

## *Marriage Expenses in Rural China\**

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### *Abstract*

High marriage expenses in China's rural areas have drawn considerable attention from the public, media, and academia. This article reviews recent literature on China's rural marriage expenses and related issues. We first describe China's rural marriage process and the high level of expenses including total expenses, housing expenses, bride-price, and marriage banquet expenses. Afterward we analyze speculatively the three causes of high marriage expenses: parental obligation, face-related competition in village culture, and imbalanced bargaining power due to the shortage of women. Next we introduce briefly the consequences of high expenditure on marriage. Then we investigate the three contentious issues related to high rural marriage expenses, namely economic exploitation between families, between generations, and within generations; high marriage expenses and female social status; and the preference for sons. We conclude with issues for future research.

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