as noted above, not all marriage

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problems are related to culture, so even the cross-cultural couple needs to read up on general help for couples. The name of the book is, The Five Love Languages, by Gary Chapman. The Chinese title, easily available in many bookstores and online, is 爱的五种语言. Every couple, cross-cultural or not, can greatly benefit from reading this book.

Next, let's look at a few websites for trans-national marriage in China resources:

eBeijing (Official English website of the Beijing government):
Provisions for the Registration of Marriage Between Chinese Citizens and Foreigners:
http://www.ebeijing.gov.cn/feature_2/GettingMarriedInBeijing/LawsAndRegulations/t1112837.htm
Marriage Registration:
http://www.ebeijing.gov.cn/feature_2/GettingMarriedInBeijing/LocalRegistrationService/t1112835.htm

US Embassy in Beijing, Living, Working, and Marriage in China: https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/u-s-citizen-services/local-resources-of-u-s-citizens/life-china-living-working-marriage/

State Administration of Foreign Affairs (SAFEA): Marriage & Divorce in China:
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/m/2017safea/2017-02/28/content_28380157.htm

Travel China Guide: Chinese Marriage:
https://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/social_customs/marriage/customs.htm

eChina Cities: Foreigner vs. Chinese Tradition: Relationship Roles in a Chinese Family:
https://www.echinacities.com/expat-corner/Foreigner-Vs-Chinese-Tradition-Relationship-Roles-in-a-Chinese-Family

Now that you have looked at some sites with practical information, before you actually marry that person from another culture, read the following articles about culture:

Quora: What are the major differneces…?
https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-major-differences-between-Chinese-and-Western-cultures

Difference Between Net: Difference Between Chinese and Western Culture:
http://www.differencebetween.net/miscellaneous/difference-between-chinese-and-western-culture/

Owlcation: 10 Major Cultural Differences:
https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/10-Major-Cultural-Differences---China-and-the-United-States

Culture at Work: Communicating Across Cultures; High and Low Context:
http://www.culture-at-work.com/highlow.html

Southeastern University: Cultural Communication: High and Low Context Cultures:
http://online.seu.edu/high-and-low-context-cultures/

Liberty University, Communication in Intercultural Marriages:
http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1206&context=masters

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