

**Marriage, Migration and the International  
Marriage Business in Japan**

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**This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of  
Murdoch University, 2002**

***I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.***



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**Tomoko Nakamatsu**

## Abstract

This thesis examines the development of the international marriage business in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, and the experiences of female participants from China, South Korea, and the Philippines who married through this system and currently live in Japan.

The study treats these women as active female migrants and contributes to a gendered understanding of the process of contemporary migration. The thesis argues for an acknowledgement of the way in which the international marriage business served the purposes of marriage and migration for women in male dominant and economically stratified societies in Asia, without downplaying the fact that the same system and its ideology oppresses women. The study argues that, for these women, participation in international marriage by introduction was about marriage *and* migration. Analysis of the intricate sites of marriage and migration was thus critical to understanding their experiences. The thesis also argues for recognition of the diverse and complex experiences of the women participants.

Part I of this study investigates the macro-economic, social and political factors that influenced development of the international marriage business in Japan. It analyses representations of international introduction marriage and its female participants, and maps the ways in which patriarchal gender ideology in the international marriage business system intersects with global capitalism, and other hegemonic power relations operating in contemporary Japan.

Part II examines the marriage and migration experiences of 45 women. The section identifies conflicts faced by the women and examines processes of negotiation inside and outside the family domain. It investigates the extent of the women's agency in their decision to marry and live in a foreign country, covering interconnected arenas of marriage, family, paid work, involvement in women's groups and questions of legal citizenship. The women's narratives demonstrate the importance of articulating a structurally embedded analysis with active female agency in the study of international marriage migration.

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Japanese names are indicated with the surname first, followed by the given name. Long vowels are written with a macron over the vowel as in *sōdan*, except for words that are commonly used in English such as Tokyo.



## 1

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**INTRODUCTION****1.1 Marriage Introduction and the Introduction Business**

*Miai kekkon* (marriage by introduction) is a long-standing social practice in Japan. It is not, however, a static 'tradition'. Family patterns and functions in Japanese society underwent significant changes in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Economic, social and legal changes had a direct effect on the practice of marriage by introduction in terms of how it was performed, who performed it and how prevalent was the practice. Marriage by introduction involves intermediaries, and their involvement gave scope for turning a practice into business. Socio-economic changes in the post World War II period provided an opportunity for this intermediary group to become established as the marriage introduction industry. As the social meaning of *miai kekkon* changed over time, so did the features and function of intermediaries.

*Miai* refers to meetings with a view to marriage and *miai kekkon* indicates marriages that eventuate from introductions<sup>1</sup>. The standard meaning given to the term is 'arranged marriage' (see for example, *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary* 1974; *The Kodansha Japanese-English Dictionary* 1976). But over the last one and half centuries its usage has gradually lost the coercive connotation of the term, where prospective couples had no choice over the selection of their partners. *Miai kekkon* in today's sense signifies no more than marriages where the couple's initial meeting is formally arranged by intermediaries. The intermediaries can be commercial agencies or non-commercial parties such as relatives. Participants in introductions, with or without consulting their parents, decide whether to pursue the relationship and subsequently marriage. 'Marriages by arranged introductions' rather than 'arranged marriages' therefore better captures the contemporary social practice of *miai kekkon*. Tracing the history of marriages identified as *miai kekkon* reveals its many forms.

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Traditional *miai kekkon* (arranged marriages where prospective couples have minimal or no choice over the matter) became widespread in the late nineteenth century as a result of the modernisation process that Japan was experiencing at that time. *Miai kekkon* had been largely a practice of the ruling class in feudal Japan, where matching the status of the household was important. Among the peasant class, young men and women under strict village endogamy selected partners in this era largely based on premarital interaction including sexual intercourse.<sup>2</sup> The advent of the Meiji era (1868-1901) saw the practice of *miai kekkon* spread to other social classes. The Meiji government's political push for modernisation, industrialisation and westernisation brought a range of legal and social changes. The government banned premarital relationships and the practice among the young villagers gradually lost popularity (Ueno 1995). This change coincided with the process of displacement of smaller farming families, brought about by the lifting of restrictions on the sale of agricultural land leading to differentiation in wealth among the villagers. In this way, legal and social changes affected the practices of the formerly closed village communities, including a decline in the custom of premarital relationships among the young single population that gave rise to the practice of marriage introduction (Ueno 1995).

One of the significant changes that Meiji government policies brought about concerned the perception of the Japanese family, commonly referred to the *ie* (house; household; family) system. Muta (1996) argues that the family system in the Meiji era, albeit often described as 'traditional' in many sections of contemporary Japanese society, developed differently in a legal and practical sense from the preceding one of the feudal Japan, and favoured the industrial change that Japan underwent at the time. The family became a more economically and politically independent unit, less subject to the influence of the clan group and village community than it had been previously.

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<sup>2</sup> While some tended to stress the free choice of individuals in the system of mate selection in villages in feudal Japan (Yanagida cited in Ueno 1995 62-65), others suggested that the young women in the village did not have such power of free choice and the system was rather one in which young men monopolised sexual access to young women's bodies in the same village (Murakami cited in Ehara 1985 147)

At the same time the number of households increased due to the social movement to establish independent households by second and third sons who had been denied such rights due to the eldest son's privilege over the household inheritance and formal enshrining of the ancestors (Kamijima, cited in Muta 1996: 16).<sup>3</sup> The family system established by the 1898 Meiji civil law supported and further advanced this social trend. Meiji civil law endorsed the right of the head of the household to manage assets, that in effect freed the family from the control of the clan or village community. The family system upheld as an ideal was still the extended family and not the nuclear family, but it was nonetheless promoted to function as an independent domestic unit under direct governance by the state. Other reforms in the family register,<sup>4</sup> tax, and conscription systems contributed to the dissemination of such notions of the family among the wider populace (Muta 1996). Japan's transformation into an industrialised and modernised nation-state restructured the site of the family, transferring ultimate control from clan groups and village communities to the state.

More importantly, the ideology of the family promoted by the Meiji government was a patriarchal one in which authoritarian power over other members of the family rested with the male head of the household. A 'modern' household was patriarchal in essence, with elevated rights for the male head who came under the direct governance of the nation-state. The notion of the family line, associated only with the upper classes in feudal Japan, became important among ordinary families as a result of Meiji reforms. The practice of arranged marriages that had been used to ensure the family line and

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3 These second and third sons' households were called *bunke*, or branch families, as opposed to *honke*, the head family in which the eldest son succeeded. As these terms suggest, the second and third sons' households were not totally 'independent' from the control and support of the head family. The terminologies remain commonly used in many rural areas in contemporary Japan.

4 The system of the family or household register is called *koseki* and its central purpose is formal registration of the population. Its original form dates back to the late seventh century and different variations have been practiced in periods since (Hisatake 1990). In the Meiji era, the 1872 version of the family register required the recording of all members who actually live in one household as a unit, that included, for example a servant. Meiji civil law enacted in 1898 revised the practice to register 'a family' as a unit, defined as the head of the household and those who have a certain blood relation to the head (Hisatake 1990). Under the current family register law that was put into effect in 1948, the entry to one register can only include up to two generations such as a married couple and their unmarried children (see Chapter 8 for a discussion of the effect of the family registration system on foreign spouses of Japanese).

socio-economic status among the ruling classes then also became widespread across all classes in tandem with the ideology and practice of the Meiji family system that was disseminated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The method of performing marriage by introduction underwent change in the expanding cities of the early twentieth century. The industrialization at the time promoted urbanisation in which mainly second and third sons of rural origin moved to cities as wage earners (Reischauer 1989), forming 'the new middle-class' (Muta 1996: 36). At the same time, marriage agencies became active in cities. By the late 1920s, a number of private marriage agencies were seen in urban areas, and the first public marriage consultancy appeared in Tokyo in 1933 (Tokyo-to Kekkō Sōdanjo 1996). Evidence suggests that individuals in search of spouses approached these agencies by themselves (see Tokyo-to Kekkō Sōdanjo 1996), indicating the lessening of parental control over such matters for young city dwellers. The form of marriage by introduction remained as a norm, but along with other social and economic changes that were brought by urbanisation, its social practice began to encompass a wider spectrum of the community in cities, contributing to an emergence of professional matchmakers.

Another form of marriage by introduction developed specifically for sending Japanese brides to Japanese men overseas. The 'Gentlemen's Agreement' between the Japanese Government and the United States of America and Canada that came into effect in 1908 forced the Japanese government to halt new labour immigration to these countries except for family members of existing Japanese immigrants. Consequently, the practice of *shashin-kon* (picture marriage or picture brides), in which marriage was arranged without meeting a partner except for exchanging photographs, became popular in the 1910s and 1920s for Japanese immigrant labourers in the United States (Chai 1992) and Canada (Makabe 1983). Usually a go-between such as a mutual acquaintance or relative of the prospective groom arranged the marriage of 'picture brides' (Chai 1992: 125). Later, the *tairiku no hanayome* (literally, brides for the continent) scheme involved a similar use of marriage by introduction. The *tairiku no hanayome* scheme was more systematically conducted than *shashin-kon* (picture marriage). During Japan's colonial expansion in the 1930s and 1940s, the marriages of Japanese farm

settlers in former Manchuria were widely organised by introduction through private marriage agencies and organisations under the control of the Department of Colonial Affairs. The government encouraged women to marry these farmers and settle in Manchuria in order to establish stable and firm colonial territories (Imagawa 1990). As male immigrants, whether in Hawaii or Manchuria, had extremely limited chances of finding a marriage partner overseas, they came to depend upon one or another form of marriage by introduction.

Recent studies on the 'picture brides' and 'brides for the continent' showed commonalities in women's reasons for entering such a marriage (Chai 1992; Makabe 1983; Furukubo 1997). The women considered marriage by introduction an opportunity to realise their aspirations when other alternatives in life were scarce. Chai (1992: 126), in her study of 'picture brides' in Hawaii, described their aspirations as 'achieving individual goals of adventure, social status enhancement, or a free and independent life.' While Makabe (1983: 13) mentioned aspiration for 'financial success in life' as an important motive for the 'picture brides' who went to Canada, Furukubo (1997: 23) depicted 'realising an ideal of a 'modern' happy family bounded with mutual love of the husband and wife' as an aspiration for those who went to Manchuria. Marriage by introduction was thus perceived somewhat differently by these women of mainly rural origin. It was much less to do with matching the status of households, placing the household over an individual, but for overseas bound women when marriage was tied to the prospect of migration, it does seem to have allowed them a sense of choice and self-expression over their lives.

Co-existing with the more popular private marriage agencies and go-betweens, public marriage bureaus were established in the urban areas in the post World War II period. They provided social welfare services in supplying spouses for war widows, returned former soldiers and females in their late 20s and 30s whose potential spouses became scarce because of war. These bureaus later accommodated young workers who migrated from rural areas (Tokyo-to Kekkō Sōdanjo 1996; Ōno 1990). They provided a service for people who had difficulty in finding a partner. There is also evidence that these marriage bureaus were perceived as offering a non-traditional way of selecting a

marriage partner. One of the consultancies in Tokyo recorded in the late 1950s and the early 1960s that their clients visited the consultancy because they disliked matchmaking by go-betweens (often relatives or their parents' acquaintances) and wanted to choose a partner freely from a larger number of potential candidates (Tokyo-to Kekkō Sōdanjo 1996). This indicates that the roles of go-betweens and marriage bureaus were differently understood: the former as operating within the 'traditional' parameters of matching households, and the latter as oriented toward achieving spouse selection based on the client's personal choice. The development of marriage by introduction has shown diversity in its perceptions and conduct throughout the twentieth century

The social practice of *miai* (introductions with a view to marriage) as a method of finding a suitable marriage partner gradually lost its popularity by the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s (Minoura 1995: 33). Personal selection based on romantic love gained status during Japan's high economic growth period (1955 ~ 1973), and *renai* (romantic love) became a trendier alternative to *miai* (introduction) as an ideal method of meeting up with a potential marriage partner. The expansion of second and tertiary sectors of industry caused rapid urbanisation and a decline in the number of farmers, causing a profound influence in every corner of society. While Japan's economy became the third largest in the world by 1975, the number of farm families fell from 6 million in 1960 to 4.95 million in 1975 (Reischauer 1989). The nuclear family with fewer children became the common family form in Japan, and nearly 90 per cent of people considered themselves middle-class in 1967 (Economic Planning Agency 1995: 154-155). In this 'basically urban' (Reischauer 1989: 297) Japan in the early 1970s, marriage by introduction, once a symbol of Meiji 'modernity' (Ueno 1995: 69), conceded its normative status to *renai kekkō* (literally, marriage by romantic love), where prospective couples initially meet 'spontaneously' and subsequently marry. Marriage was now perceived as well as practiced as a personal matter. Throughout the 1970s and 1990s, marriage by introduction through intermediaries was increasingly perceived as outdated and second best, and generally for those who otherwise had difficulty in finding a partner among the vast majority of the population.

In European history, ideals of romantic love marriage appeared at the same time as the separation of production functions from households caused by industrialisation (Cancian cited in Giddens 1993; Hamilton cited in Robinson 1996). Along with this separation, personal relationships in the family became distinguished from relationships in the workplace. Affective individualism began to appear, transforming the basis of marriage and the relationships of women and men (Cancian cited in Giddens 1993). In Japan, industrialisation in the late nineteenth century and the modernization policies of the government at the time promoted the separation of production functions from tight-knit farming communities, and the notion of the patriarchal (extended) family as a basic unit. The process gave rise to marriage by introduction. In the recent period of high economic growth, the popular form of mate selection started to shift away from introduction, and the idea of romantic love started to dominate the choice of spouses. Economic advancement brought further industrialization, rapid urbanization and westernisation, and enabled some individuals to become autonomous, and remove themselves from family control over their marriage, embarking on the quest for marriage based on romantic love.

The free choice of spouse based on romantic love as an ideal does not, however, guarantee a spouse for all. In the early 1970s, associations of marriage agents began to emerge in major cities, uniting typically neighbourhood-operated small marriage agencies and private persons acting as go-betweens. This affiliation made it possible for small scale agencies to increase their operational volume over a wider geographical area through exchanging profiles of individual candidates among member agencies. Then, nation-wide large scale computerised marriage information service firms mushroomed between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s until excessive competition affected some bureaus (Ōno 1990). Aggressive advertisements and promises of frequent introductions attracted a large number of members despite the costly membership fees. These large scale firms claimed not to offer matchmaking as such, but information on a wide range of potential partners. Anticipation of finding the most 'suitable' partner from a (supposed) wide range of choices was very attractive to some young people.



International marriage introduction came to prominent attention in the mid-1980s, when some rural municipalities involved themselves in arranging marriage introductions between Filipino women and Japanese men in their villages. Usually small-scale private marriage agencies were heavily involved in organising these meetings. The international operation of marriage agencies however precedes the involvement of these rural shires. Private agencies or individuals acting as agents already operated as suppliers of Japanese women to the USA in the 1970s. Mullan (1984) reported that Japanese women along with other Asian women were popular among the US marriage introduction agencies. Around the late 1970s and the early 1980s, Japan-based marriage agents started to operate internationally, introducing Taiwanese and South Korean women to Japanese men. Agents also introduced Korean women to Korean men resident in Japan. The international marriage business was then promoted to South Korean and Filipino women in the late 1980s and Chinese women and, to a lesser extent, Russian women in the early 1990s.

Overseas business connections proved invaluable for marriage agencies starting up overseas operations. Increased economic and social integration together with the massive movement of people within the Asian region encouraged these mutual developments. Domestic demand supported their activities as certain sections of the population found difficulty finding marriage partners. These agencies with overseas business ties typically act as suppliers of foreign women to their affiliated domestic agencies. Yet, in spite of the growth of the marriage business, international marriage through introduction by agents is by no means widely accepted to the extent that domestic introduction is and has been; nor do Japanese men and women freely practise it as a preferred option to domestic marriage. Nonetheless, it became a more familiar means of spouse selection than it had been previously.

The social meaning, function and patterns of *miai kekkon* (marriage by introduction) existed in many forms reflecting class and gender values at one point in history, and have significantly changed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The role of intermediaries – though essentially to assist with finding a marriage partner – has been transformed accordingly. Yet marriage itself largely remains a pervasive social

institution, supporting the contemporary patriarchal and capitalistic political and economic system of Japan. It in turn encourages the introduction business, either in the form of arranging introductions or providing information about candidates whether through domestic or international operations.

## 1.2 *Kokusai Kekkon*

Marriage between Japanese men and foreign women through marriage agencies, the topic of this study, is discussed as a form of *kokusai kekkon* (international marriage) in Japan, as well as of *miai kekkon* (marriage by introduction) in the marriage agencies' vocabulary. The transnational marriage business and marriage migrants add another dimension to the history of *kokusai kekkon* in contemporary Japan. This section briefly traces the changes in the feature of marriages defined as *kokusai kekkon* over the last one and half centuries in Japan, in order to highlight the background of the current issue of international marriage by introduction.

The term *kokusai kekkon* became popularised in the Meiji era as the process of modernisation and internationalisation of Japan progressed (Koyama 1995). Newly introduced at the time, *kokusai kekkon* gradually replaced expressions such as *naigai kekkon* (marriages of natives and foreigners) or *zakkon* (mixed marriages) (Koyama 1995). The popularity of the new terminology that emphasised 'inter-national' nature of marriages signalled Japan's definition of itself as a modern nation-state.

Before the Meiji modernisation, Japan had closed its doors to foreigners in most of the Edo period (1603-1867), and permitted only certain foreigners to stay in designated places (Reischauer 1989).<sup>5</sup> There was no form of legally recognised marriage between Japanese and foreigners in the Edo era. Male foreign dwellers mainly took Japanese women as their mistresses (Koyama 1995; Shukuya 1988).

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<sup>5</sup> All missionary activity was banned in 1612 and by 1840 Japanese were strictly prohibited from practicing Christianity, and going abroad or returning to Japan if already overseas (Reischauer 1989)

In 1873, Japan introduced the first regulations on international marriage, which lasted until a major legal reform in 1897. Under the 1873 regulations, a Japanese woman who married a foreigner lost her Japanese nationality at marriage, and a foreign wife of a Japanese man was required to renounce her original nationality to take up Japanese nationality (Koyama 1995). According to Koyama's (1995) detailed work, during this period 80 per cent of registered international marriages were between Japanese women and foreign men, commonly British and Chinese men staying in Japan. Japanese men who married foreigners, on the other hand, mainly met their prospective wives in Germany, England or the United States, where the Japanese government had sent them for the purpose of study (1995)

As contact with foreigners brought the opportunity for marriage with them, so did Japan's colonial expansion into neighbouring Asian countries. Although not officially sanctioned, the Japanese colonial government in occupied Korea (1910 - 1945) encouraged *naisen kekkon* (marriage between Japanese and Korean colonial subjects), in particular between Japanese women and Korean men who in that period had Japanese nationality (Itō 1995). This was part of a wider policy to eliminate Korean racial and ethnic identities alongside *sōshi kaimet* (forcing the abandonment of Korean names and adopting Japanese-style names), the compulsory use of Japanese language, and the worship of *Shinto* shrines. A symbolic case was that of a Japanese imperial princess and the last Korean Crown Prince of the Yi dynasty (1392 - 1910), who were married for political reasons in 1920 (Itō 1995). More usually under this policy, Japanese women married Korean men brought to Japan by the Japanese government to work in mines or other sites as labourers. After Korea became independent in 1945, most of the Japanese women who married in Korea remained there, and many of those who had lived in Japan moved to Korea with their Korean husbands. Itō's (1995) interviews with some of these women at a nursing home in Korea depicted the hardships and challenges of their post-war lives in South Korea where anti-Japanese sentiments arising from the colonial experience were profound.

Marriages between Japanese and Koreans dominated the scene of international marriages beyond the end of the World War II. Marriage with Korean nationals<sup>6</sup> comprised the largest number of foreign marriages in 1965, making up 79 per cent of Japanese men's and 36.5 per cent of Japanese women's marriages with foreigners (Ministry of Health and Welfare 1996). The majority of these Korean nationals were Korean residents in Japan, who themselves or whose parents had once had Japanese nationality under Japanese colonial rule, but lost it in the immediate post-war period because of a series of discriminatory Japanese government policies (Kashiwazaki 2000). The 'inter-ethnic' marriage of Japanese nationals and Korean residents in Japan has subsequently been registered as 'international marriage' in government statistics due to their use of nationality criteria.<sup>7</sup>

The end of World War II and the Allied Occupation led by the United States brought another kind of 'international marriage' to Japan. During the Occupation (1945 - 1954), international marriage between Japanese women and servicemen from the United States became prominent (Nitta 1998). Commonly called *sensō hanayome* (war brides), many of these women migrated to the United States. Shukuya (1988) commented on the hostile attitude of the Japanese public toward these women, yet the trend of Japanese women marrying foreign men continued throughout the 1960s. In 1965, only 1,067 Japanese men married foreign women, whereas 3,089 Japanese women married foreign men, 51.5 per cent of them from the United States. Among the 2823 marriages between Japanese women and foreign men in 1975, the proportion of those marrying men from the United States decreased to 22 per cent, and continued with a similar proportion into the 1990s, though the actual number of marriages between Japanese women and American men increased (Ministry of Health and Welfare 1996).

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<sup>6</sup> This includes both North and South Korea origins

<sup>7</sup> The number of marriages between resident Koreans and Japanese surpassed that of Korean-to-Korean[in Japan] in 1975 (Kim 1985), and by 1994 Korean-Japanese marriages had increased to 81.5 per cent of the total number of marriages involving Korean residents (Kim, cited in Ryang 2000)

The trend in international marriage from the mid-1970s to the 1990s reflected the increased economic, social and cultural integration of Japan with other Asian countries that encouraged the movement of people in the region (see Chapter 3). The number of registered international marriages doubled between 1975 and 1985, and again doubled within five years, reaching 25,626 in 1990 (Ministry of Health and Welfare 1996). Between 1965 and 1980, marriages with a foreign national represented less than one per cent of the total marriages registered in Japan. The figure increased to 1.7 per cent in 1985 and to 3.5 per cent in 1990, with the largest rise between 1988 and 1989.

This increase was largely due to the growth in the number of marriages between Japanese men and foreign women: in 1975 for the first time, Japanese men marrying non-Japanese nationals outnumbered Japanese women marrying non-Japanese nationals. As the vital statistics from the Ministry of Health and Welfare (various years) showed only four categories of countries of the foreign spouses – Korea (North and South), China, United States and Others – until 1992, it is difficult to pinpoint the nationalities of the foreign wives in the ‘Others’ category which accounted for the substantial increase in the number of marriages between Japanese men and foreign women. But the breakdown of the originating countries of foreign brides in the more detailed 1994 figures (Ministry of Health and Welfare 1996) shows that nearly 90 per cent of the 19,216 foreign brides were of Asian origin. Of the total, Filipino nationals made up 31.2 per cent and formed the largest group of foreign brides, followed by Korean nationals (25.2 per cent), Chinese (23.9 per cent) and Thai (9.6 per cent). The number of Filipino women who came to work in Japan – mostly employed in the entertainment industry – significantly expanded in the 1980s. Inter-marriage with Filipino migrant workers already resident in Japan caused the first major increase in the number of marriages between Japanese men and Filipino women (Kojima 1996; Suzuki 2000). The establishment of the international marriage business in Japan – the theme of this study – simultaneously contributed to the increase of marriages between Japanese men and women from other Asian countries.

Although the scale is not significant when compared with international marriages among Japanese men, the number of marriages between Japanese women and men from the Asian region became notable around the early 1990s. Most of these men came to Japan for employment, study or training purposes. Some Japanese women married foreign nationals who overstayed their visas and sought to obtain special permission for spouse residence for their partners (see for example Shahed and Sekiguchi 1992). There were enough unions between men from the Asian region and Japanese women to justify the establishment of the monthly magazine *Misshuku* in 1992, which targeted Japanese women whose partners were from Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The magazine featured stories about living with a foreigner of 'Asian' origin in Japan, and organised seminars on issues such as, for example, legal questions involved in marrying an 'over-stayer' (personal interview with the editor of the magazine October 1996).

These changes in the features of *kokusai kekkon* (international marriage) reflected Japan's historic and contemporary international relations with other countries. The term *kokusai kekkon* essentially refers to marriages of people of different nationalities, and is inadequate to deal with the question of ethnicity. The term excludes cross-cultural or cross-ethnic marriages of people who have the same nationality and live in the same country. Such couples do not appear as *kokusai kekkon* on official marriage statistics, but may be regarded as such by some people in day-to-day social life. The lack of an equivalent term for cross-cultural marriage in the current Japanese language indicates Japan's lack of consideration of and exposure to such marriages. The social use of the term *kokusai kekkon* shows slippage in associations across concepts of international, cross-cultural, or cross-ethnic marriages. The term encompasses the marriages which are the focus of this study. In looking at the contemporary use of *miai kekkon* in the international context, this study will also contribute to analysis of the on-going process of re-framing what *kokusai kekkon* signifies in Japan today.

### 1.3 Definitions

I use the term ‘international marriage’ as a category encompassing the intermarriages in this study. It is a direct translation of the Japanese word *kokusai kekkon*. Its use situates the marriages under discussion within the historical construction of intermarriage that reflected Japan’s international relations described in the previous section. Further, this usage also highlights the *transnational/ international* nature of marriage agencies activities. The term also offers a better understanding of why marriage with foreign nationals was promoted under the rhetoric of ‘internationalisation’ by some marriage agencies and rural local governments. An equally important point is that, compared to terms such as ‘cross-marriage’ or ‘cross-cultural marriage’, the term ‘inter-national marriage’ allows me to place more emphasis on the aspect of migration – of one spouse to the other spouse’s country of residence – as a feature of this study. The term ‘international marriage’ is thus suitable as a broad category to refer to intermarriage in the context of this study.

The term ‘international marriage business’ in this study refers to commercialised marriage agencies or individuals acting as agents who charge fees, and who conduct business in two or more countries. The terms ‘international marriage by introduction’ or ‘international introduction marriage’ refer to one category of international marriages that are arranged by such intermediaries. I use the term ‘marriage migration’ to focus on the importance of marriage as well as migration for one spouse in international marriage by introduction

This study focuses on Chinese, Korean, and Filipino women who used the international marriage business service to marry Japanese men. I use the terms ‘female (or women) participants’, ‘marriage migrants’ and ‘migrant women’ to refer to these women in different contexts. These designations are useful for emphasising the different aspects of these women’s motivation and experience as well as some sense of autonomy in their decision to take up marriage, work and life in Japan. Other general terms such as ‘women from neighbouring Asian countries’, ‘foreign brides’, or ‘foreign women’ are also used in this study depending on the content of discussion. When the media report

on the business of international marriage, they refer to women who were married to Japanese through this system as ‘brides from Asia’, ‘Asian brides’, or sometimes ‘rural brides.’ Many Japanese to whom I spoke in Japan used these terms. Some people also used the term ‘*mukō no hito*’ (literally, people from over there). Popular terminology differentiated and racially marked the brides as ‘Asian’ – a distinct entity, over there – apart from ‘Japan’. It is important to note the differentiation of the term ‘Asian (or Asia)’ and ‘Japanese (or Japan)’. Whilst Japan is geographically part of Asia, Japanese identity does not correspond with conventional geographical and cultural categorisations of Asia (Söderberg and Reader 2000). Indeed, Japan's inclusion within or externalisation of the ethno-historical category ‘Asia’ has been one of the significant features in the construction of Japanese identity. The use of the term ‘Asian brides’ referring to non-Japanese marriage migrants from Asia, reflects Japanese perceptions of their identity, which strongly influence their understanding of international marriage by introduction and the international marriage business.

The term ‘Asian brides’ is not used in this study except within quotation marks because of its negative connotations (see Chapter 2) which are part of the historical construction of the ‘Asian’ other in Japan. Moreover, the women who used marriage introduction in my study identified themselves as Chinese, South Korean, Korean from China or Filipino, as opposed to ‘Japanese’, but not ‘Asian’. Similarly, their Japanese husbands referred to differences between themselves and their wives in terms of differences between Japanese culture and the specific ethnic backgrounds of their wives. As the terms ‘female participants’, ‘marriage migrants’ or ‘foreign brides’ do not properly articulate the specific origin of the women in my study, I provide an individual ethnic identification when referring to a specific group of women.

This study does not use the term ‘mail order brides’ which is popular in the West (see, for example, Glodava and Onizuka, 1994; del Rosario 1994) for several reasons. To begin with, this term was never used in Japan to refer to the women under discussion. In the Japanese representation, the term ‘mail order brides’ is usually used when referring to women (commonly not Japanese) who marry foreign ‘Western’ men through marriage introduction (see for example, Shukuya 1988). In other words,



different terms were used for those women who used the international marriage business to become the wives of Japanese men and for those who married Westerners. Secondly, international marriage agencies in Japan generally do not operate their business by a 'mail order' system. While candidates use 'catalogues' of potential partners to choose whom they meet at introduction prior to the event, they do not start their courtship by corresponding with potential partners chosen from the printed or on-line catalogues of members provided by agencies. Marriage agencies in Japan usually organise a group tour for male candidates to meet prospective female partners which is referred to as *miai* (introduction), and the clients' marriage is decided on the same day or the day following the initial meeting.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, the term 'mail order brides' is derogatory of women who use the system of international marriage introduction because the term works to emphasize the passivity and commodity status of women in the system of international marriage. In del Rosario's (1994) work, she used the term 'mail order bride' (or MOB) while arguing the importance of seeing the women involved as active agents. Her adoption of a term that continuously conveys images of a 'passive' woman and her 'bizarre' marriage weakens the persuasiveness of her argument. This study therefore rejects the use of the term 'mail order bride'.

#### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

In this study I investigate international introduction marriage in Japan and the experiences of female participants from China, South Korea, and the Philippines. My objective is to offer 'a gendered understanding of the social process of migration' (Pedraza 1991: 305) which explores the meaning of marriage and migration in this system. I argue that the women participants' marriage and migration experiences are much more complex than the available interpretations of them as victims or opportunity seekers. Further, I argue that for these women participation in the international

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<sup>8</sup> The procedure adopted by marriage agencies is that the male clients and their prospective brides make their decision for marriage at or immediately after the introduction within the period of the clients' overseas stay (usually no more than one week). Most of the agencies then arrange the second trip for a marriage ceremony after a certain period of time (see Chapter 4).

marriage business is about both marriage *and* migration. An examination of either marriage or migration alone cannot sufficiently articulate the women's experiences in participating in international marriage by introduction.

In Part One I aim to delineate macro factors in the formation and development of the international marriage business in Japan. The section analyses the interaction of gender ideology with other dominant power structures that relate to the international marriage business. The international marriage business embodies the patriarchal disposition of marriage contracts and capitalistic aspects of marriage introduction. Its construction is nevertheless also tied to an interpretation of marriage in the wider society that relates to familial and personal happiness. The international marriage business promotes a gender-specific form of migration. It is constructed within the world of globalized capitalism and gender hierarchy which intersect with concepts of race and nation.

The focus of this macro analysis is on such questions as:

- in what way has globalisation in the Asian region influenced the emergence and operation of the international marriage business;
- what internal changes (or continuities) in social forces in Japan influenced the emergence and maintenance of the system of international marriage by introduction;
- what factors influenced some rural local governments' involvement in international marriage arrangement;
- how have international marriage agencies operated in Japan and other Asian countries, and what rhetorics have they used to promote their business; and
- how are international marriage introduction and its women participants presented in the media and received by the Japanese public.

In Part Two, I examine the marriage and migration experience of South Korean, Chinese, Chinese-Korean, and Filipino women who used the marriage introduction system and now live in Japan. I look into these women's decisions to marry, the process of establishing married life and the experience of living in a foreign country, covering interconnected arenas of marriage, family, paid work, involvement in

women's groups and questions of legal citizenship. In the light of recent feminist work, and particularly analytic perspectives developed in the literature on immigrant women, this study sees them as 'active female migrants' (Kofman 1999: 286) and identifies the conflicts (Vasta 1991) faced by the women and their adaptive strategies (Chai 1992). The study does not intend to romanticize resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990), but it respects 'an active intentional subject' (Ortner 1996: 19) and attempts to expose the macro- and micro-level operations of power and its complex relationship to female agency.

I will cover such questions as:

- why did the women enter into an international marriage by introduction and what were their incentives;
- what were the circumstances of their introduction meetings;
- how did the women negotiate their wife and/or mother status in the family;
- why did they choose to participate in the paid work force and how did they evaluate their work experience;
- what was the impact of their paid work on family relations;
- how did their relationships with marriage agents, local government officials and support groups change;
- what constraints did marriage migrants experience in the matter of residential status and what accounted for their decisions regarding legal citizenship.

### **1.5 Analytical Framework**

Most previous studies on the issue largely confined analysis to the economic domain (see Chapter 2 for a detailed examination of previous studies). The focus on economic determinants, while important in the examination of the international marriage business system, tends to ignore the meanings of marriage and migration to women participants and the way in which material and discursive constructions of marriage in patriarchal societies is incorporated in the marriage introduction system. Prevailing interpretations assumed 'poverty' was the force driving women who used the introduction business,

and saw the women as victims sacrificing themselves for the sake of their families or as migrant labourers 'disguised' as brides. The tendency to overemphasise economic determinants in interpretations of the lives of marriage migrants to Japan resonates with Trinh's (1993) observation of films that are made about 'Third World' countries. She points out 'an excessive tendency among members of overdeveloped nations to focus on economic matters in 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' contexts'... 'as if "Third World" can/must only be defined in terms of hierarchical economic development in relation to "First World" achievements' (1993: 168). Any film, she continues, that 'fails to display these signs of "planned poverty" in its images' is often 'classified as "apolitical"' (1993: 168). Economic and political interpretations of international marriage by introduction and its participants' experiences dismiss the meanings of marriage and treat individual women's desires as derivative. 'Brides' in this context 'must' suffer as a consequence of, or in an attempt to challenge, the marriage business. As a result, the material and psychological incentives which make international marriage by introduction appealing to some women have largely been unexplored. Neither is there any attempt to approach the women who use such a system of marriage as active participants or immigrants. As a result, women participants' own accounts of marriage and migration have been largely unexamined.

For this reason, I use a qualitative approach and place emphasis on the women's own interpretations of their experiences and perceptions of marriage migration. I follow the practice of feminist enquiry which places the emphasis on experience (Strathern 1985) in order to understand and document insights into the female participants of the international marriage business. This approach is essential to effectively evaluate the women's narratives against currently prevailing accounts. While I have no intention of claiming authority over these women's narratives, an approach that focuses on experience is urgent when dominant interpretations tend to focus on macro-level social structures and as a result offer static stereotypes of women participants.

Kofman (1999) criticises the gender blindness of mainstream research paradigms in migration studies in the European context, despite the increasing amount of theoretical and case study literature about the feminization of international migration. She

identifies the potential of qualitative approaches to engage with mainstream theoretical models:

Another propitious terrain for dialogue concerning gendered agency and diversity of intentions and projects might emerge from the use of qualitative approaches, such as (auto)biographies, narratives and ethnographies, which have explored the richness, hopes and disappointments of migrant women's lives (Kofman 1999: 289)

Highlighting experience in this study is therefore a strategic choice which will deepen the understanding of the meanings and consequences of international marriage by introduction for these women.

What becomes apparent from the examination of the women's narratives in this study is the inadequacy of studies which treat them narrowly either as victims or opportunity seekers (freewill agents), focusing on either structure or agency. Among some feminists and activists, understanding the female participants of marriage business as 'victims' is common. This is not surprising considering the feminist political standpoint is intended to counter women's continuous and renewed subordination in the global economy. Approaches which stress the constraining nature of social structure cannot sustain an active intentional subject, and tend to portray the women under discussion as deviant victims. For example, in a book edited by two prominent Japanese feminists, the foreign woman married through introduction in Japan is described as 'not respected as an equal human being', or 'a tool for child bearing, care of the elderly and farming duties' (Yoshizumi 1991: 42).

Similar negative depictions prevail in the literature on 'mail order brides' (see, for example Glodava and Onizuka 1994), diminishing the determination of the female participants of marriage by introduction to be successful in marriage and life: 'sadly, wife as obedient but active sex object, dependent on male attention and money sometimes sums up the (expected) power relationship fairly accurately' (Breger 1998: 134, parentheses original). Kawarasaki's (1999) article in a Feminist journal, *Joseigaku* (Women's Studies), on the issue of Asian 'mail order brides' in the United States discusses the issue in the light of racism against Asians, the oppression of Asian women on the basis of gender and ethnicity, and the exploitation of 'mail order brides'. In her conclusion, she comments that Japanese women need to have a basic understanding that

they are not completely outsiders to this issue, as many Japanese women would be disturbed to see Japanese women together with other Asian women in the catalogues of 'mail order brides' in the United States (1999). The article unintentionally reveals the extent to which the author herself, and by implication her readers, see the female participants of marriage by introduction as outsiders. But for some women, taking a risk for the dream of 'happy' marriage and successful migration is proactive, enabling them to take responsibility for their own lives.

As an example of this structural (over)emphasis, I will examine Truong's (1996) political economy approach on the issue in some detail. Her account, while providing insight into the constraints on these women's lives, is not useful in articulating the meanings and experiences of marriage and migration for the women under discussion. She identifies 'mail-order-brides' (her usage) as 'female migrant reproductive workers' along with foreign female sex workers and domestic workers. Truong attempts to provide an analytical framework to understand these female migrants as reproductive (in a broad sense) workers in a cross-national transfer of labour. She suggests a global approach that can explain the structural determinants of labour reproduction gaps in specific classes and economies; the processes which organise the transfer of productive labour from one country to another; and the implications of these determinants and processes for the state, capital, communities and the reproductive workers themselves (Truong 1996: 33).

Truong identifies reproductive gaps in some countries, caused by, for example women's increased participation in waged labour, as the reason for the increase in the number of the foreign female sex workers, domestic workers and 'mail-order-brides' from low-income countries. Referring to the Japanese case, Truong highlights the shortage of female labour in the Japanese agriculture and service sectors as the cause of the importation of foreign brides and entertainers into Japan. She argues that a cross-national transfer of labour for reproduction is a form of 'social dumping' as reproductive work is cross-culturally devalued, and thus one must 'foremost give recognition to the cruciality of reproduction' in order to halt this 'trade in women' (1996: 47).

Her definition of foreign brides as 'female migrant reproductive workers' has limitations as an analytical framework for the interrogation of the marriage migrants in my study. The term and her global approach are useful in identifying the structural problems that affect these women. However, my concern lies in her overemphasis on the aspect of labour migration, her limited appreciation of social aspects of these reproductive 'gaps', and her devaluation of the migration of certain women as 'social dumping', when examining the experiences of marriage migrants in Japan. First, her approach views 'mail-order-brides' in the same category as sex workers and domestic workers. This view trivialises the importance of marriage for marriage migrants. The structural determinants that brought 'foreign' entertainers and brides into existence may share commonalities, but the reference to sex and domestic work overemphasises the aspect of labour migration and hinders investigation into the significance of marriage (including affection, children, emotional satisfaction) and migration (including a sense of adventure and becoming a different self, as well as achieving financial comfort) in the experience of the female participants in marriage migration in Japan.

While the female migrants in my study do perform reproductive work (and paid work) like other women, defining them as 'reproductive workers' undermines their personhood. The term denies the possibility of grasping women's multiple subjectivities and their changing roles in family, community and the host country. Truong urges the protection of the rights of 'MOBs [mail-order-brides] as citizens of the host country' (1996: 44), but the construction of these women entirely as subjects for protection may have little to do with these women's own perceptions, desires and identities.

Similarly the political economy perspective does not enable an understanding of the roles of these women in creating diversity in the entertainment and marriage 'markets', or variety in fulfilling those masculine desires that capitalism in Japan has been so eager to realise. The gaps in reproductive work are in part a construction of male dominant society as much as they are a distortion of political and economic structures. For example, Yamagata prefecture where some village officials and private marriage agents actively promote foreign brides has one of the highest rates of married

population among males in Japan (Yamagata-ken Kikaku Chōsei-bu Seishōnen Josei-ka 1994). Similarly, so-called ‘Filipino pubs’ or ‘Korean pubs’ co-exist with numerous other forms of adult entertainment. This includes Japanese teenage women in the ‘*enjo kōsai*’ (literally, assisted intercourse) relationship, who date and may have sex with adult males in exchange for pocket money. Female foreign workers and brides have been brought to Japan, not so much because of ‘natural gaps’ in reproductive work, but because men’s desires for marriage or sexual gratification is over-catered in contemporary Japanese capitalism.

Further, it is very difficult to recognise the importance of reproductive work while forms of it performed by certain groups of women are devalued. In many contemporary male dominant societies, reproductive work is undervalued and assigned to women, but some aspects of such work (including sex work) may nevertheless give fulfilment to some women regardless of its low social value. This ambivalence in the meaning of reproductive work to women should be extended to the analysis of the marriage migrants under discussion (see for example Okin’s 1997 examination of ambivalence about families in feminism). Rather than demeaning their migration as ‘social dumping’, it may be more useful to acknowledge the ambiguity in the meaning of all reproductive work in order to recognise its importance.

How is it then possible to advance our understanding of the issue, while critically analysing women’s oppression in the system of the international marriage business and not undervaluing women’s agency and aspirations in their own marriages and their lives in Japan? A number of feminist researchers in different fields of study point to unproductive binaries on theoretical sites between social structure and human action, between macro and micro approaches, or textual studies and ethnographic studies (for example Bacchi 1990; Chancer 1998; Ortner 1996; Kofman 1999). Their arguments address the need to acknowledge mutual determination of structure and agency in order to advance our understanding of gender relations. I pursue this approach to the question of structure and agency in my study as it offers a place for the migrant women’s agency while articulating structural constraints placed on them as well as the roles they may play to reproduce and/or transform dominant social structures.



Bacchi (1990) urges us to avoid setting up 'free will' and 'victim status' as polar options (1990: 227), in her analysis. She urges a departure from that dichotomy to enable a focus on the alternative ways to effectively address the ways in which social structures disadvantage women and bring about social arrangements for humane living without assigning them on a gender basis. Chancer (1998) goes further and offers to think and feel in terms of 'both/and' rather than 'either/or' conceptions in her analysis of sex and sexism in the interpretation of pornography, beauty, prostitution, sadomasochism and rape. She argues that for feminism to move forward it is essential to effectively incorporate questions of both structure and agency, sexism and sex, and asserts the importance of commonalities as well as recognition of differences. She offers a conception that challenges ongoing structures of sexism and simultaneously respects diversities of sexual agency. For example, on the issue of rape, she asserts that:

[p]erhaps it is possible to both protest (rather than deny) the all-too-common occurrence of actual violence against women and to acknowledge (rather than deny) that our fantasy lives are complex and deeply affected by eroticisation of violence in American and other still male-dominant societies (Chancer 1998: 275, parentheses original)

The question of women's subordination in global capitalism and agency in the system of international marriage business is also a particular expression of the issue of structure versus agency. Chancer's argument makes it possible to capture the ways in which the system and ideology of the international marriage business works to oppress women while still serving the purposes of some women in the male dominant, economically stratified societies of Asia. Through respecting rather than denying these women's agency and their 'needs and rights to find happiness now' (Chancer 1998: 274) in marriage and migration, the complexity of sexism, racism and capitalism become clearer, for social structures do not exist outside of social identities but constitute them (Somers and Gibson 1994).

Similarly, Ortner (1996) makes it clear that writing in binaries such as structure/event, structure/agency, habitus/practice is 'a dead end' (1996: 12). She proposes what she calls 'subaltern practice theory' – a project to incorporate mutual determination of structure and agency that encourages theorizing of feminist, minority, postcolonial, and subaltern perspectives. Her approach recognises the role of practice in social

reproduction, but also stresses its role in transformation. Ortner shows the way to conceptualise hegemonic social orders as partial hegemonies. She addresses the necessity for 'retaining an active intentional subject without falling into some form of free agency and voluntarism' (1996: 19); 'focalizing power relations and struggles within a practice theoretical framework'; and 'theorizing ways to break out of the loop of [social and cultural] reproduction.' (1996: 20). Such an approach offers a ground from which to shift the representation of the women from 'mail-order-brides' or female migrant reproductive workers to female participants in marriage by introduction and women migrants. It makes it possible to discuss the migrant women's aspirations and struggles as the agency of the oppressed, without losing sight of the complexity of power relations.

Somers and Gibson (1994) point to the fact that 'social identities are constituted by the intricate interweaving of history, narrativity, social knowledge, and relationality, as well as institutional and cultural practices' (1994: 80). This view releases the understanding of social action from a sole reliance on structural determinism, and makes it possible to seek explanations, for example, as to why some women decide to participate in marriage by introduction at a certain point of time in their life; what motivates them to take up paid employment (or not to); why they divorce or stay married when relationships do not meet expectations; or why some decide to join (or not to join) a women's group. This approach locates action in context and prevents it from being seen as 'irrational' or 'anomalous' (Somers and Gibson 1994: 77).

Without acknowledging mutually determining relations of structure and agency, interpretations of female participation in international marriage by introduction will continue to treat them as (total) victims, freewill hyper-agents, or deviants. The inadequacy of these representations, that arise from setting up theories of oppression and theories of agency as polar options, will emerge from this study; dichotomous approaches cannot adequately explain the multi-faceted relationships that the women form (and re-form) with other key actors such as marriage agencies and their husbands.

Their experiences need to be examined in their own light within the context of immigration and cross-cultural marriage, encompassing the sites of marriage, family, paid work and citizenship. Cases of divorce, domestic violence, or exploitation at paid work must be treated in these contexts as well as in relation to their situation in the wider society. This approach defies the dominant perception of these women and their marriages as problems. Cross-cultural marriage is often defined '*a priori*' as "problematic" (Breger and Hill 1998: x). International marriage by introduction and its female participants are automatically located within this problematic framework (see for example Breger's own description of Asian wives of German men in the same volume, Breger 1998). However, there are encouraging developments in migration studies. When Japan started experiencing an influx of foreign women workers in the 1980s, debate was firstly focused around ethical issues because of their concentration in the entertainment industry, until important scholarly works such as Itō's (Itō, cited in Kajita 1994) argued that they should be understood as labourers not as '*Japayuki-san*' (literally, Japan-bound women, which connotes prostitutes) in the context of global labour migration. Similarly, until the mid 1970s the category 'women' was largely left outside of migration theories (Pedraza 1991; ed. Gabaccia 1992), despite the significant presence of women in the history of migration flows in many parts of the world. Women were considered passive dependents of their husbands or fathers; not as labourers or migrants in their own right.

Castles and Miller (1998) see migratory movement as the result of interacting macro- and micro-structures. Macro-structures involve large-scale institutional factors such as historical, political and cultural linkages among countries and particularly the role of the state; and micro-structures include the personal networks, practices and beliefs of the migrants themselves. A similar approach to the combined site of marriage and migration is necessary to understand the 'migratory process' (Castles and Miller 1998: 27) of marriage migration because the 'push-pull' factors (i.e. lack of economic opportunity in sending countries and demand for brides in receiving countries) alone cannot articulate the collective and personal imaging of marriage partners. Although, as Kofman (1999) correctly points out, current migration studies including Castles and Miller's (1998) work tend to limit their focus to labour migration, family migration, and

refugees. Marriage migration is another form of migration deserving attention. It offers insights to the understanding of the feminization of international migration and demonstrates the heterogeneity of women's migratory experiences. I suggest a similar broadening of approach in conceptualising marriage migrants, shifting the issue from 'deviance' to further variations of migration forms that connect with marriage. Through this approach, my study aims to contribute to the underrepresented number of scholarly works on the lives of foreign migrant women in Japan.

The international marriage business has been present for about 20 years in Japan and longer elsewhere (Mullan 1984). The use of internet websites for advertising the marriage business may increase the number of participants and onlookers, allowing easier access to the business: Japanese women can now access a variety of printed and on-line catalogues of Western men if they wish to subscribe. In the documentary 'Email order bride' (Flaherty 13 October, 2000, Channel 9), an Australian man – the director himself – went to the United States with his adult daughter in search for his wife-to-be and met a number of American women with whom he had become acquainted through on-line introduction. Globalization gave rise to the international marriage business (see Chapter 4) and is widening the sites of partner selection and marriage as well as promoting migration of women (and men).

In these circumstances, the political economy approach is inadequate because it fails to answer such questions as, for example, why Japanese women pay to marry American men and migrate to the United States when Japanese men marry Korean women through introduction and bring them to reside in Japan; or why Palestinian or Ugandan women are not marrying Japanese men despite their countries' economic and political oppression. To understand why certain patterns and preferences characterise marriage migration, a broad approach is necessary to encompass personal and collective, local and global, and historical and ongoing constructions of the interweaving arenas of gender, race and nation. Scholarly inquiries into such processes and their meanings to the participants will enrich the study of gender and migration in the future. My study attempts to fill out one piece of that puzzle, situating its investigations in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s.

## 1.6 Research Methods and Data

I firstly conducted an academic literature review relating to the international marriage business in Japan as well as studies of similar issues outside of Japan, and relevant theoretical writings in the fields of marriage and migration. I adopted qualitative research methods because the study aimed to explore individual experiences and possible diversities. A total of eleven months in 1995 and 1996 were spent doing fieldwork in Japan, which included six months in a farming region in Yamagata prefecture, and five months in and nearby Tokyo. Yamagata prefecture was chosen due to its growing number of female foreign residents and to the notable activity of private marriage agencies.<sup>9</sup> Some of the village offices were also involved in international marriage promotion in this prefecture. The selection of the Tokyo metropolitan area was intended firstly to complement previous research on this issue which concentrated on the lives of the migrant women in rural areas, and secondly to identify the effect of a locality factor in differentiating the experiences of those who migrated to urban and rural areas.

Patton (1990) describes three types of data collection relevant to qualitative approaches: in-depth, open-ended interviews; direct observation; and written documents. Written materials used for the analysis include newspaper articles, magazine reports, court documents, local government publications, newsletters of non-government organisations, and leaflets of ethnicity based organisations. I used discourse analysis to

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<sup>9</sup> Yamagata prefecture had 2,726 registered foreign nationals among its 1.2 million population in 1993. Among these foreigners, 35 per cent were classified as a spouse or child of a Japanese national, which was the fifth highest percentage among all the forty seven prefectures in Japan (Matsumoto 1995). Yamagata prefecture reported the number of foreign wives has increased from 525 in 1992 to 984 in 1995 (information obtained in 1995 from the international section, the Planning and Regulation Department, Yamagata Prefecture). The 1994 statistics indicated that the prefecture has a disproportionately high proportion of its population over 65 years of age: 17.1 per cent as compared to 13.1 per cent of the national average. The area showed the highest percentage of 'three generation households' (31.6%) compared to the national average (12.1%), and also the highest ratio of labour force participation of husbands and wives. The women's workforce participation rate does not drop sharply in the 30s and 40s age cohorts as is the case in national statistics (Yamagata-ken Kikaku Chōsei-bu Seishōnen Josei-ka 1994). See Chapter 5.

examine media reports, public debates, and local government documents. I also reviewed marriage agencies' advertisements and pamphlets. As stating an author's name in newspaper and magazine articles is not mandatory practice in Japan, the name of the newspaper or magazine is given in the text when quoting from the articles without the name of author. When quoting in the text from the printed materials of the agencies whose owner or employee I interviewed, the agent's pseudonym is provided as in (Yamada brochure, n.d.) to indicate its source and correspondence with a personal interview with the agent (see Appendix II for a list of the marriage agents interviewed). The actual company names are given when quoting from the printed materials of the agencies I did not interview.

I observed the activities of marriage agents and the foreign women who married Japanese men through introduction. All my observations were done overtly after explaining the purpose of the study. I visited five marriage agents, one in a regional town and the others in urban areas, several times to observe their operations. Two of the employees, one in a rural and another in an urban agency, who were themselves married through the services of their agencies, became primary informants. I had opportunities to observe relationships between agents and clients in many situations: for example, when employees were talking to potential clients or newly married couples face to face and by telephone, while attending welcome or Christmas parties, and when accompanying the rural agents on visits to the households of new arrivals. I participated in several weekly Japanese language classes for foreign residents, and in social events organised by the ethnically based women's groups, non-government organisations and local governments. Examples of social events included Korean food functions, Chinese cooking classes, Christmas parties, public health centre related affairs and symposia involving the marriage migrants. I also accompanied a health worker on visits to some of these women with newborn babies in the regional town. Apart from attending these functions, I had other opportunities to associate with the women through informal social activities of eating, drinking, shopping and singing at

*karaoke* bars. These occasions provided me with further scope for more informal and personal relationships with some of these women.

Interviews were conducted with Chinese, South-Korean, Korean-Chinese and Filipino women who married Japanese men through introduction, marriage agents, local government officials, health workers, volunteer workers, officials at consumer bureaus, academics and other individuals who were vocal on the issue. Patton (1990: 280) specifies three basic variations in qualitative interviewing, that is: the informal conversational interview; the general interview guide approach; and the standardised open-ended interview. The standardised open-ended interview where the exact wording and sequence of questions were set in advance was employed for interviewing the migrant women. This is because the method is suitable to obtain complete data for each person on the issues addressed in the interview and increase comparability of responses. I also carried out less structured follow-up interviews with some of these women where specific issues raised by the respondents required further exploration.

I adopted the interview guide approach for other groups to cater for expected diversity in the respondent's activities. The interview guide approach allowed an exploration of particular issues for individuals or specific groups. Topics and issues for interviews were determined in advance but the wording and sequence of questions arose during the course of the interview. Different sets of topics to be covered were prepared for each group in advance as well as relevant issues for particular individuals. A difficulty with this approach was that its situational nature allowed some interviewees to select the issues they wanted to discuss, and not all the issues were equally covered.

I will provide some details concerning the interviews with the marriage agents and the women who used the system of marriage introduction, as these two groups of interviews comprised the most important part of my study. I conducted all the interviews and used an audiotape to record responses with respondents who gave their consent. I also transcribed the tape recordings. In the text, these interviewees are referred to by pseudonyms. Direct quotes from the interviews are cited in smaller font

to differentiate them from other materials (see Appendix II for a list of the interviewees). Translation of the interviews from Japanese to English is my own.

For selecting interviewees among marriage agencies, I obtained a list of marriage agents from advertisements in telephone books. Of the 156 agencies which advertised in the 1994 and 1995 commercial telephone books (*Taun pēji* or Town Pages, various areas) in Japan, I approached 75 agencies by telephone, including those whose pamphlets I had collected previously. Of these, 20 agents refused an interview, 14 had their lines disconnected, and nine no longer operated. Of the 32 agents who decided to accept the interviews, 17 agents agreed to a face-to-face interview and another 15 agents agreed to a telephone interview, in some cases because there was a problem with distance

The telephone interviews lasted between 15 minutes and two hours, and face-to-face interviews between one and a half and two hours. All the face-to-face interviewees except one involved the owner or co-owner of the agencies at their offices during business hours. The exception was an employee who preferred a café near his office as the site for the interview. Six interviewees agreed to tape-recorded interviews. The topics addressed in the interviews incorporated questions about their current business including the introduction procedure and methods of recruiting clients, other or previous businesses, overseas business connections, profiles of their clients, and any past or present connections with public organisations. It was quite common for the agents, during the face-to-face interviews, to show me profiles of their male and female clients, photos or video-tapes of female candidates and the wedding photos of their previous clients.

I interviewed 45 women of Korean, Filipino, Chinese and Korean-Chinese origin.<sup>10</sup> Of these 45, 35 women resided in Yamagata prefecture and ten in the greater Tokyo metropolitan area (see Tables 6-1 to 6-6 in Chapter 6 for details of interviewees)

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10 The 1990 statistics estimated 1,920,000 Korean-Chinese in China. Their migration from Korea accelerated largely during Japan's colonial occupation of Korea and former Manchuria (Takahashi 1996)



background characteristics). Because I did not have ready access to a large number of potential respondents, I arranged to meet the interviewees through various means.

In the rural area, I came to know potential interviewees while attending Japanese language classes for migrants, Korean and Chinese language classes taught by women who had married through introduction, and other events which involved them. I was aware that most, if not all, of these female participants were wives of Japanese and married through introduction. Toward the end of the 1995 fieldwork, I then asked several people for an interview. On my return to the same area in the following year, I contacted others whom I had met previously and asked them for interviews. Some of the respondents introduced me to their friends or acquaintances, many of whom also agreed to an interview. This method proved beneficial as it allowed me to gain access to the women who were not attending the social events and Japanese classes.

In the urban area, I asked the marriage agents to introduce me to some of their former clients. Four agents agreed and gave me telephone numbers for the women whom I contacted, and visited for interviews when they agreed. One of these women introduced me to a Filipino women's group in which she actively participated. There she acquainted me with potential interviewees. Another means of gaining access to urban contacts was through the women I met in the rural area who introduced me to their acquaintances and relatives in and near Tokyo. I then asked these urban dwellers to introduce me to their friends. In the urban area, the strategy of finding potential informants through attending classes or events that I had employed in the rural area did not work. Although there were a large number of the women of Asian origin who married Japanese in these classes and events, the diversity and political sensitivity of their work and family situations made initial enquiries difficult. I could not obtain an equivalent number of respondents from the urban area due to this difficulty, as well as time and financial constraints.

The topics which were covered in these interviews included personal information, pre-migration situation, initial migration experience, family, paid-work, support services, contact with others, religious practice, community involvement, contact with the family

in their country of origin, involvement in marriage introduction and overall evaluation of life in Japan (see Appendix III for the list of interview questions). The interviews were mainly conducted in Japanese except with some Filipino women who preferred English. An interpreter was present for two interviews (one with a Chinese woman and the other a Filipino woman). Of the 45 interviews, 40 were tape-recorded with the interviewee's consent and lasted an average of two hours (ranging between one and three hours). Interruptions, such as children or visitors, caused the foreshortening of six interviews. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere at various sites, chosen by the interviewees, such as the interviewees' house, the house I rented, community centres, and cafés. The majority of interviewees (42) were by themselves during interviews except for their children or interpreters (for two cases). Three interviewees were with their friends who kept themselves busy by minding the children or engaging themselves with other activities. I encouraged interviewees to expand on their answers or digress from the topic under discussion without interruption. They often asked questions about me during interviews, which I answered accordingly.

One of the limitations regarding the interviews was the use of Japanese language. As I am a native speaker of the language, I inevitably placed myself in a privileged position in interviewing non-native speakers. The use of the language may also have restricted the range of vocabulary available to the informants. This can lead to a more serious question of power relations based on ethnic differences between the respondents and myself. Although I belong to a minority group, categorised as 'Asian' in Australia where I normally live, I am a member of the dominant ethnic group ('Japanese') – and no longer regarded as 'Asian' – on return to Japan. My position as Japanese in Japan may have prevented the interviewees from sharing some information. Had I employed interviewers with the same ethnic background as each interviewee, the results may have been different, although these interviews would produce other partialities.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For example, one Korean informant who acts as an interpreter for a non-government organisation said that Korean interviewees tended not to disclose information about themselves as freely when they found she was younger than they were (Myung-Ja 1996).

One positive aspect of the differences between the interviewees and me was my 'outsider' identity. This 'outsider' status may have eased the tension between the interviewees and me, both because I did not belong in their local place of residence and because I normally resided outside of Japan. Some women mentioned that they discussed certain matters with me because I was not a member of their local community or group. I was also made aware that they viewed me as someone who could see Japan and Japanese people comparatively as they did. From the comments and questions I received from them, I realised that they were interested in me as someone who had also married a 'foreigner' and was living outside of my home country. While I do not intend to claim that the interviewees and I identified with each other, there was a sense of sympathy between us based on a common, yet different, experience of migration and international marriage.

The interviews with these marriage agents and migrant women are in many ways partial because of limitations in sample size, geographical restrictions or time constraints. The accounts nevertheless present the experiences of the individuals whom I met and the ways in which they chose to tell their stories to me at that time.

What arises from these women's various narratives is the fact that their marriage and migration experiences are more complex than structural deterministic views alone can cope with. In various situations these women may resist or embrace, confirm or recast structural roles and relations imposed upon them. Their narratives demonstrate the necessity for a theoretical project that can appropriately articulate a structurally embedded yet active intentional female agency in the study of international marriage migrants. To contribute to the development of such a project, this study provides empirical information and interpretations which revise current literature on the issue.

## PART I

The chapters in Part I investigate the interrelation of the macro factors in the formation and development of the international marriage business and its understanding in Japanese society. Chapter 2 deconstructs the representations of international marriage by introduction and at its female participants in the media and points out its influence on scholarly works. Chapter 3 identifies the social changes in relation to the emergence of the international marriage business in the late 1980s. The chapter highlights the significance of globalization in the Asian region and the demographic and perceptual changes in the domestic marriage market. Chapter 4 examines the operational system of the international marriage business, based on interviews with marriage agents and secondary documentary material. It exposes the web of transnational and domestic business connections of Japanese marriage agencies, and depicts the way in which marriage agencies domesticated the international marriage business for the Japanese market. Chapter 5 outlines the history of the state's interest in women's fertility, and analyses the promotion by rural governments of marriage schemes for their male residents. The section contextually situates the development of the international marriage business in the Japanese socio-historical context and exposes the way in which the Japanese gender hierarchy, though contested, intersects with changing global and local capitalism, the state and local politics, and race relations.

## 2

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## Representations of International Introduction Marriage and its Female Participants

International marriages by introduction attracted enormous media interest in the late 1980s. The issue rapidly became a ‘trend’ (*torendo*) (Sukora 14 April 1988: 58) following the involvement of rural local governments in arranging international marriage for their male residents. Articles, covering *mura no kokusai kekkon* (international marriage in villages) appeared frequently in major newspapers and magazines. For example, a then major Japanese opinion magazine *Asahi Jānaru* (Fukuzawa 4 December 1987) featured Filipino brides’ stories of the release of a documentary film on the lives of Filipino brides and the starting of a support group for Filipino women.<sup>1</sup>

The symposium by the Marriage Bureau branch of the rural-oriented Japan Youth Association in February 1988, entitled ‘*Mura no Kekkon Jijō*, or Situations of International Marriage in Rural Areas’, invited not only local government officials as speakers but also two Filipino brides and the Consul-General of the Philippine embassy

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1 I examined about 230 newspaper and magazine articles and 11 TV programs on the issue of international marriage that appeared between 1970 and 2000. More than 50 articles on the issue appeared between 1985 and 1989, contrasting with an average of one or two articles a year in the earlier period. Some examples of the articles featuring this topic in the late 1980s include ‘Gaikokujin Hanayome o Mukaeta Yamagata-ken Asahimachi no “Yome Busoku Taisaku no Hyōka”’ (‘Evaluation of the Measurements of the Bride Shortage’ of Asahimachi, Yamagata which received Foreign Wives) in *Shūkan Sankei* (31 July 1986), ‘Firipin kara Kita Shiawase na “Oshun”-tachi’ (Happy “Oshun” from the Philippines) (Sakurai 1986), ‘Firipin Hanayometachi’ (Suzuki 1987b), ‘Ajia kara no Hanayome’ (Brides from Asia) in *Asahi Shimbun* (3~17 March 1988) ‘Taidan Firipin Hanayome’ (Discussion Filipino Brides) (Itamoto & Yamatani 1988). The coverage on TV included ‘*Firipin kara no Yomekko*’ (Brides from the Philippines) on Yamagata Hōsō, 21 June, 1986, featured in news review programmes such as *Nyūsu Suteishon* on Terebi Asahi, 20 May, 1986, in *Morimoto Mōningu Eye* on TBS, 23 July, 1986. Among the articles and footage collected, over 150 articles appeared in the early and mid 1990s. The articles from this period featured a wider range of topics such as the conduct of marriage agencies, and Chinese, Korean and Russian brides. Some of these examples are ‘Meisōsuru Kokusai Kekkon Assengyō sha’ (Problems with International Marriage Brokers) (Higashi 1993), ‘Kyūzō Kankoku no Hanayome-san’ (Korean Brides on Rapid Increase) in *Yamagata Shimbun* (31 January 1991), ‘Tōhoku no Nōson no Kanashiki Chūgokujin Hanayome’ (Poor Chinese Brides in the Farming Communities in the Tōhoku Region) (Hasegawa 1993a), ‘Sanbyakuman-yen no Roshujin Hanayome’ (Russian Brides for 3 million yen) (Ako 1993).

at Tokyo (Nihon Seimenkan Kekkō Sōdanjo 1988). The event was extensively reported in the media (see for example, *Asahi Shimbun* 21 February 1988; *Yomiuri Shimbun* February 21 1988, *Mainichi Shimbun* 1 March 1988, *Zenkoku Nōgyō Shimbun*, February 26 1988, *Akahata* 24 February 1988), and created some basis for the discussions which proceeded later in the media. The national television channel, NHK's feature '*Ajia kara no Hanayome o Kangaeru*, or Concerning Brides from Asia' (13 & 14 June 1988), was also an influential example of the coverage on the issue.

The media initiated debate largely revolved around the issue of 'necessity' versus the 'morality' of some rural shires becoming involved in mediating such marriages. These discussions further reproduced the view that international marriage by introduction was a rural issue (see for example, the editorial column entitled "'*Ajia no Hanayome*" no *Mukaekata*' (How we receive "Asian Brides") in *Asahi Shimbun* 11 April 1988). Most of the reports displayed photographs which turned the audiences' curious gaze upon individual women and their families. The reporters visited the villages concerned so extensively that some village officials and families with foreign brides barred reporters from collecting data. The exposure of the issue in the media spurred other villages and towns, where depopulation was of concern, to visit villages that had become involved in the international marriage scheme (personal interview with Section Head of Agricultural Committee, Ōkura Village October 1995). At the same time, the number of introduction agencies mushroomed.

Most scholarly work on the issue of the marriage introduction business and on 'Asian brides' tended to produce a similar picture to that presented by the media. Many, regardless of their fields of study, based their arguments on media representations rather than critically questioning them. I will first analyse the process and product of these representations, since the way the Japanese media appropriated the issue for public consumption reflects contemporary as well as historic relations between 'Asia' and Japan, and changing gender and ethnic relations within Japan. Then, I will examine how academic works from various fields deal with the issue of the international marriage business in relation to the media reports. Finally, I will suggest the need to re-examine the issue within the framework of marriage migration.

## 2.1 In Public Discourse

In the mid-1980s, a new form of '*kokusai kekkon*', or literally international marriage (see Chapter 1) entered the public arena. Since 1975, the number of Japanese men marrying non-Japanese nationals became larger than the reverse pattern (Ministry of Health and Welfare 1996) which had predominated during the American occupation. From that time, due to the involvement of rural villages in marriage introduction, *kokusai kekkon*, began to connote marriages of Japanese farming heirs to Asian women.

The media extensively represented 'Asian' brides as 'pitiful' but 'cheerful' women from 'poverty-stricken' 'southern' countries brought to Japan to be the wives of 'shy', 'lonely', 'hard-working' farmers living with their parents in 'snow-buried' remote farming villages which were suffering severely from 'bride famine'. The media consistently discussed the issue in terms of the 'suffering' and 'lack' borne by men in Japanese rural communities and women from 'southern islands', particularly Filipino women.<sup>2</sup>

The extensive coverage of the issue generated an impression that the role of marriage through mediating agencies was the sole explanation for the increase in numbers of female spouses of Japanese nationals from other countries in the Asian region. Such a powerful regime of representation made it difficult to establish alternative readings even by some academic researchers, whose writings operated largely within the same discourse constructed by the media. The *Asahi Gendai Yōgo* (1992), a dictionary of modern vocabularies, for example, included the issue under the sub-heading of 'bride shortage in rural areas/brides from Asia/bride business'. It went on to explain the issue as a rural problem and criticised the practice as the 'purchase more than marriage' of poor Southeast Asian women by now affluent Japanese men. The entry concluded with

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2 The following examples are representative of the media coverage that depicted the issue: 'Firipin no Hanayome 10-nin ga Kaso no Mura ni Yattekita' (Ten Filipino Brides Have Come to a Depopulated Village) (Murai 1986), 'Firipin kara Kita Shiwase na "Oshin"-tachi' (Happy "Oshin" from the Philippines) (Sakurai 1986), 'Nangoku no Hanayome ni Hajimete no Yuki' (First Experience of Snow with Brides from Southern Countries) in *Asahi Shimbun* (12 January 1987), 'Firipin Hanayome' (Filipino Brides) (Suzuki 1987a)

the statement, 'many women ended up enduring unsatisfactory marriages due to a custom in their own countries which views divorce as shameful' (1992 1063)

The making and dissemination of this particular representation raises an interesting issue about constructing identities of self and 'deviant other' within the changing milieu of labour and gender relations in the 'bubble' economy of the late 1980s. In this section, I examine the way Japan made sense of the experience by mobilising two signs 'rural Japan' and 'Asian brides'

A substantial amount of media coverage on international marriage through introduction agencies in rural areas was produced in magazines, photo journals, the press and TV programmes in the mid to late 1980s<sup>3</sup>. By 1989, three books on the issue, which foregrounded the word '*mura*' or rural community in their titles, were published one after another (Satō 1989b, Higurashi 1989, Nīgata Nipposha Gakugeibu 1989). These books further consolidated the images projected by the media. Later, in the early 1990s, the term *nōson no hanayome* (brides in farming areas) seems to be used to designate 'Asian' women married by arrangement to rural Japanese men (see for example Shinozawa 1996).

Part of the reason why the media coverage favoured rural examples lies in the peculiarity of public agencies becoming involved in arranging groups of seemingly private marriages between local male residents and overseas women. Their involvement bears on the gendered aspects of rural politics, which I discuss in greater depth in Chapter 5. However, the media's extreme focus on rural cases demands interpretation in the context of the operation of discursive power. This is all the more probable given that the arrangement of international marriage itself neither originated from, nor was unique to, rural farming areas. Private agencies were already operating in the business before the involvement of local shires. My interviews with the marriage agents (Kitano 1996, Ishino 1995) and some newspaper articles suggest that

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<sup>3</sup> See the previous two footnotes for examples of the media coverage that featured the rural cases



private agencies operated mostly in urban areas matching Taiwanese and Korean women with Japanese men (see for example, *Asahi Shimbun* 12 November 1981, *Shin Chihai* December 1986)<sup>4</sup> Private agencies later extended their business into rural areas and rural sector organisations, including local councils and agricultural cooperative associations, to attract rural male clients

The media focus on rural examples had the effect of dissociating the issue from the wider context of international migration. The backwardness of and problems in rural regions, as well as the poverty of the brides' original countries dominated the discourse at the expense of critical commentary on the influence of Japan's economic expansion or its socio-cultural integration in the Asian region. Farming communities were portrayed negatively as 'forgotten', 'isolated', 'gloomy', and facing difficulties with an ageing population and a 'bride-shortage'. For example, the Yamagata Hōsō's feature, 'Firipin kara no Yomekko, or Brides from the Philippines' (broadcasted 21 June 1986) contained a story of an old person in a wheel chair who had to come to live in a nursing home after becoming ill, 'because this person's son has not taken a bride'. One newspaper article published an interview with the village Chief who had initiated international marriage arrangements in his village, in which he comments, 'When a man is over 35 years old and has not yet married, he loses motivation to work. This also sets the family at odds and some families do not talk at all during meals' (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 14 September 1987). Suzuki's (1987b) article in *Mainichi Shimbun* portrays a solitary old mother who lost her two unmarried sons, the elder son a few years ago and the younger one just recently in a traffic accident. The writer sympathises with the sons who passed away, 'without being able to get married' and finishes the paragraph by reporting two single men's suicide cases in the last two years in the same village, though the writer gives no reason for the suicides. The message repeated in the media coverage is that snow-bound desolate villages have no future without brides for their sons.

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4 For example, the article in *Asahi Shimbun* (12 November 1981) reported the emergence of international marriage agencies dealing with Korean women for Japanese men and Korean male residents in Japan. It put emphasis on problems of sham marriage as a means of obtaining opportunities to work in Japan and of Japanese men allowing access to his family register to Korean women for money.

Three issues emerge in the reports that provide an insight into the image of the 'hopeless' future of the agriculture industry. The first issue concerned the government's priority on high economic growth and its effect on rural communities. The second issue relates to the strength of 'feudalistic' family household customs in rural regions. The third issue involved the farmers' consequent lack of self-assertion and aspiration. The media often used this last issue to explain the farmers' lack of popularity as husbands for young Japanese women (see for example, *Yomiuri Shimbun* 7 April 1987, *Asahi Shimbun* 11 April 1988). The widely circulated newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* wrote, '*Ajia kara no hanayome* (Brides from Asia) are the illegitimate children of high growth economic strategies which abandoned farming communities' (*Asahi Shimbun* 17 March 1988).

What operates in these kinds of discursive practices is, inevitably, an urban gaze that distances itself from the controversial and somehow embarrassing 'marriage trade' by projecting it onto a 'rural other' and by defining rural as irrational and pre-modern. The media gaze is the gaze of urban residents who have been enjoying the fruits of Japan's high economic achievements. The intensified images of 'rural-ness' on TV programmes and in photo journals – displaying villages in heavy snow, old thatched houses or a boundless expanse of rice fields with no mention of near-by coffee shops or drive-ins – works to secure the audience in their 'imagined', relatively urban environment, and to distance the incidents of international marriage business to 'somewhere-else'. The common Japanese response to my research topic was, 'Yeah, that happens in the countryside' (*inaka no hō-no koto desho*), a response that exemplifies the sense of security in distance.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Surprisingly, I have received this sort of comment not only in Tokyo and the prefectural cities, but also in a village where more than 40 women from other countries in the Asian region live as spouses of Japanese residents. The woman who lived in front of the house I was renting during my fieldwork, commented that most of the 'Asian' women lived deep in the village but not around 'here', despite the fact the house I rented belonged to a Japanese husband and Korean wife.

Tobin (1992),<sup>6</sup> in his argument on the domestication of the West in Japanese consumption, stated that, '[u]rban and rural Japan suggest a dichotomy as much of time as of space Tokyo is the future, rural Japan, the past that was "always already there" (Harootunian 1988, 416)' (1992: 16). A crucial difference between Tobin's 'rural' and the one produced in the articles by Japanese authors mentioned above is that while the former connotes a kind of Shangri-La that, 'urban Japanese take comfort in' (Tobin 1992: 16), the latter discloses the unpleasant dark side of the past that urban Japan had overcome. The international marriage arrangement, which is, in fact, part of globalization, is relegated to the past through its association with rural Japan. The countryside here is a symbol of the past. Tobin (1992: 16) commented that, 'if Tokyo is Japan's West, the countryside is Japan's Japan'. Urban Japan takes the position of progressive present, and the rural is situated as the, 'third world within Japan'.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in the discourses of international marriage arrangements, I suggest that 'If Tokyo is Japan's Japan, the countryside is Japan's Asia'.

Within Japan and in the Asian region, Tokyo signifies the desirable Japanese-Self in the, 'hierarchical relations of cultural production' (Chow 1995: 21). Chow (1995) argues that the desirable Japanese-Self is achieved through 'primitivizing' (1995: 20) the subalterns of modern Japan – rural communities and 'Asia' itself. In his analysis of the anatomy of racism, Miles (1989: 79) stated, 'the negative characteristics of the Other mirror the positive characteristics of Self'. To stress the backwardness of the rural and Asian Other is to mirror the progress of a Japanese Self who desires to possess an urban and 'first world' identity.

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6 It must be pointed out that Tobin incorrectly stated that, '[w]ith dramatic shifts in wealth come shifting patterns of intercultural intimacy in the mid-1980s the number of Japanese men marrying Western women for the first time surpassed the number of Japanese women marrying Western men' (1992: 11). What increased was not the number of Western women but foreign women, especially those from Asia. Moreover, the change occurred in the mid-1970s not the mid-1980s (Ministry of Health and Welfare 1996). Part of the problem may have been caused by the fact that Nitta (1988), whose work Tobin cited, did not differentiate between 'foreign' and 'Western' women in other parts of the article.

7 See for example Yamazaki (1988). In her article on the issue of international marriage arrangement in *Asahi Shimbun*, she labels 'Asia' as 'third world', and 'rural Japan' as 'third world within Japan', and attributes both 'Asia' and 'Japan's Asia' with the poverty of the underdeveloped past.

Why did Japan need to associate the international marriage business with the pre-modern? Until recently, there existed a sense of uncertainty in Japan about whether it has achieved 'first world' status outside of the economic field (Clammer 1995: 58). Iida (1990), in his article titled, 'Is Japan an "economically super, [but] politically minor country"?' (*Nihon wa "Keizai Taikoku Seiji Shōkoku" ka*), posed a counter question to 'the widely fixed image of Japan as economy only', by asking whether this was such a shameful thing (1990: 185-186).<sup>8</sup> This lack of confidence and fear of not fully being 'first world' can partly explain the popularity of linking a somehow embarrassing international marriage business to rural problems rather than to the process of Japan's globalization. Urban Japan invests a lot in the claim that there is no place for this issue in modern Japan. Thus, the backwardness of 'Asia' and 'rural Japan' constitutes an indispensable part of a narrative that identifies the Japanese desired-self with a seemingly modernised, urban, middle-class, homogeneous identity. At the same time, it serves to overlook the increasing presence of non-Japanese, in particular 'Asian' residents, other than as students, illegal labourers, entertainers or brides, as a part of a globalised modernity.

The reduction of the international marriage business to a rural problem in these debates also reflected changing gender relations in the 1980s. Some participants in the debate juxtaposed the dichotomy between rural and urban with that between men and women. Rural men were portrayed as dutiful and admirable but unfortunate and abandoned (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 7 April 1987, Itō 1988). Situated in this binary opposition, 'urban women' denote the independent, selfish, fortunate - those who abandon. In short, the rural male became a victim of urban female progress. When some women's groups and individuals criticised the involvement of rural towns in international marriage, the press and rural interest groups countered with criticism of the achievements and urbanity of these women. They claimed the women were *tokai no josei* (urban female dwellers), who were privileged enough to abandon farming and farmers, and thus had no legitimate right to comment critically on rural matters. In his article in *Asahi Shimbun*,

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<sup>8</sup> Iida, T. (1990) reasons that Japan's economic success is derived from its homogeneity and equality in society, which is partly derived from Japanese culture, and praises the significance of the peculiarities of Japanese culture in the history of civilization.

Satō Tōzaburō (1988), an independent scholar of the rural society, argued that urban-based women should have no right to criticise men's decision to receive wives from overseas unless they live in rural areas, and questioned whether economic independence is true independence for women. Itō (1988), the then chief editor of *Asahi Jānaru*, stated passionately

It seems that the pre-established harmony of one woman for one man has been disturbed in Japan. The inducement of Filipino brides is under attack by urban women's liberation groups. The misfortune of rural male youth is caused not only by themselves, but also by political parties, enterprises and consumers. Moreover, not only men but women bear 50% of the responsibility. Marriage difficulties should first be answered within the country and for this, *support* from urban females is essential (1988: 11, emphasis added)<sup>9</sup>

His comments give the impression that urban women could solve all the problems of farmers, despite his reference to other factors such as the effects of industrialisation. Itō makes urban women responsible for the farmers' misery, and in turn for the sacrifice of other women from neighbouring Asian countries. Itō's view of 'pre-established harmony' represents a masculine viewpoint, albeit an imaginary one.

The excessive emphasis on farmers' misery, enhanced by captions such as 'abandoned males' (Itō 1988: 11) and 'sleepless nights of village men' (*Asahi Shimbun* 3 March 1988), unable to fulfil their sexual needs, shows a sharp contrast with the media's silence on rural female heirs. Rural female heirs may have even more difficulty finding a marriage partner due to their 'heiress' status. Their potential marriage partners in these areas may also be heirs, but marriage between an heir and heiress of farming families is still met with strong opposition by other family members and relatives (Itamoto 1987) due to the land and property inheritance issue.

Tokyo-to Kekkō Sōdanjo (1996), a public marriage bureau, notably described the post-war marriage market as, 'a truck full of women for one man' (*torakku ippai no onna ni otoko hitori*) (1996: 24), rather than a 'groom famine'. Due to the effect of World War II, young females faced difficulty in finding a marriage partner in the 1950s (Anzō

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<sup>9</sup> What exactly 'support' implies in the article is not explicit, yet it invokes marrying farmers or returning to farms.

1985) Men's marriage difficulty was thus not a disturbance of proper 'harmony', but merely a gender reversal. Borrowing Joan Eveline's (1994) argument on the politics of advantage, getting married was in fact an advantage - a privileged right - which men expected to enjoy.

In championing the cause of disadvantaged rural males, the media set the dissatisfied voices of urban male readers against those of urban women, who have challenged the bases of masculine identity over the years. The term '*dansei kekkon nan jidai* (the era of marriage difficulty for men)' - became a popular phrase in the late 1980s. As better educated women moved into paid work, more women than before were able to live on their income and negotiate the terms of marriage. Although most eventually marry (see Chapter 3), being single until a certain age is an attractive state for women who enjoy a sense of freedom. The 1980s saw a large increase in female labour force participation, the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, and the popularity of such terms as *feminizumu* (feminism), *dinkusu* (DINKS, or double income no kids) and *sekuhara* (sexual harassment). Questions about the traditional complete devotion to a company, once an approved life style for men, are also increasing. During the 1970s and 1980s, some sections of Japanese society mocked men as *kaisha ningen* (company-beings) who risked *karōshi* (death from over work) and as *sodai gomi* (bulky rubbish), that is, largely useless and a nuisance at home. The debate over international marriage developed in such a way as to reassert a male identity, undermined by changing gender relations in the era of economic transformation.

As the media confined its association of international marriage introductions to the term 'rural', so the brides were assigned to a particular ethnicity and type of woman. First, the brides were racially marked as 'Asian'. The representation of 'Asian brides' reflects historic as well as contemporary race and gender relations with 'Asia'. In imperial Japan, Asia and women were available to satisfy Japanese needs for colonial expansion as well as being an accessible, exotic, erotic body to gratify the imperial Japanese phallic desire (Herman 1993). Young (1995 ch 4), in his study of nineteenth century European colonial desire, demonstrated the significance of the cultural and

gendered construction of race. Translating the hierarchy of sex in Europe into a sexual division of race enables an understanding of the feminisation of 'Black' and 'Yellow' races. As Japan modelled itself on the nineteenth century West in its colonial appetite to fuel its own modernisation and industrialisation (Reischauer 1989), it also adopted the rhetoric of colonial desire (Herman 1993). One of the slogans of the *Meiji* era (1868-1912), '*Datsua Nyūō*' (escape from Asia, enter the West) indicates its share in the project Said (1978) identified as Orientalism. 'Asia' (outside of Japan) was re-invented as available and feminized – the Other to the masculine, Western progressive image Japan constructed of itself. The category of 'Asian women' conveyed a double image of availability and passivity in the Japanese imaginary shaped by colonialism.<sup>10</sup>

During Japan's military expansionist period, the system of institutionalised military controlled sex slavery, or so-called *jūgun ianfu* (war comfort women) was set up in 1937 (Takagi 1992b, for the various interpretations on this issue, see Ueno 1998, Mackie 2000). Mainly young local women of the occupied lands,<sup>11</sup> were confined to military requisitioned sites and forced to serve as sexual commodities for the Japanese soldiers. Many of the Korean and Chinese women were moved around the war zones with the troops and some were abandoned or killed in destinations when the Japanese army began losing the war. The bodies of the female colonial subjects were made available as common property by the Japanese army for their consumption in order to control the soldiers and claim their authority in the occupied lands. The atrocities of

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10 Japan's expansion into the Asian region and establishment of domestic industrialisation in this period had to be partly attributed to Japanese women prostitutes overseas, known as *Karayuki-san* (literally, China-bound persons) who worked in Manchuria, Southeast Asia, and other areas in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These women, mostly of peasant origins, earned and remitted the country's much needed foreign currency (Sone 1990). Japanese merchants through their involvement in the brothel business gained a foothold in the region for the expansion of their other businesses (Sone 1990: 270). The Japanese prostitutes therefore contributed to the domestic and international economic expansion of Japan. Despite their contribution to the nation's achievement of modernisation, Japan eventually discarded *Karayuki-san* as its disgrace, echoing international campaigns against prostitution. The remittances of the women became less valuable to industrialised Japan by the 1920s, and their existence became an embarrassment to the image of the modernising nation (Sone 1990: 272-280).

11 Most of the women were Korean and Chinese origin. Others included Filipino, Indonesian, Malaysian, Dutch and Japanese women.

institutionalised sexual slavery by the Japanese military sharply demonstrated gender, race, and class relations of wartime Japan and its colonised Others<sup>12</sup>

The contemporary representations of 'Asian women' in Japan display similarities and dissimilarities with those of the past. In the 1970s and 1980s, the dominant image was of sex workers until the issue of 'Asian brides' surfaced. Japanese men's 'sex tours' to Korea and the Philippines in the 1970s and the influx of Filipino women into Japan's entertainment industry in the 1980s contributed to the fixation on 'Asian women' as available sexual commodities. Migrant female workers in the entertainment industry were called *Japayuki-san*, a coined word from *Karayuki-san* (see footnote 10). This naming accurately depicts structural similarities with the latter in contributing to the development of a nation with the accumulation of foreign currency through women's work, but at the same time it carries the connotation that all 'Asian women' working in pubs and bars (or any other industries) in Japan are engaged in prostitution. Filipinas, in particular, were made to carry the image of available exotic bodies as well as victims of poverty. Japan, now fulfilling its economic desire, continued to occupy the position of the masculine self in relation to feminised 'Asia' that is embodied by the image of 'Asian women' in Japan.

When the issue of 'Asian brides' started to appear in the media in the mid-1980s, the most over-represented group of Asian brides was Filipino women (see, for example, *Sandē Mainichi* 23 November 1986, *Shūkan Asahi* 18 September, 1987, Suzuki

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12 It was in 1992 that the Japanese government first acknowledged the Imperial army's involvement in the system of sexual slavery, or 'comfort women' in their terminology, after the compensation claims by three former Korean military prostitutes to the Tokyo district court in 1991 (Ueno 1998). Their claims, which were the first of its kind, had enormous implications to expose and problematise the gendered dimensions of human rights abuses in war (Mackie 2000, Ueno 1998). To date, the government refuses to admit any governmental responsibility in the form of a formal apology or an individual compensation to the women affected.



1987b).<sup>13</sup> The image of the Filipino bride occupies the space of a pseudo-Japanese rural 'mother', who is cheerful, determined and fertile, yet foreign. The brides are often pictured cooking with the mother-in-law, fondling babies, serving tea in a Japanese manner, working in farms or factories, all with an emphasis on rural-ness - wearing traditional Japanese padded gowns and with rice-fields for a background (see for example, *Yomiuri Shimbun* 14 September 1987, '*Ajia kara no Hanayome o Kangaeru*', NHK, broadcasted 13 & 14 June 1988). These photos of young Filipino women in a Japanese rustic setting invite a voyeuristic gaze and more or less caricature Filipino women as pseudo-Japanese country mothers.

The images portray Filipino women's adaptability and abundant fertility as symbols of success and stability in marriage. A headline such as, 'Filipino brides five women already [have a child], and the remaining four also will be mothers soon' (Suzuki 1987b: 55), stresses the women's reproductive role. The caption in one of the photos in this article, in which a Filipino wife with her baby in her arm is standing with her Japanese husband and mother-in-law, says, 'A mother-in-law fondling her granddaughter and a young couple for Masahiro [the husband's name], his wife Susan, who gave birth to his daughter, is the best wife' (Suzuki 1987b: 55). A cheerful Filipino wife and her fertility brought happiness and liveliness to a household, 'after so many years' (Shibata 1987: 213). When depicting language and cultural conflicts between a Filipino bride and her mother-in-law, the bride's expected baby bears the role of, 'a flash of hope' (*Asahi Shimbun* 12 January 1987).

The media translates cheerfulness into naivety and innocence in its portrayals of Filipino wives. The 'childish' behaviour of the brides was repeatedly emphasised. Examples include a Filipino wife who wakes her husband up to go to the toilet at night because she is afraid of a ghost (Sakurai 1986), A husband, while stressing his

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13 The media's preference for Filipino women (and to a lesser extent Sri Lankan women) was apparently due to their visibility. A film director commented that Filipino women's different appearance from Japanese makes a good picture, in particular their dark skin against white snow (personal interview, Yamatani 1995). In other words, their 'Asian-ness', as opposed to 'Japanese-ness' makes sensational pictures of brides of Japanese men. Korean brides were the most under-represented. Through their avoidance, the debate managed to elude the troubled issue of Korea-Japan relations and the position of Korean residents who have been one of the most silenced of 'Others' in Japan.

responsibility for watching over his wife as she needs more years to grow, describes living with his wife at the moment as like playing with a child of a kindergarten age (Shibata 1987), and a Filipino wife, calling her husband 'papa', puts her arm around her husband's neck and holds out a peeled mandarin toward the husband's mouth (*Asahi Shimbun* 12 January 1987) These depictions paint Filipino women as immature, submissive, dependent, while exhibiting oddness and foreignness in the relationships of Japanese husbands and Filipino wives

One newspaper article depicted 'nangoku no hanayome (brides from southern islands)' showing interest in, 'anything – fridge, washing machine, microwave –' and commenting, 'we don't have this and that in the Philippines' (*Asahi Shimbun* 12 January 1987) Descriptions such as, '(she) goes to buy an ice-cream with small change everyday [and ] seems not to understand that her husband has to go to work everyday' (Sakurai 1986 316, 320), imply Filipino wives' ignorance of modern life and reinforce the idea that the women come from backward, uncivilised countries A title of a Television feature on Filipino and Sri Lankan brides, '*Suashi no Hanayometachi Aru Kokusai Kekkon* (Bare-foot Brides An International Marriage)' (TBS, February 1987 [no date recorded]), represents the 'southern islands' as a place of poverty illustrated with footage showing swarms of children and washing in the street

The poverty of the 'Asian brides' countries of origin is one of the most important features in these portraits When the problems between the brides and their Japanese families regarding cultural and language differences were depicted, the issue of money was frequently the focus, as in the story of a wife secretly sending money to her family in the Philippines (for example, *Shūkan Sankei* 31 July 1986) This implies that the reasons for their marriages are simple economic ones The constant portrayal of the women as economic victims of their families and homelands reinforces the idea that they are best suited to the role of an undemanding wife and enduring mother These representations suppress the diversity of the socio-economic backgrounds of the women (the experience of a university graduate medical researcher or a motel owner was

unlikely to receive media focus)<sup>14</sup>

The contemporary portrayal of the 'Asian bride' as rural mothers is in opposition to other prevailing images of them as sex workers. This shows the influence of the prevalent gender ideology of Japan, which divides women into two categories, that is, nurturing 'mothers' without sexuality and those who provide sexual services outside mother/wifehood (Mackie 1988). In short, women are divided to satisfy men's needs. The images of Filipino women are accordingly divided: one serving as a wife/mother, the other as a prostitute. 'Rural brides' were the reverse of 'urban entertainers': the former, pseudo-Japanese mothers, whose sexuality is bound with their fertility, and the latter, whores. One common trait that these contrasting representations share is their status as victims of poverty in their 'backward' country. This portrayal legitimises the Filipino women's 'availability' to Japanese men in either context.

The dual representation of Filipino women as sex workers and rural brides is perpetuated in a serial comic book, *Itoshino Airin* or *My dear Irene*, (Arai 1995~1997). In this story, Iwao, a 42 years old bachelor, who lives with his senile father and domineering mother in a rural area, marries Irene, a Filipino, through the arrangement of an international marriage agency. At the beginning, the story revolves around the theme that Irene, a virgin, kept refusing to have sex with her new husband Iwao. In contrast, Irene's colleagues at a local Filipino pub engage in prostitution. While Irene is depicted as sexually attractive, enhanced by her chastity, the portrayals of Filipino women remain divided into two contrasting groups. Both images once again share the common narrative that they came to Japan primarily for money.

As a consequence, the two stereotypic representations of Filipino women left a large number of urban Filipino wives of Japanese men, whose marriages may or may not be through arrangement, greatly under-represented in the mass media, especially until the mid-1990s. It also further stigmatised Filipino women and tended to create divisions

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<sup>14</sup> The media exaggeration of poverty and backwardness brought frequent disparaging comments, such as 'do you have refrigerators in Korea?' (Soo-Mi 1995). These comments severely undermined the pride of many women.

among the Filipino women themselves. Some of the Filipino wives I interviewed commented that they were very careful with their choices of clothes and accessories not to look like entertainers (Rose 1995, Cynthia 1996). A Filipino wife (who married a Japanese man not through introduction) living near Tokyo mentioned to me that those married through introduction agents do not live in the metropolitan area, despite the fact that the Filipino group she belonged to turned out to have such women as members as well as former entertainers.

Around the mid-1990s, some books and films appeared on marriages between Filipino women and Japanese men. The narratives were from the viewpoints of the husbands and offered some insights into these relationships from the Japanese male perspective. Among these were a documentary film, *Tsuma wa Firipīna* (My wife is Filipina) (Terada 1992), and books, *Firipīna to Kekkonsuru Koto* (On Marrying Filipina) (Tamagaki 1995), and *Jīna no Ie* (House of Jina) (Nakahara 1994)<sup>15</sup>. The first two works portrayed the creators' experiences of living with their Filipino wives, whom they first met at a pub, whereas the third one describes the author's account of living with his son's Filipino wife. Criticising Terada's (1992) documentary film, Kaneko (1996) mentions that the Japanese husband continues to be a buyer of what his Filipino wife sells. That is, she sells her sexuality and ability to serve men, and thus their marriage 'mimics' the economic relations between the Philippines and Japan.

Other books such as *Firipīna Aizō Dokuhon* (Filipinas Love and Hate) (Ajia Fūzoku Kenkyūkai 1996) viewed Filipino women as partners, but stressed their sexuality in a voyeuristic manner. An article in *Spa!* (23 March 1994: 36-47), a young male oriented weekly magazine, similarly characterized the Filipino woman as having a 'nice body',

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<sup>15</sup> There was also the TV drama in 1992 which was based on the prize winning non-fiction book, titled '*Firipīna o Aishita Otokotachi* (Men who loved Filipinos)' by Hisada (1989). Her work has significance in dealing with marriages between Filipino workers and Japanese men, when such representation was still rare. However, her continuous use of the term, *Japayuki-san, moto* (former) *Japayuki-san* and *Firipīna* constructs Filipino women as sex workers not as migrant women. She attempted to write beyond the common representation of the relationship between Japanese men and Filipino women as exploiters and exploited. Yet, Filipino women in her book were presented as 'other' poor yet warm-hearted, extremely cheerful and street-wise. Their Japanese husbands were also outsiders, coming from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Their marriages were not ordinary. The TV version attracted criticism from Filipino and Japanese women's groups for its stereotypic representation of the Philippines and Filipino women (for example see, Inagaki 1996).

being 'cheerful', 'virginal', 'simple', 'sharing', 'being like women of 30 years ago', and 'not acting big' The popularised usage of the word, *Firipīna* (Filipina), indicates some shifts in construction of ethnic identities of Filipino women from *Japayuki*, a sex worker, and *Firipin hanaome* (Filipino brides), to a substitute for Japanese women as a potential attractive partner Nonetheless, the term *Firipīna* (Filipina) carries connotations of intimacy as well as some derision, and the women are assigned exaggerated femaleness and other characteristics reflecting male desire It should be pointed out that Filipino men are not called *Firipīno* or Filipino, but the more neutral term of *Firipin-jin*, which indicates nationality

Underlying the image of Filipino women as mothers, prostitutes and overtly female was the historic conception of 'Asian' as a manipulable, uncivilised, feminised race As Torgovnick (1990) says of 'primitivist discourse', primitives were constructed in a way that, 'tells us what we want it to tell us' (1990: 9) The race of Filipino women made it easier to reflect dominant male desires in these impositions This becomes apparent when compared with the representations of Russian brides Their portraits stressed the terms 'white', 'blond', 'glamorous' and 'sexy', yet 'humble' (for example, Ako 1993, *Sandē Mainichi* 6 June 1993) But, in spite of the same economic reason being given for their marriages, the portrayal of Russian brides allows them greater autonomy, as in '(She) got angry about the small size of the room, and returned home' (*FLASH* 18 May 1993) The representations of Filipino brides whose marriages were arranged were of women who could not afford such self-determining 'anger'

The passive nature ascribed to 'Asian brides' in the contemporary period echoes that given to 'Asian women' in imperial Japan Their lack of subjectivity and 'uncivilised' nature were necessary to construct and define Japan's progressive identity, an identity that excused domination The portrayal of 'Asian brides' as victims in their own countries undermined their decision-making power over their lives in Japan and their sense of challenge and aspiration At the same time, the public was invited to view the 'Asian' brides' experience in Japan with pity The coverage given to the problematic provisions which some shires imposed on bride candidates (see Chapter 5 for details)

elicited this attitude<sup>16</sup>

This approach that ascribes passivity to 'Asian brides' operates in some women-oriented print media as well. Japanese women who seek a Western partner through introduction are described as in search of 'something' which Japanese men cannot offer (for example *Elle-Japon* 5 February 1988), while 'Asian brides' are depicted as marrying Japanese men only for economic reasons (for example, Ishikawa 1992). The account completely neglected the possibilities of Japanese women themselves marrying disadvantaged men in the Western marriage market, and 'Asian' women marrying in Japan for other reasons. It assumes a subordinate position for 'Asian women' and imposes uniformity on them.

The opponents of the 'Asian bride business', who were often anti-capitalist women's groups, also contributed to the dissemination of the image of 'victim other'. Since arguments were presented in economic terms in the context of the exploitation of 'Asia' and 'Asian women' by Japan and Japanese males, groups such as '*Filipin Hanayome o Kangaeru Kai* (Concerned Group for Filipino Brides)' which was formed in 1987, projected the image of 'poor Filipino brides' and the marriage system as a 'slave trade' (see, for example, Yamazaki 1988). The newsletter of the '*Filipin Hanayome o Kangaeru Akita no Onnatachi no Kai* (Concerned Women's Group for Filipino Brides in Akita)' (March 1988) included the group's written protest to the Prefectural Governor, in which they, calling the foreign brides as 'daughters from poor Asia', identified the brides with Japanese 'daughters' who were sold out of poverty in the pre-war era in the Tōhoku region. But defining Filipino brides as 'daughters' also denies these women's autonomy over their lives, and stresses their sacrifice for economic reasons and for the sake of their family. Although I do not wish to underestimate the importance of these non-government organisations' supportive work in such contexts as domestic violence, such frameworks hindered the possibility of constructing Asian

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16 See for example, the TV program '*Ajia kara no Hanayome o Kangaeru*' on NHK (broadcasted on 13 & 14 June 1988) and Fukuzawa's (1988) article. Some of the provisions included compelling 'Asian' brides to abandon their own culture and language even though they had no previous exposure to Japanese language.

female identities outside the status of 'victim other'. They tended to create distance between Japanese supporters and the 'Asian' supported, or, borrowing Trinh's (1989) term, 'between I-who-have-made-it and You-who-cannot-make-it' (1989: 86). As a result, the latter sometimes felt the Japanese supporters ignored their 'real' issues, and came to criticise the 'self-satisfied' position of Japanese activists and social workers (See Chapter 8).

Class intersects with race and gender in the discourse of international introduction marriage. While 'Asian' women were associated with Japanese 'rural' men 'who could not find a Japanese partner', Russian women were, 'rather expensive, as expected' (Ako 1993: 11) and were associated with 'elite' 'urban' men (for example, see, *Shūkan Shinchō* 25 April 1996). Whilst the motivation for marriage of both Asian and Russian women was understood to be economic, the poverty of Russia was not necessarily translated into a discourse of the passive poor. Thus, race relations are woven into domestic class relations. Marriage businesses make anyone a commodity in which 'White' serves as a 'brand' accorded 'upper' class status in the cultural hierarchy. The relationship between Asian women and Japanese men was constructed in very narrow subordinate terms within these structures.

After the period of high economic growth, the Japanese economy showed a steady growth throughout the 1980s until the 'bubble' economy burst in the late 1980s followed by a series of recessions in the 1990s. Japan achieved higher per capita national income in dollars than the United States in 1987, the longest life expectancy in the world, and some improvement in working and housing conditions. Ninety (90) percent of the population has shared middle-class consciousness since the late 1960s. Yet, this 'progress' was not reflected in satisfaction with living standards (Economic Planning Agency 1995). To be hard working with savings gave the promise of success during the high economic growth period, but such a myth was replaced with another myth of consumption in the period of the late 1970s and 1980s (Ehara 1991).

The discourse on the emergence of international marriage business at that time reflected

Japan's need for assurance that it had achieved prosperity. Japan now received economic migrants 'like the West'. This sense of prosperity explains why the increase in numbers of cross-cultural marriages between Japanese men and 'Asian' women were readily attributed to the growth of the marriage business alone until the mid 1990s (for example, see, Sasaki 1991, Kajihara 1991). Japan's economic achievement and its positional superiority were highlighted in its understanding of international introduction marriages. Marriages based on free will or love between Asian women and Japanese men do not fit the self-portrait of first class Japanese, that is, as not belonging to Asia. Japan constructed the discourse of being other than Asian in accordance with the desire to, 'signal the beginning of a new Japanese departure from and occupation of Asia' (Field 1993: 662)<sup>17</sup>. At the same time, Japan could distance itself from all parties involved in the business of international marriage by linking them to the pre-modern past and, hence, confirming them outside the urban middle class – where the Japanese image of its 'real' modern self resides. This association marks the parties to such marriages as deviant with a subtle but definite touch of derision.

Most stories of cross-cultural marriage share a certain voyeuristic emphasis based on curiosity or even fear, either by exaggerating their problems or by fantasizing about the marriage, depending on the actors and the target audiences<sup>18</sup>. The specific development of the debate overlooked the reality of increasing numbers of non-Japanese spouses of Japanese nationals, and the implication of inter-racial children, coupled with a general expansion in the number of residents of foreign origin. The media continued to stereotype Filipino wives as 'rural brides' years after their arrival (Ida 1992, *Shūkan Gendai* 28 May 1994, Honda 1996). Simultaneously, international marriage through introduction in urban areas has been constantly under-represented. The international

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17 Field (1993) is referring to the commodification and consumption of Asia as culture, exemplified by the emergence of the term *esunikku* (ethnic) in reference, for example, to Asian food in quasi-expensive settings, or Korea as a tourist site.

18 For example, male-oriented magazines often favour the failure stories of Japanese women in such marriages, condemning their indiscretion or immodest encounters (see for example an article titled "Baritō no Tsuma" to natta Nihonjin Josei 200-nin no Seikatsu' [Lives of 200 Japanese Women Married in Bali] in *Shūkan shunchō*, a popular middle-age male oriented weekly magazine, 7 September 1995). It seems that such stories consolidate the fear of losing authority over 'their' women. Some studies also refer to similar stereotypical projections about the problems of cross-cultural marriage (see for example, Breger & Hill 1998, Robinson 1996).



marriage business had to remain a peripheral issue in order for Japan to continue maintaining its dream of homogeneity and middle-class consciousness in the making of its 'first world' identity

## 2.2 In Academic Research

International marriage arrangement has attracted the interest of academics from various disciplines. In general, the scholarly works that examined or referred to international marriage by introduction perceived the issue solely as a rural problem and saw female participants in the marriage business as economic migrants, with an emphasis on Filipino women in their writing. The media, activists, and academics to some extent mutually reinforced each other's representations of a particular image. I will firstly examine the representations of the issue within Japan, and then cover similar discussions outside of Japan using material written in English.

Scholars in Japan discussed international marriage by introduction from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. Some considered it from the perspectives of human rights questions (Satō 1989a, 1989b, 1990) or focussed on the adaptation of the brides from the various perspectives (Matsuoka & Ueki 1995, Matsuoka et al 1995, Sugaya 1995, Kuwayama 1992, 1994, 1995, Igarashi 1995). Others discussed the issue in the context of rural studies (Mitsuoka 1989, Iwamoto 1995, Nakazaka 1996) or migration studies (Tezuka 1990, Kajita 1991, 1994, Kojima 1996, Ishii 1995). Imagawa's (1990) interesting work analysed the history of national and local policies on marriage since the Meiji period and added historical perspective to rural shires' involvement in international marriage in contemporary Japan. At the local municipalities' policy level, available services for the foreign women are assessed (Matsumoto 1995a), and some argued the need for Japanese language classes as the educational right of foreign brides.

(Sasagawa 1989a, 1989b, 1990)<sup>19</sup> All but a few of these works (Kojima 1996, Ishii 1995) placed their focus on international marriage in rural areas, and many presented foreign brides as victims, although there was somewhat less emphasis on this image in the rural studies

Under the heading of '*kokusai kekkon*', the data-book on women, edited by two prominent feminists (ed Inoue & Ehara 1991), observed that,

Marriage brokers have been established to introduce Asian women as brides in order to solve the marriage difficulty for men, which was caused by the high ratio of men to women of 'marriageable age' and the increase in women who do not desire to marry. In these marriages, the women are often not respected as an equal human being, and are treated as a tool for child bearing, elderly care and farming duties. (Yoshizumi 1991: 42)

Yoshizumi's account is representative of the victim focused treatment of international introduction marriage and of the lives of foreign women in other scholarly works. In order to elaborate this tendency in the wide range of disciplinary works which took up the issue, I summarise some of these studies in four categories: those with a mainly legal focus on human rights questions, rural studies concerning the demographics and economic viability of the agricultural sector, psycho-social research on the adaptation of the brides, and labour and migration studies.

Some scholars were concerned with human rights, the commodification of brides, and the violation of the 'modern' notion of marriage. Understanding international marriage introduction as a rural problem, their main arguments converged on associating rural communities with pre-modernity. Satō (1989a, 1989b, 1990), a law professor, criticised the international marriage business as 'pre-modern' because it was out of step with the notion of modern marriage that should be based on the agreement of both sexes. Condemning the involvement of some rural towns in marriage introduction, he urged the farming communities to 'modernise' themselves. The feminist writer, Higuchi (1987), similarly, was critical of rural communities from the perspective of their disrespect for women's autonomy. According to her, the idea of receiving submissive

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<sup>19</sup> The issue also attracted interest from the specialists in oral literature, who collected folklore narrated by foreign wives (Nomura 1995a, 1995b)

brides from Asia was a reflection of backward thinking by rural policy makers Nakamura (1990) also criticised the current way of 'importing Asian brides' as commodifying women. However, as an advocate for sustainable economy and re-valuing of farming, he saw some potential in the influx of 'Asian brides' if their living conditions were to improve as the women could become a driving force in creating a more humane, multicultural society in farming communities. While all three were concerned with the question of human rights, the two former authors placed rural communities outside of Japan's modernity and the later saw the potential of farming as an alternative to Japanese capitalism.

Scholars from rural and agricultural studies (Mitsuoka 1989, Iwamoto 1995, Nakazawa 1996),<sup>20</sup> generally more sympathetic to the practice, raised the issue of marriage difficulties for farming heirs and depopulation within the framework of sustaining rural communities. Mitsuoka (1989: 187) stated that the lack of marriage opportunities for rural young males has represented a denial of their human rights. These scholars' arguments emphasised the importance of admitting the 'reality' of foreign wives' presence in the communities, rather than scrutinising the villages' involvement after the fact. The main theme was therefore to identify problems and suggest policies on the settlement of foreign wives. For example, Nakazawa (1996) depicted the stress and dilemmas facing foreign wives in their relationship to their husbands, their families and communities, and made recommendations to promote the internationalisation of rural areas. Some others such as Mitsuoka (1989) similarly suggested international exchanges as an alternative to instant marriage arrangement through, for example, the establishment of *kokusai kōryū mura* (an international exchange village) providing opportunities for the young to meet and possibly marry on the basis of love. These views, which focus on rural policy, have underlying assumptions that migrant women's adaptation is somehow always ideal, that harmonious adaptation would lead to the

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20 Iwamoto (1995) and Nakazawa (1996) come to different conclusions about the same issue. Iwamoto noted the progress in mutual understanding between the foreign brides and the community, whereas Nakazawa draws a negative conclusion on the subject. This may be because Iwamoto depended on information provided by the regional officials, while the Nakazawa aimed to identify stress and complications in the wives' relationships with their husbands.

internationalisation of rural areas, and that the adaptation of foreign wives greatly depends upon the support given to them <sup>21</sup>

Sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, psychiatrists and some social workers, focussed on the adaptation of foreign brides, mainly within the family (Matsuoka & Ueki 1995, Matsuoka et al 1995, Sugaya 1995, Kuwayama 1992, 1994, 1995, Igarashi 1995) These scholars discussed the problems that arose within cross-cultural families and the rural household system

Some of these studies (Matsuoka & Ueki 1995, Matsuoka et al 1995, Sugaya 1995) point to the rigid patriarchal Japanese household system in rural areas and the low status of young *yome* (brides) under that system as the major causes of the difficulties faced by foreign wives. The method of financial allocation within the household is identified as one expression of these structural problems. These studies treat conflict within the family as problems rather than as the result of 'a clash of interest' or an 'active struggle' (Giddens 1993: 739) of the foreign wives. The notion that the family was an essentially harmonious entity surfaces in the anthropologist Sugaya's (1995) concern that 'the troubles over money and relationships between brides and mothers-in-law would destroy the stability of the Japanese family' (1995: 12). The usage of terms such as 'international family' (*kokusai kazoku*), and 'international child' (*kokusai-ji*) (Hara et al 1994, Matsuoka & Ueki 1995, Matsuoka et al 1995) also anticipates an ultimate harmonious amalgamation within the family.

A psychiatrist and an active non-government organisation worker, Kuwayama (1992, 1994, 1995) has been vocal on the matter of foreign brides. Through his experience with dealing with foreign wives in Yamagata prefecture, he illustrated the process of cross-cultural adaptation of the foreign wives who mainly married through introduction, and the pattern of their stresses over time. His work often included examples of severe cases of brides' suffering – an inevitable focus on the extreme due to his professional

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<sup>21</sup> This can be seen in the use of the trainee system by some shires to bring single foreign women to the communities for 3 month periods. I will explore this in Chapter 4.

standpoint His writings were often quoted in the media (for example, *Asahi Shimbun* 3 April 1996) and other scholarly works (for example see, Kojima 1996, Ishii 1995, Ōnishi et al 1995) Kuwayama saw the issue of international introduction marriage as a social and psychological problem specific to rural Japan For example, he associated the increase in the number of the foreign spouses in rural areas with the lack of rural men's attractiveness to Japanese women He cites a strong dependency between mothers and sons caused by fathers' *dekasegi*, or working away from home, during the period of high economic growth in Japan According to his view, international marriage increased around 1986 because rural mothers faced the reality of their aging and felt it necessary to find partners for the sons (Kuwayama 1995 64-65) While his account adds a psychological perspective to the issue, once again, we see the marriage business reduced to a rural problem and foreign brides its victims

Some scholars did consider the issue of Asian brides within the context of foreign labour and migration (Tezuka 1990, Kajita 1991, 1994, Ishii 1995, Kojima 1996) These studies helped to situate the issue in the global context The focus was placed on the productive and reproductive labour that the foreign women perform (Tezuka 1990, Kajita 1991) Kajita (1994 125-146) urged his readers to see the issue of 'Asian brides' in light of the international labour movement He categorised two types of demand for foreign labour in Japan as, "*seichō e no senryaku*" (strategies to 'growth') and "*sutai e no taiō*" (countermeasures for 'decline') (Kajita 1994 69) 'Asian brides' were classified under the latter group for the reason that they represented a countermeasure for declining rural communities facing productive and reproductive labour shortages (Kajita 1994 69)

While these two studies focused on the aspect of labour migration and rural cases, Kojima (1996) discussed the influx of Filipinos to Japan in the framework of the population movement as well as a labour movement He points out that the marriage and labour market in Japan influenced the migration of Filipino women Using statistical evidence, he argued the increase in marriages between Japanese men and Filipino women, who initially came to work, occurred before the increase of marriage by introduction His study is among the first to indicate the trend of inter-marriage

between Japanese men and Filipino females who first migrated as labourers. Similarly taking labour migration as its departure point, Ishii (1995) presented the lives of cross-cultural couples in urban and rural Japan, reflecting the notable 1990s public and academic discussions about foreign workers as residents. Yet again, both authors' accounts of foreign brides in rural areas are largely framed in terms of exploitation. Despite Ishii's (1995) reference to active urban-based women's groups of cross-cultural marriage, she was silent about rural based ethnic women's groups.

Despite different focal points and perspectives, the studies examined here are based on the assumption that the poverty of brides forced them into marriage and migration. Thus, other possible reasons for the women's action were not explored. Neither were the interrelated sites of marriage and migration in the international marriage business system, or the participants' active struggles in challenging stereotypes and structures in Japan. As a result, an 'Asian' woman in international introduction marriage remains without her own agency in these academic works.

A number of studies written in English in different fields referred to the issue of international marriage introduction. In the material examined, the account of Japanese farmers and their suffering brides from other Asian countries predominated in scholarly representations.

The AMPO *Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*'s (1988, vol 19) feature, 'Japan imports brides', defining it as 'slavery without chains' (1988: 22) included two articles on Filipino (Yamazaki 1988) and Sri Lankan women (Nakamura 1988). In these articles, both authors, who were actively involved in supporting women from the Philippines or Sri Lanka, introduced the stories of the exploited 'Asian brides' of rural farmers. Other authors in their references to the issue displayed a similar understanding to that of Yamazaki (1988) and Nakamura (1988). When McCormack (1996: ch. 4) discussed Japan's identity in relation to Asia, he mentioned three groups of women as clear examples of the continuing discrimination against Asian people in Japan. They are entertainers, marriage partners in isolated rural communities from Southeast Asia,

Korea, and China, and resident Korean schoolgirls (1996 178-180) McCormack (1996 179) compared entertainers with wartime 'comfort women' and the experience of the brides was summarised as isolated and discriminated against Moeran (2000) who looked at Japan's cultural influence in Asia, discussed the movement of people from other parts of Asia to Japan, and referred to the 'new breed of "comfort women", primarily Filipinas, who now populate the country's clubs and bars' and 'who have come to Japan as wives of Japanese farmers in remote country villages' (2000 32) Truong's (1996) perspective on the issue was also in line with others, though she did not make such a simplistic comparison between Asian female migrants in contemporary Japan and forced military prostitutes during wartime Nonetheless, in arguing that 'mail-order-brides' were 'female migrant reproductive workers', Truong commented on Japan's 'import of foreign brides to solve a female labour shortage in agriculture' (1996 41), citing del Rosario (1994), who quoted the above-mentioned articles by Yamazaki (1988) and Nakamura (1988)

In contrast to the above articles that condemned the marriage practice, Nitta (1988) treats positively the increasing trend toward intercultural marriage in Japan He mentions the invitation to Filipino brides from farmers in a farming community as an example of the greater Japanese acceptance of intercultural marriage From a different perspective, Iwao (1993), discussed Japanese women's advancement and their change in attitude toward marriage, illustrated by the influx of Asian brides as a response to male farmers' desperation for marriage (1993 66) Similarly, Jolivet (1997) described 'the new order' (1997 ch 7) in the marriage situation in Japan, which included 'importing' foreign wives for farmers, illustrated by an interview with a Filipino woman

The scholarly work examined here either highlighted continuing problems (for example McCormack 1996) or changes (for example Jolivet 1997) in Japanese society through their reference to the narrative of 'Asian brides' and 'rural Japanese farmers' In these studies, rural farmers do not necessarily occupy the position of outsiders within Japan while the representation of Asian brides remained more or less unaltered from the

prevailing public discourse in Japan. These studies contributed to shape the understanding of the issue of international introduction marriage outside Japan as an account of rural Japanese farmers and their subordinated Asian brides.

### 2.3 Conclusion

The Japanese mass media devoted considerable attention to the issue of international introduction marriage and its female participants in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The media extensively focused on rural areas and favoured the images of Filipino women among other foreign brides. In the media representations, the assumed poverty and backwardness of 'Asian brides' and their countries in global economic relations were linked with those of rural farmers – Japan's rural Other – in Japan's construction of its identity as a modern developed society. The blame for the presumed suffering of 'Asian brides' tended to be placed on urban Japanese women who 'had abandoned' rural men in their marriage choices. Activist groups also based their arguments on the victim status of 'Asian brides'. The discursive power of the media, while revealing its urban male-centred orientation, distanced 'deviant' international introduction marriages from the imagined core culture of an urban, middle-class, and (paradoxically) homogeneous Japan. Despite the implication of inter-marriage between Japanese men and women from other Asian countries which brings ethnic heterogeneity within Japanese families, the representation of international introduction marriages in the public discourse perpetuated Japan's desires, both historical and during the 'bubble' economy, for separation from and dominance of 'Asia'.

In the academic works that examined or referred to international introduction marriage, the issue was also largely portrayed as a rural problem. Regardless of the position of these works on the issue of introduction marriage, they tended to assume the poverty of 'Asian brides' in their countries of origin and their consequent disadvantage in their imposed reproductive and productive roles in rural farming families. The lack of qualitative inquiry among these studies meant that the meanings of marriage migration



to the women participants and many dimensions of their personal experience remained unexplored. Both public discourse and academic representation during the late 1980s and the mid-1990s disseminated the image of 'Asian brides' as economic victims and confined their existence to Japan's 'periphery'.

### 3

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## Globalization, Marriage, and Migration

This chapter examines macro factors that affected the establishment of the international marriage system in Japan in the 1980s, with particular emphasis on the linkage between the domains of marriage and migration. It first looks at interpretations of the site of marriage in modern society and its ambiguous meaning for women, and analyses its relation to the operations of the marriage business. The development of the marriage introduction business reflects the social meanings given to the site of marriage in general. Marriage is a pervasive social institution and patterns of marriage alter in relation to other societal changes. It is not accidental that the emergence of the international marriage business occurred at the same time that major changes were taking place in marriage patterns in Japan. Marriage agencies construct their product - marriage introduction - alongside (and often as a remedy for) these changes to appeal to their potential clients. An examination of marriage *per se* is therefore essential in order to understand the development of the industry.

The chapter then offers an analysis of the international marriage business within the context of global patterns of trade and migration in the Asian region. The acceleration of Japan's economic expansion into the Asian region and of accompanying migration influenced the character and development of the business. The overseas connections of Japanese marriage agents are also a product of the extensive integration of capital and the movement of people in the region since the 1980s. Thus, an inquiry into the historical and on-going shape of Japan's connections with other countries in Asia provides also important background to this study.

### 3.1 Marriage and the International Marriage Business

Marriage has many facets. For a biologist, the function of marriage may simply be procreation (Ishikawa 1992). But marriage patterns - from mate selection to family types - and the meanings attached to marriage differ among cultures and have changed over time. The study of marriage and family, and their interrelations with the public sphere including the nation, has been one of the most important areas of feminist research in the West and Japan alike. Giddens (1993: 390) defined marriage as 'a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals'. This definition does not refer to power relations in the union despite the fact that many feminists have identified the unequal distribution of power between a husband and wife as a significant social issue.

Socialist feminist Carol Pateman (1989), regards the marriage contract as a sexual contract in which men exercise their sex-right to women, and an individual husband gains sexual access to his wife's body and her labour as a housewife. Liberal democracies such as those in Britain, Australia and the United States are believed to have originated in a social contract, but Pateman argues that the original contract is the patriarchal, sexual contract through which men's freedom and women's subjection are created. Civil liberty and equality are attributes granted to men. Women are incorporated into civil society through the patriarchal marriage contract. Pateman (1989: 32) says that marriage today remains economically and socially advantageous for most women because of their disadvantage in the patriarchal capitalist market. Marriage offers women economic protection and a social identity, though only in the form of relations of domination and subordination.

Delphy (1984) essentially focused on men's material advantage in the western family. She defines 'marriage [as] the institution by which unpaid work is extorted from women-wives' (1984: 94). Delphy and Leonard (1996) stress the existing hierarchy within the family system. In this system, husbands appropriate women's 'practical, emotional, sexual, procreative and symbolic' work (1996: 23). Women do not own the products of the work they perform for their husbands. According to them, this

material appropriation of women's labour is the cause of women's oppression. However, Delphy and Leonard (1996), who are strong opponents of the marriage institution, nevertheless express slight ambivalence regarding the family when they write,

the family and heterosexuality are not the place to start when trying to change gender relations. They are certainly not the only place to start, since women need to have a stronger public position before they give up such protection as their domestic position currently provides for them (Delphy and Leonard 1996: 266)

While they 'reluctantly' accept protection for women through the family, others value (although their positions are also qualified) family and marriage in a more positive light. Vasta (1991) concludes that although the family is a site of female oppression, it is an ambiguous and contradictory site for many immigrant Italian women due to racial and class-based hostility from outside. This ambivalence not only affects women of 'difference', such as Vasta's minority subjects. Okin (1997) argues that a similar ambivalence about family can be traced in the writing of most Western feminist theorists. She stresses that women share such ambivalence across different life phases and family environments. She states, 'except for a small radical fringe, all feminists, white as well as Black, want to retain the family but to reject its "rigid and demeaning sex roles" (Smith, cited in Okin) ' (1997: 20). Okin believes that many feminists recognise the positive potential in 'a greatly changed conception of family' (1997: 14). Based on heterosexual marriage, the modern family system is a patriarchal institution and a site of women's oppression, but its total rejection does not appeal to many women of our time.

According to Ehara (1985), the Japanese Women's Movement displayed a similar ambivalence towards families and motherhood positions as that presented in Western feminist writings. Contrary to the common belief that these women asserted an anti-motherhood position, Ehara argues that it was the myth of 'motherhood' or the motherhood ideology that these women rejected, not the act of child bearing or nurturing. These acts were not essentially oppressive, but could have a liberating effect on women. She points out that setting 'equality with men'

(modernity-oriented) against 'women's originality' (anti-modernity-oriented) is a false dichotomy as such an opposition is a part of the very system of modernity (1985 153-157) Her account is similar to Bacchi's (1990) argument on the futility of discussing women's sameness to or difference from men A modernity that excluded women from the outset forces women to define themselves in terms of sameness or difference from men The system of modernity constructs the relationship between women and men within the dichotomy of private/public, natural/civil and nature/culture, and these oppositions themselves are expressions of patriarchy

The question of whether marriage and family are sites of oppression or empowerment for women is, then, deceptive It is deceptive because modernity excludes women from becoming 'individuals' except through the sexual contract of marriage In modern society men are 'naturally individuals' and they are rarely asked whether marriage for them is the site of oppression or empowerment This is because men legitimately belong to both private and public spheres Thus, only women face this as a dichotomised relation Therefore, acknowledging ambivalence about marriage and families, or thinking in terms of 'both/and' in Chancer's (1998) sense, would be a more constructive approach when dealing with the contradiction that modernity has imposed on women

The essence of the marriage institution governs the ideology of the marriage introduction business Heterosexual marriage is a patriarchal site through which men claim the right of sexual access to women's bodies (Pateman 1989) The marriage business embodies this fundamental attribute of marriage As Pateman (1989) demonstrates, heterosexual relations are not limited in the private sphere The prevalence of prostitution in the capitalist market, for instance, is a working example of heterosexual relations in the public sphere Women's bodies are commodities in the institution of prostitution In the system of the international marriage business that operates in the capitalist market, marriage is for sale as a commodity, and this commodity is marketed to satisfy men's expected use of women's bodies The international marriage business similarly commodifies women as 'embodied sexual beings' (Pateman 1989 17)

Pateman(1989), referring to the lack of real competition among men in the marriage market, said that, ‘in the masculine sexual competition, unlike the competition in the market, *all members of the fraternity can win a prize*’ (Pateman 1989 114, original emphasis) In the 1980s in Japan, marriage has been undergoing some changes, and the possibility of not being able to gain the prize of a wife became a reality for some men In particular, farming and the rural periphery were left behind in the period of high economic growth and that translated into marriage difficulties for some rural male farmers (see Chapter 5) Yet, marriage as a norm retained a strong ideological hold All men *must* win a prize The international marriage business operates in this context The international marriage market offers a second chance for a prize to Japanese men who are disadvantaged in the domestic marriage market

The construction of marriage by introduction reflects the normative expectations of gender relationships at the site of marriage in the general society The advertising aimed at men depicts women as submissive to men whilst advertising aimed at women describes men as able providers The gender division between a husband and a wife is inseparably connected to racial distinctions between the two parties and to economic stratification between their countries of origin For example, matchmaking between Japanese men and Korean women, and Japanese women and American men are common but not vice versa In matchmaking between Japanese men and Russian women, the advertisements for men tend to stress the women’s whiteness, their submissiveness and Japanese men’s relative affluence The advertisements assign women to a lower non-threatening position in social, economic and/or sexual terms They align men with an image of the ‘provider’, able to provide material and other comforts (see Chapter 4)

Further, a marriage introduction would commonly take place with the understanding that a female partner would move to her husband’s country The physical movement of brides can place them in a vulnerable position, as they have to adapt to an unfamiliar person in an unfamiliar country In this regard, migration due to this type of marriage is a gender-specific movement in which clearly, genders are unequal The vulnerability of

the women in the marriage business tends to lead to the common stereotype of them as victims of the patriarchal capitalism, and their marriages are often associated with forced labour and domestic violence

International marriage through agencies is often treated as a fraudulent, manipulation of the immigration laws of the bride's receiving country, laws designed to respect the marital relationship between a citizen and a foreign spouse. Most international marriages by introduction are legal because they are conducted in accordance with the relevant civil laws of the countries involved. At the same time, the definition of 'genuine' marriage is based on accepted notions of romantic love. Thus, marriage through matchmaking is open to question and treated as a fraudulent way to gain entry in a number of countries. Truong and del Rosario (1994) noted extensive screening of foreign spouses from certain countries by British immigration authorities. Their assessment of the intention of the foreign spouse in marrying a British national is one of the criteria used to help them determine the authenticity of the marriage.

The authenticity of marriage by introduction was also a concern of immigration authorities in the United States. The US Immigration and Naturalisation Service released a report mandated by Congress on international matchmaking organisations in March 1999.<sup>1</sup> The report assessed the extent of correlation between the international matchmaking business and immigration and marriage fraud or domestic violence. It concluded that concern over fraudulent or abusive marriage is well founded, however, the available administrative sources of information failed to establish that the marriage business contributes in any significant way to these problems. This example alleges an association between the marriage business and hence marriage through business, and fraud and abusive marriage. Representations of the women participants in this discourse are limited to either cheated victims of the

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1 The report is obtained from <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/repsstudies/Mobrept.htm> (U S Department of Justice, accessed 20/Dec/1999). This study estimates the number of 'mail-order' marriages in the US to be in the range of 4,000 to 6,000 yearly as of 1998.

agencies or abusers of immigration laws, who are (consequently) abused in their marital relationship

The women's vulnerability in the marriage business does not however necessarily mean that they are always forced into such arrangements and victimized in their marriages. International marriage by introduction is one pattern of marrying and forming a family. It carries ambivalent meanings for women at the site of marriage in the wider society. Like men who use the marriage business, female participants in the international marriage business also want to win the fine prize of a husband who will provide them with a comfortable family life in an affluent foreign country. The institution of marriage disadvantages women and the international marriage business commodifies them, nonetheless, married life is tied to an idea of happiness. The international marriage business offers women this happiness (imagined or real), albeit it constructed within the relations of domination and subordination.

Women occupy a vulnerable position in this form of marriage migration. Yet the possibility of migration through the international marriage arrangement is an indispensable part of what international marriage can offer to these female participants (see Chapter 6). From the point of view of the female participants from Asia, the business of international marriage with Japanese men fundamentally means marriage *and* migration. Female participants are attracted to the combination of marriage and migration when domestic marriage is not attractive or feasible for one reason or another. Other forms of migration, such as labour migration, do not provide them with a marital/family life and a social place as a married woman. The combination of marriage and migration circumvents the restrictive provisions on migration in Japan as its Immigration law in principle recognises marriage to a Japanese national as ground for granting residential status. However, for the women in this study, migration is meaningful because it is linked with marriage. The international marriage business for them is about marriage *and* migration.

While the structure of the international marriage business evidently presupposes prospect of patriarchal marriage, a close examination of the actual operation of



international marriage reveals more complex factors at work. The business involves a man, a woman, and an agent. The women are commodities but also clients of the business. Similarly, the men are clients as buyers of marriage introduction services and female marriage partners, but also commodities of the business when it gears advertising towards female audiences. In my study, some Korean and Chinese women paid fees to their agents in their originating countries. Some Japanese agents deal with marriage between Japanese women and Western men who reside in Japan. Their introduction system commonly requires the Japanese women to pay fees, largely because of the limited number of male candidates. The Western men do not pay fees in this system. In this regard, men have elements of commodity status for the marriage agencies. Further, women own marriage agencies in my study, as the business does not require much capital or experience (see Chapter 4). There are cases of former brides becoming marriage introduction consultants (see Chapter 8). Collaborative relationships between some marriage agents and women are notable (see Chapter 6 and 8). Moreover, some men and women who married through the introduction of agencies do try to establish trust, happiness and sometimes achieve love in their marital relationship (see Chapter 7).

Seeing the relations between agents and their male and female clients dichotomised along the lines of exploiters and victims limits an understanding of the issue within a structural deterministic view. Although such an approach is useful in analysing macro level social structures, it obscures the very incentives offered by the business to female clients and fails to address important questions. What is the nature of a marriage contract (both imagined and real) to these women? What do marriage and marital life mean to them? The lack of inquiry into the meaning of marriage or marriage migration will reduce the women to objects of protection and rescue. This precludes them from marriage in the same terms that operate normatively in 'our' contemporary society. In particular, the ambiguity colouring interpretations of marriage in general should be extended to marriage by introduction. To argue for ambivalent meanings operating at the site of international marriage by introduction is not to ignore its patriarchal and capitalistic constructions but to attempt to understand their workings on the experiences of the women.

### 3.2 Women and the Japanese Marriage Market

What was the situation regarding marriage in Japan between the 1980s and the mid-1990s when the international marriage business developed? The 1980s was heralded as *onna no jidai*, or women's era (see for example, Kanaï 1990). In the late 1980s, media accounts of 'women [who] do not marry and men [who] cannot marry' and 'men's marriage difficulty' began to represent the marriage situation as a social problem (see for example, Itō 1988, Kajihara 1991)<sup>2</sup>. The decline in the number of marriages was emphasised together with the decline in childbirth and the increase in divorce. The media highlighted a change in women's attitudes toward marriage and family as the cause of the decline. Women's situations were '*dokomademo akarui* (forever bright)', as the feminist Kanaï (1990: 95) commented with a sense of irony. Iwao (1993) also depicted a promising picture of Japanese women in their late 20s and early 30s, enjoying the freedom of single life with more career and life choices. Marriage, Iwao said, was once a requirement for women, but now it became 'a matter of individual choice' (1993: 64). However, as Iwao herself stated, 'the majority did eventually marry' (1993: 64). Statistics showed that women were marrying later than the previous generation rather than choosing a non-married lifestyle. The institution of marriage is intact, but the meaning attached to marriage has changed since the earlier generation. Rather than a social norm, an economic necessity or an obligation to parents, a desirable marriage is now presented as one based on personal motives of romantic love between two people. The change in women's perceptions and the experience of marriage has certainly occurred, though the degree of that change is arguable.

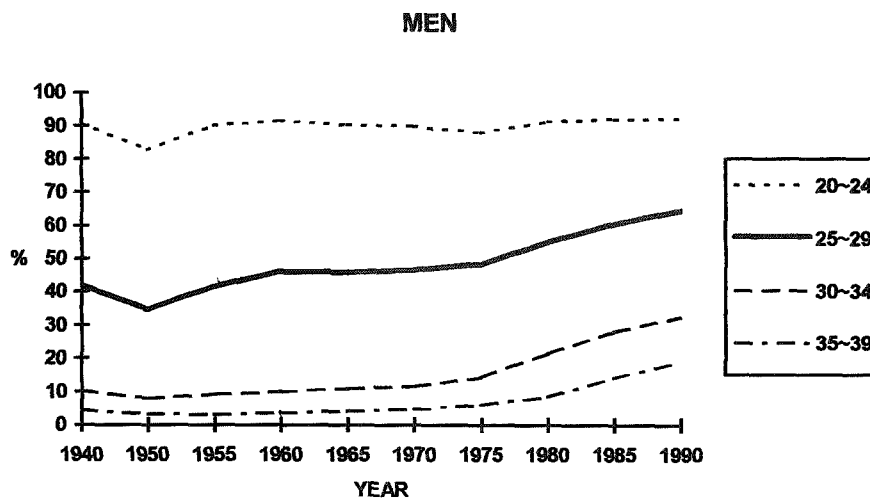
Statistics show a decline in the total number of marriages since 1970. Between 1950 and 1995 marriage rates (per 1,000 population) peaked at 10 per cent in 1970 and fell to the lowest rate of 5.9 per cent in 1990 (Nihon Fujindantai Rengō kai 1994: 260). The

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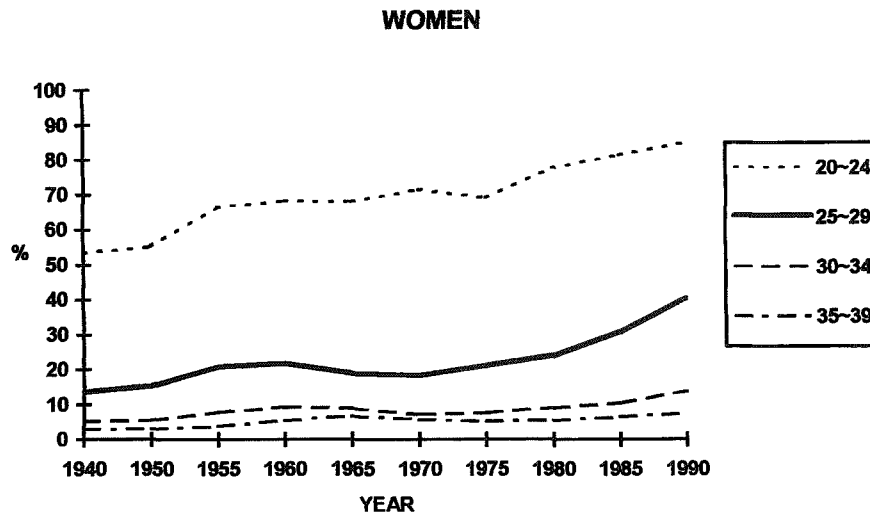
2 The term *dansai kekkon nan* (men's marriage difficulty) was one of the popular terms in the late 1980s along with *dinkus* (DINKS, or double income no kids) and *sekuhara* (sexual harassment) (Economic Planning Agency 1995: 154-155).

average age for a first marriage increased to 28.2 years of age for men and 25.5 for women in 1985 from 26.9 and 24.2 respectively in 1970 (Nihon Fujindantai Rengō Kai 1994: 260). This trend has been continuing and rose to 28.5 years of age for men and 26.2 years for women in 1994 (Economic Planning Agency 1995: 101), which showed a more marked increase among women, narrowing the age gap between the sexes. Consequently, the 'never married' population has increased in the 25 to 34 year age cohort. The unmarried rate for men was 46.5 per cent in the 25 to 29 years age cohort and 11.6 per cent in the 30 to 34 years age cohort in 1970. These statistics increased to 64.4 per cent and 32.6 per cent respectively in 1990 (see Figure 3-1). The unmarried rate for women in the 25 to 29 year age cohort rose 22.1 per cent between 1970 and 1990, reaching 40.2 per cent, but only showed a 6.7 per cent increase among the 30 to 34 year age cohort to reach 13.9 per cent (see Figure 3-2). This is indicative of the fact that a growing number of women in their late 20s remained single, but the majority of females in their early 30s were married.

**Figure 3- 1 Trend in unmarried rate for men: 1940–1990**



Source: *The 1995 White Paper on National Life*, The Economic Planning Agency, 1995, p. 102 & p. 405

**Figure 3- 2 Trend in unmarried rate for women: 1940–1990**

Source *The 1995 White Paper on National Life, The Economic Planning Agency, 1995, p 102 & p 405*

The increase in the number of single women in their late 20s affected the decline in the fertility rate (Kōno 1995). The fertility rate showed a gradual decrease from the late 1960s and reached 1.75 in 1980, 1.57 in 1990 and then 1.43 in 1995<sup>3</sup>. It is said that this rate must be over 2.1 in order to maintain the current population. The phrase ‘1.57 *shokku* (shock)’ appeared in the media in 1990. It attracted criticism from some feminists who regarded it as policy makers’ attempt to fuel concern among the public (Ueno 1991). They pointed out that women, once married, gave birth to an average of two children – a similar number to their counterparts in the 1970s (Kōno 1995, Ueno 1991).

As the total number of the ‘never-married’ population grew, the number of divorces also showed an upward trend. The divorce rate (per 1,000 population) rose from 0.93

<sup>3</sup> A fertility rate requires a complex calculation. It indicates ‘the number of children that would be born to an average woman in a given population if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and bear children at the same rate as those currently in the age group who have just passed the age of childbearing’ (Giddens 1993: 595).

per cent in 1970 to 1.39 per cent in 1985 and 1.57 per cent in 1994 (Economic Planning Agency 1995: 404). The numbers remain relatively small compared to the 4.73 per cent in the United States in 1991 (Nihon Fujindantai Rengō kai 1994: 259).<sup>4</sup> The economic hardship of divorced women with children continues, but the social stigma has been easing. Language has changed to reflect less judgemental attitudes with the use of the term *batsu ichi* (literally, one cross out), which can connote 'just one mistake'<sup>5</sup> replacing the older version of *demodori* (a returned woman [to her parents' home]). Similarly, a de facto relationship once called *dōsei* (cohabitation) had an anti-social connotation but this term was replaced with the less stigmatising *jijitsu-kon* (de facto). Revision of these terms suggests a change in the degree of societal acceptance towards divorce and de facto relationships, although the category 'married' is still reserved as a primary reference point. Nonetheless, throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, Japanese society saw an overall increase in the numbers of unmarried people in the population.

*San kō* (three highs) - high income, high education and high physical height - was one common media representation of what 'choosy' women of the late 1980s required in a potential marriage partner. The media insinuated that it was the 'choosy' woman's fault that men faced difficulties in finding a marriage partner. The term nonetheless implies that marriage continued to hold a significant meaning for women. In a survey by the Institute of Population Problems (1994), respondents under 35 years who had indicated

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4 The divorce rate was much higher in the 1880s and 1890s in Japan due to the fact that a man was able to divorce his wife easily with reasons such as not bearing a child, or not bearing a male child (Economic Planning Agency 1995: 101).

5 The term *batsu ichi* appeared around 1990. It came from the way in which divorce was recorded in the family register (*koseki*). This register records the family as a unit under the head of the family who is often the husband. At divorce, the name of the non-head of the family (usually a wife) is crossed out to remove her record from the family's register. Although the term *batsu ichi* is used for both male and female divorcees in general, 'crossing out' of one's name on the register does not usually happen to the husband at divorce because his name cannot be removed from his register. After divorce a woman can make a new family register with herself as the head of a family, though the Family Registration Act in principle advocates a re-registration of her name in her parent's register if she does not have children or is not a legal custodian of her children. Unlike the pre-war family registration system, the present family register records only up to two generations together in the same register. While the present system is supposed to reflect the equal rights of individuals among the family members, many feminists such as Sakakibara (1992) argue that it still works to legitimise the hierarchy among family members by gender and age, and give precedence to the rights of the family as a unit over those of individual members.

their intention to marry were asked what the important factors were for choosing a potential marriage partner. Both men and women regarded personality to be a far more important factor than academic background, earning power, occupation, appearance and birth order. However, apart from this similarity in first preference, the survey found marked differences by gender on other criteria. Men did not pay much attention to other factors, but expressed a relatively high interest in 'appearance', while women demonstrated concern with all the remaining factors. This tendency was more obvious among the 25 to 34-age cohort than the younger group. The survey also showed that those with higher levels of income, education and occupation showed a higher degree of concern with multiple aspects of a marriage partner (1994: 69-77). While men's adherence to 'personality' and 'appearance' in mate selection was not given much attention in the media, women's more inclusive considerations in their potential marriage partner were presented widely as *san kō* (three highs). It was not merely *san kō* that women in this survey considered important for their future husbands, but other characteristics as well. If a woman can only become a 'full-citizen' in society through marriage, it should not be surprising that they are considerably concerned with the terms that define their 'citizenship'.

Iwamoto (1995) concluded that the marriage difficulty for men was caused by demographic and gender factors due to the post-war baby-boom (1947~1949). As women tend to marry older men, and men younger women, those men who were born in the baby-boom period faced a shortage of potential marriage partners. These men reached their early 30s in 1980, and statistics show the unmarried rate was consistently high among this group of men throughout the 1980s. These factors were enhanced by women's advancement into the labour market and changes in their attitude towards marriage, causing further marriage difficulties for men (1995: 214-215).

An account as to why the changes regarding marriage have occurred was presented in the 1995 White Paper on National Life (Economic Planning Agency 1995). The report firstly referred to a demographic imbalance between the sexes. In the 20 to early 30-year-old cohort, the male population was 1 per cent smaller than the female population in 1960, but in 1994 the male population became 3.3 per cent larger than the female

This contributed to marriage difficulties for men. Secondly, a prolonged educational period resulted in a tendency to marry later. In particular, hypergamy tendency regarding education among women caused higher educated women difficulty in finding suitable partners. Thirdly, the report mentions the increase in the number of women in the labour force due to the growth of tertiary industry. Fourthly, the growth in the market of products for singles, such as convenience stores and processed food, made it 'easier for men to remain single' (1995: 108). The report also suggested the decrease of the practice of *mai* (marriage introduction) restricted opportunities to meet a potential partner. The impression conveyed is that the increase in the number of women with higher education who work in paid labour is the primary cause of the increase of the unmarried population.

Kōno (1995) has questioned the implication of the demographic imbalance by sex. The male population in the 20 to 34-year-old cohort compared to the female population was much larger in 1930 than in 1990. Yet, the male unmarried rate was very small in 1930. All men were able to 'win a prize' (Pateman 1989: 114, original emphasis) in 1930 but not in 1990. The explanations provided in the White Paper did not refer to the decline in economic and psychological attractiveness of marriage for women (Kōno 1995: 78). The report emphasised women's hypergamy but ignored the disillusionment with marital life among some women possibly due to the rigid sexual division of labour and married women's double burden as well as (as the report mentioned) the increased opportunities for paid work for women. If the attractiveness of marriage for men is influenced by the mere availability of processed food as the report claimed, such marriage is likely to have little appeal for women. Neither does the report mention the widely acknowledged fact that an increase in the number of women in the labour force was largely caused by the number of married women with part-time work, and their income was limited to supplement the household budget (see for example, Shiota 1992, Nakamatsu 1995). While the number of the women in their late teens or 20s in the labour force has increased over the last 40 years, the growth in the number of women in the labour force has not directly affected the increase of the non-married population.

The Institute of Population Problems under the Ministry of Welfare has been carrying out surveys on the birth trend, which includes the marriage tendency every five years since 1952<sup>6</sup>. In their 1992 survey of 12,394 single people from 18 to 49 years old, around 90 per cent indicated their intention for future marriage (Institute of Population Problems 1994). The percentage was lower than the previous two similar surveys, but the strong preference for marriage was still notable. Among those who showed an intention to marry, 45.5 per cent of men and 49.6 per cent of women chose 'marriage is not necessary until finding an ideal partner' over 'intend to marry by a certain age'. Compared to the 1987 survey, these percentages increased 8.0 per cent in men and 5.0 per cent in women (Institute of Population Problems 1994: 11-16). Marriage by a certain age appears to be the norm. But the survey shows a tension between this norm and a preference for a certain type of marriage.

One important change regarding marriage in the last 40 years was a shift in perceptions of desirable ways of finding a marriage partner. As delineated in Chapter 1, the popularity of *renai kekkon* (marriage based on romantic love) replaced that of *miai kekkon* (marriage based on introduction) in the early 1970s, and became firmly established in the late 1980s. It should be noted *miai kekkon* in today's sense does not mean forced marriage by parents or others. A go-between arranges the initial introduction and marriage usually takes place after a period of courtship and only if both participants agree. The surveys by the Institute of Population Problems (cited in Minoura 1995: 33) showed that among the cohort who married between 1944 and 1949, 65 per cent married through introduction and 22 per cent said their marriages were based on *renai* (romantic love). The distribution became equal in groups married between 1965 and 1969. This shift in value coincides with Japan's high economic growth and massive migration of the rural population to urban areas (Minoura 1995: 33). Romance was popularised alongside the rise of Japan's GNP and the weakening of the agricultural sector that contributed to the disintegration of the extended family system in the era of industrial restructuring and urbanisation. The percentage for *renai kekkon* (romantic love marriage) rose by 9 per cent, reaching 82.3 per cent between

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6 The first survey was conducted in 1940.



1987 and 1992 As Minoura (1995) put it, romantic love marriage became a norm in the early 1990s in Japan

The survey by the Institution of Population Problems (1994) shows that marriage based on romantic love is popular among the non-married population Within this non-married population, romantic love marriage was more popular among the younger than older cohort and more popular among women than men A majority of non-married respondents in the above-30 age cohorts indicated that their future marriage would not necessarily be based on romantic love That response was also more common among those with lower education, and those who were self-employed, or in family business The survey speculates that this tendency reflects the difficulties of finding partners among these groups in real life In other words, romantic love marriage is a preferred option, but if this appears unattainable, marriage through introduction comes as a second choice rather than remaining unmarried

The normalisation of marriage based on romantic love encouraged the growth of the new marriage introduction businesses Marriage is no longer solely the function of matching two similar households in status, but it is supposed to be an outcome of two individuals' romantic love based on their compatibility in terms of personality and other factors Marriage based on romantic love with an ideal partner is, however, not easily attainable for everyone, hence the introduction businesses marketed 'meetings' with the prospect of nurturing romantic love The large-scale marriage information industry arose with computerised customer management in the late 1970s The computer introduction business was followed by the expansion of small and medium scale new 'introduction' businesses in the late 1980s, which organised various kinds of 'casual' occasions to find a partner, such as a singles party, a group meeting, a sports event, and a quiz night A matchmaking television show '*Neruton Kō geidan*' also attracted high viewer ratings around this time (*DIME* September 1989) At the same time, the opening of men's dating or marriage schools were widely reported for those men who found it difficult to find a partner The widely circulated newspaper, *Mainichi Shimbun*, ran the

series, '*Heisei Otoko-gaku* (Being a man in the *heisei* era)'<sup>7</sup> in 1990 and published it as a book titled, '*Kekkonshitai Otokotachi e* (For men who want to marry)' (Mainichi Shimbunsha Seikatsukateibu Shuzaihan 1992) A magazine, *Bessatsu Takarajima* (September 1995), similarly featured '*Kekkon no Okite Onna no Honne Oshiemasu* (Law of Marriage We can Show What Women Really Think)' The idea of marriage based on romantic love brought opportunities and competition in finding a partner, and mate selection, supposedly based on an individual's 'free will', became a new object of consumption in Japan

The international marriage business emerged and developed in these circumstances As explained in Chapter 2, the business attracted massive media coverage in the late 1980s, fitting well within the discourse of the difficulty men experienced in finding a marriage partner because of 'choosey' Japanese women Rural farmers perfectly symbolised marginalised men in a domestic marriage market, now governed by the idea of romantic love The international marriage business would not have attracted the male clients and media attention it did without these circumstances within the domestic marriage market However, the industry could not operate either without recruiting willing women from Asian countries

### 3.3 Globalization and Migration

The business of international marriage agencies cannot be isolated from the globalization process in the Asian region The political, economic and social integration of Japan and other countries in the region paved the way for the emergence of the business of international marriage agencies The diverse links between countries, involving movement of capital, commodities, and information, stimulated the movement of people through various patterns of migration Contemporary studies on immigration (see for example, Fawcett and Arnold 1987, Castles and Miller 1998)

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<sup>7</sup> *Heisei* is the name of the present era that started from 1990 when the present emperor Akihito ascended the throne

stressed the importance of considering all the linkages between the places concerned rather than 'push-pull' theories, which tended to ignore prior relationships and the role of the state. These 'push-pull' theories are limited by ahistoric and individualistic approaches. While migration is not a new phenomenon, contemporary migration is characterised by globalization, acceleration, differentiation and feminisation, which signalled the changes in scale and character of migration (Castles and Miller 1998)

The work of marriage agencies greatly influenced the migration of women from the Asian region under discussion. Marriage agencies operate through a web of business connections between Japan and the rest of Asia (see Chapter 4 for details of the operation of marriage agencies). The characteristics of and connections among international marriage agents indicate that the emergence of the business is closely related to the increasing economic integration of Japan and the Asian region, which accelerated after World War II, especially in the 1970s. In particular, parallel expansion of the introduction business and the flourishing tourism industry, alongside a massive increase in small and medium-size production companies moving to Asia deepened the integration process. Marriage businesses thus have the aspect of being a by-product of the movement of capital and people from Japan into the Asian region. In addition to Japan's presence in Asia, the presence of Asian students and workers in Japan, affected the business links of marriage agents. Japanese government policy influenced the intake of these foreign nationals which, in turn, indirectly stimulated the marriage business. An examination of the connections among marriage agents and the agents' previous or other business involvements clearly demonstrate that the development of the marriage industry was an integral part of economic, cultural, political and personal linkages expanding across the Asian region in the last few decades. To a lesser extent, the initial ties among marriage agents or intermediaries stemmed from earlier colonial connections between the countries involved.

During the period of transformation to modernity, imperial colonialism shaped Japan's interaction with the Asian region. Japan expanded its empire to East Asia beginning with Taiwan in 1895, Sakhalin in 1905, Korea in 1910, and Manchuria in 1931. Military expansion began in the Southeast Asian region in 1942, when during World

War II an area four thousand miles south from Sakhalin and almost to Australia, and six thousand miles from Burma to the Gilberts, fell under Japanese occupation (Reischaure 1989: 269). Colonisation accelerates the movement of people between a sovereign state and its colonies. Six million Japanese soldiers and civilians were repatriated to Japan at the end of the war, and the mobilisation of colonial subjects before and during Japanese involvement in World War II was also notable. The Japanese Government in Korea promoted the settlement of Korean farmers in Manchuria in the 1930s and the early 1940s (Takasaki 1996), and Japan imported Korean 'forced labourers' and moved them to its other colonies, such as Sakhalin. More than two million Koreans were residing in Japan by the end of the war.

The consequences of colonial migration did not end with the war. Around 600,000 Korean people remained in Japan after the war, and formed the basis of the present long-term Korean resident population. Some 42,000 former Korean labourers were left in Sakhalin without compensation (Takagi 1992a). There were also Japanese women who married Chinese men and remained in China along with women and children sold to or fostered by Chinese people during the chaotic mass evacuation of Japanese people from Manchuria. Some of them finally managed to return to Japan alone or with their families after 30 or 40 years, but faced difficulties in adapting to Japanese life (Ogawa 1995).

While the results of Japan's colonial expansion in the Asia region continued beyond August 1945, Japan's engagement with the rest of Asia has shifted to the arenas of economics in the post-war period. The economic connection was limited to obtaining raw materials from Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia for export industries during Japan's rapid economic growth period in the 1960s (Rowley and do Rosario 1991). Since the 1970s, Japanese manufacturing plants began moving to the region in search of cheap labour. The Plaza Accord in 1985<sup>8</sup> induced the tremendous

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8 This was a pact signed by the US Treasury Secretary and the finance ministers of Japan, West Germany, England, and France at the Plaza Hotel in New York on 22 September 1985. It aimed at relieving America's trade deficit through appreciation of the main non-dollar currencies against the US dollar (Hatch and Yamamura 1996: 21).

appreciation of the Japanese *yen* against the US dollar, damaging export oriented firms, and pushing the relocation of small and medium-sized firms offshore Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Asia started to increase in the late 1970s, and accelerated from 1985, growing more than twelvefold between 1977 and 1994 It firstly injected funds into newly industrialising countries (NICs) such as Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, then the ASEAN-4 (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand) and China from 1990 Japanese FDI in the Asian-Pacific region was more production oriented than that in other regions, and Japanese small and medium-sized companies were more active than elsewhere (Hatch and Yamamura 1996 3-12)

Hatch and Yamamura (1996), in their discussion about Japan's deepening economic influence in the region, concluded that Japan has 'embraced' other Asian countries' economies, making them an integral, but technologically stratified, part of Japan's production structure They argue that the attraction of the Asian countries for Japanese manufacturing firms was no longer solely the availability of cheap labour since 1980, but rather aimed at capitalising on the region's technological division of labour, allocating a different stage of the manufacturing process to different nations according to their technological levels (Hatch and Yamamura 1996 22-23) The Japanese government policy on official development assistance (ODA) also encouraged this extension of production Japan provides a significant amount of ODA to the Asian countries, largely in the form of concessionary loans For example, the Philippines received 67 per cent of its ODA from Japan in 1991 (1996 131) Orr (cited in Hatch and Yamamura 1996 131) estimated Japanese aid was equal to 15 to 20 per cent of the budget expenditures of every nation in Southeast Asia Although the impact of the economic gap between Japan and other countries in the Asian region may be arguable, massive flows of private and public capital and trade certainly show the active integration of Japanese interests with regional economies

As the movement of capital has been notable within Asia, so has the movement of people between Japan and the other Asian countries The number of Japanese nationals who travelled abroad increased throughout the 1970s, and expanded again from the mid

1980s In 1970, 663,000 went abroad increasing to 4.9 million in 1985 and 15.2 million by 1995 (*Asahi Shimbun Japan Almanac 1997* 1996: 265). The 1991 figures by destination showed that 47.8 per cent of the total 10.6 million went to countries in Asia. For the purpose of travel, sightseeing occupied 81.8 per cent and short-term business 13 per cent (Japan Immigration Association 1992: 34-36). The movement of Japanese corporate professionals and technicians also accompanied massive capital flows from Japan to the Asian region. They travelled to the locations of their offshore firms with their families, carrying a 'Japanese' corporate culture with them (Moeran 2000: 31).

Japanese tourists have become a common sight in major cities and resorts in Asia. At an earlier phase of the development of international tourism, Japanese males predominantly formed the bulk of tourists to certain countries. 'Sex tours' of Japanese males occurred, firstly to Taiwan then shifted to South Korea in 1972 after losing direct flights between Tokyo and Taipei because of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and China. These tours expanded in Southeast Asia in the late 1970s to include such destinations as the Philippines (Matsui 1993). International tourism is often connected with prostitution, as illustrated by Truong's study (1990). International tourism has expanded since the 1970s involving the developing countries and NICs as holiday destinations, where prostitution played an important part in attracting foreign exchange (Truong 1990). The age and sex of Japanese tourists in the region and the way they travel have diversified since, although the number of male visitors to Asia remained larger than females in the early 1990s, whereas Europe and North America attracted more female visitors. For example, men occupied 87 per cent and 68.8 per cent of the total number of Japanese who travelled to the Philippines and Thailand respectively in 1991. That figure was 53.1 per cent to U.K. and 54.1 per cent to the U.S. (Japan Immigration Association 1992: 36).

Meanwhile, an increasing number of people from the Asian region have visited, worked and studied in Japan. By one estimate, Japan in 1995 had 1.6 million foreign residents – 1.3 per cent of the total population – of which one million arrived in the last two decades (Komai 1995: 20-24). Among the new arrivals, the largest population by ethnicity was Chinese (270,000), followed by Brazilians (160,000) including those of

Japanese decent, Koreans (150,000), and Filipinos (120,000) The total number of Japanese descendants, mainly returnees from South America, and spouses of Japanese nationals have reached 370,000 There were also an estimated 270,000 unregistered overstayed persons and a total of 100,000 trainees and students, who were mainly from the Asian region (Komai 1995 20-24)

The total number of legal first time arrivals from the Asian region rose 4.5 times from 461,811 in 1980 to 2,105,573 in 1991 The proportion of Asian origin arrivals also grew during the 1980s from 42 per cent of total of new arrivals in 1980 to 61 per cent in 1990 (Ministry of Justice, various years) The number of foreign registrations, which usually applied to those who stay more than 90 days, also increased from less than 80,000 in the late 1970s to more than 1.2 million in 1992, accounting for 1.03 per cent of the total population Those of 'Asian' origin amounted to 92.2 per cent in 1988 of the foreign registered population, but proportionally decreased in the early 1990s due to the expansion of migration from South America (Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice 1994 36-37)

The flow of migrants to Japan showed distinctive patterns by gender and country of origin Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, the number of first time arrivals from Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand started to increase The majority of these first time arrivals were female These women commonly worked in areas of the entertainment industry including as bar hostesses According to annual reports on Legal Migrant Statistics in 1980 and 1985 by the Ministry of Justice, in the temporary visitor category, 'sightseeing' status was popular among Taiwanese, and 'entertaining' status with Filipinos For example, in 1980 females occupied 52 per cent of the total arrivals (23,554,9) from Taiwan and 56 per cent of the total arrivals (27,902) from the Philippines In the same year, 32 per cent of the new arrivals from the Philippines held residential status as entertainment workers

Migration from the Philippines showed a significant increase by the mid 1980s By 1985, the total arrivals from the Philippines grew 2.3 times (65,529) the 1980 figure, and the number of females expanded to 72 per cent of the total, with the majority

coming on short-term visas (15 days) and only 29 per cent with 'entertaining' status. The short-term visa was easier to obtain than the latter. The Japanese dubbed them *Japayuki* (Japan-bound women), and they were often associated with prostitution in the media. The increase became steady by the end of the 1980s, but females remained the majority despite the apparent increase of male Filipino workers. Kojima (1996) found that marriage between Filipino women and Japanese men began to increase in the 1980s, and peaked between 1988 and 1989, coinciding with the growth of Filipino migration to Japan. Discussions about the inflow of female migrants at first revolved around the issues of public morals and the commercialisation of sex rather than migration. Studies that saw these women as labourers in the context of global labour migration appeared in the beginning of the 1990 (for example Itō, cited in Kajita 1994).

The debate on how Japan dealt with foreign workers took place among state and local policy makers and academics only after larger groups of males began to arrive in the late 1980s (Kajita 1994). Discussions covered issues such as their rights as workers and residents. People often called these late 1980s migrants 'new comers' and long term Korean and Chinese residents by a new term, 'old comers', to differentiate the two groups. While the latter terminology may reflect a more inclusive attitude relative to Japan's new migrants, it is nonetheless inappropriate because it includes second and third generations and continues to separate ethnic Korean and Chinese from Japanese.

A large proportion of the new migrant groups were male and came from Iran, Bangladesh, South Korea, China, Malaysia, and Thailand. Between 1987 and 1988, the number of first time arrivals from South Korea rose 70.4 per cent. Iranian migration showed a massive 92.2 per cent increase between 1989 and 1990, and the figure was 54.5 per cent for those from the Republic of China in the same period (Ministry of Justice, 1990). Small construction and manufacturing companies often employed these men, and authorities believe a considerable number stayed after their initial visa expired (Ebashi 1992). A significant number of those from South Korea and China typically held residential status as pre-college students or trainees.



The Japanese government established the pre-college residential status (*shūgakusei*) in 1982, adding to the existing residential status for overseas college students (*ryūgakusei*) (Ebashi 1992: 15). The former applies to those who attend high schools or various other schools including Japanese language schools. The government simplified the process of visa procedures for pre-college students in 1984. Part-time work, up to 20 paid hours a week, was permitted for college students in 1983 and pre-college students in 1994. The then Prime Minister Nakasone announced a policy in 1983 to increase the number of overseas students to 100,000 by 2000 which was the reason behind these amendments. Consequently, the number of new entrant pre-college students doubled in 1985, and expanded eight fold (from 4,329 to 35,107) between 1984 to 1988 (Tanaka 1994: 173-178). Those from China accounted for 80 per cent of the 1988 figure. The number of private Japanese language schools also significantly increased, absorbing these students (Tanaka 1994: 173-178).<sup>9</sup> Earning foreign currency was the main purpose of some of the students, and some schools contributed to this deception by falsely recording their attendance (Ebashi 1992: 18-9). Common jobs these students performed included kitchen hands, waiters in restaurants, and clerks at convenience stores (Ebashi 1992: 18, Mori 1997: 111).

In 1982, the Japanese government established a category of migrant called trainees and granted them residential status in 1982. This allowed government and non-government organisations to invite migrants to Japan ostensibly to acquire technology and skills. Organisations used this category to bring unskilled workers into the country. For those companies suffering from a severe shortage of labour, trainee status had considerable advantages concerning pay, working hours and welfare provisions. The labour law does not apply to trainees who are not classified as workers (Ebashi 1992). China has become a big supplier of trainees since 1990 (Mori 1997). As would be seen in Chapters 4 and 5, some marriage agents and farming communities utilised the trainee

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9 With complaints of sham language schools and 'students' whose main activities were paid to work, the government made a complete change in the policy. It tightened the control of Japanese language colleges and imposed restrictions on visas issued for their students from 1988 onwards (Tanaka 1994: 176).

scheme for marriage purposes, bringing mostly females from the Philippines, China, Sri Lanka, and Brazil as 'trainees'

While a significant proportion of migrants in the 1980s and early 1990s were from the Asian region, the inflow of *Nikkeijin* (Japanese descendants) from South American countries such as Brazil and Peru was also worth noting. The return migration of *Nikkeijin* became notable at the end of the 1980s, and accelerated with the 1990 amendment of the immigration law, which favoured them (Mori 1997). The number of *Nikkeijin* from Brazil showed a 128.1 per cent increase between 1980 and 1990. The amended Act granted long term residential status for up to three years exclusively to descendants of Japanese emigrants up to and including the third generation. This visa category made no restriction on the type of work an applicant engaged in and allowed an applicant to bring his or her non-*Nikkei* spouse, and renewal was easily managed (Yamanaka 1997). This group showed a high proportion of migration as families in contrast to migrants in other groups mentioned earlier. The overwhelming majority of *Nikkeijin* migrants were young men and women of second and third generations and their families. A large number of them worked as labourers, while some women fluent in the Japanese language worked as convalescent attendants in hospitals (Yamanaka 1997). Their migration provided industries suffering from labour-shortage with legal, unskilled, cheap workers. The government, which had faced a huge problem of illegal employment of the 'Asian' origin students and trainees, solved the problem (at least rhetorically) without changing its principle of keeping the door closed to 'foreign' workers by redefining 'Japanese'. The 1990 amendments upheld preference for racial homogeneity based on blood lineage that in effect discriminated against migrants based on race.

The public largely viewed the massive 1980s and the early 1990s influx of migrants as outsiders regardless of their origin. Tanaka (1994) observed an upsurge of public opinion, pitying overseas students and workers in the late 1980s following the death of a Bangladesh worker of hunger in 1987 and the suicide of a Chinese student in 1988. He cited a famous newspaper cartoon on *Asahi Shimbun* in 1988, which drew the picture of leftover dishes carried to a dining hall of overseas students and *Japayuki-san*

(Japan bound women) (1994 178-179) With the sudden increase of foreign workers in some areas of the *Kansai* region between 1990 and 1992, pity turned into hostility. Negative rumours circulated, including one of a Japanese wife raped by a group of dark skinned foreign workers (Misumi 1993). Tajima (1995) pointed out that Japanese often expected *Nikkeijin* to behave like 'Japanese' mainly due to their appearance and Japanese like names, and when that expectation was not met, they tended to label *Nikkeijin* as 'imperfect Japanese'.

Non-government organisations (NGOs), some academics and individuals began arguing for recognising foreigners as residents in the late 1980s. However, even a book entitled, *Foreigners are Residents* (Ebashu 1993) showed a general lack of understanding of the 1980s and early 1990s migrants in the wider society. The author needed to stress the fact that they were not merely workers who would soon return to their countries, but residents who had been staying in a neighbourhood, and might choose to live permanently in Japan.

Nonetheless, the increasing presence of people from the Asian region in Japan became incontestable. They too brought their cultures to Japan as seen in a notable expansion of grocery shops and restaurants of foreign origin. A considerable number of them were continuing to stay, and marriages with Japanese nationals became common. Stories of Japanese females' obtaining special permission for spouse residence, after marrying foreign nationals from the Asian region who overstayed their visas, also started appearing (see for example Shahed and Sekiguchi 1992). Contemporary migrants do not remain in the single categorization of their initial entry status such as labour migrants, overseas students, family migrants, or marriage migrants. The boundary between categorisations blurs over time simply because migrants are not merely labourers, students or housewives, but have multiple identities and perform multiple activities concurrently or over time in a host country.

The massive influx of foreign residents in the 1980s and 1990s has influenced Japanese politics, economics and society in many respects. The increase in the number of marriages between Japanese and those from other Asian countries is one such change.

influenced by the presence of migrants in Japan. The emergence of international marriage agencies in Japan is a consequence of the wider integration between Japan and the rest of Asia. The marriage business in turn represented further steps in the process of globalization in the region.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The institution of marriage in modern society is structured by patriarchal right that asserts the power of men over women, and men's sexual access to women's bodies. Men's sex-right operates both in the private and public spheres. The business of international marriage is one expression of the patriarchal contract operating in a globalized capitalist economy. The business constructs and commodifies women as 'embodied sexual beings' (Pateman 1989: 17). The business operates on a collective expectation, which regards marriage as a union between a husband – a provider, and a wife – a subordinate. Marriage, however, poses ambiguous meanings to many women in contemporary societies because of its association with marital happiness, family, affection, love, security, and protection from, for example, racial discrimination. The ambiguity affecting interpretations of marriage to women in general also plays an essential part in the system of marriage business in attracting women candidates. To understand the meanings of marriage and migration for women participants, international marriage by introduction should be examined in the light of these readings of marriage in the wider society.

The emergence of the marriage introduction business in Japan in the 1980s was influenced by changes in public views of marriage and partner selection along with other societal changes. Japan experienced a decline in the number of marriages and childbirths, an increase in the divorce rate, and a normalization of *renai kekkon* (marriage based on romantic love). The discourse of 'marriage difficulty for men' in a society where marriage as an institution remains intact, gives marriage agencies the basis to promote their business.

Further, the business of international marriage grew with the accelerated economic integration of Japan and the rest of Asia. The appreciation of the Japanese currency and the Japanese government's immigration policies connected with its labour force requirements resulted in the expansion of migration from the Asian region to Japan from the mid 1980s. This was also part of a pattern of accelerated migration and capital flow within Asia and around the world. The development of the international marriage business is closely connected with these changes in the patterns of marriage and migration in the 1980s and early 1990s in Japan.

## 4

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### International Marriage Agencies

This chapter examines the development of the international marriage business in Japan, focusing on their business connections and activities, associated problems, and the rhetoric used for promoting such marriages. The emergence of the international marriage industry in the 1980s in Japan reflects the extensive Japanese capital flow to the Asian region and accompanying movement of people in the 1970s and 1980s. The industry's development was at the same time closely related to the domestic marriage introduction industry. Its emergence was influenced by the change in the structure of the domestic industry with its operation utilising the existing network of domestic marriage agencies and adapting the marriage introduction system that has been used by the domestic introduction industry.

The operation of international marriage agencies is problematic as agencies do not need a specific license to set up business in Japan. The international marriage industry in Japan is largely unregulated, unlike in the Philippines where the government enacted a law banning the activities of 'mail-order' agencies in 1989 (del Rosario 1994).<sup>1</sup> The marriage industry provides easy business opportunities for those with little expertise and capital to operate. These include people marginalised in the labour market such as some middle-aged women or migrant women. Japanese marriage agencies, with the cooperation of their local connections, conduct underground operations in the countries that have imposed provisions or restrictions on their activities. Complaints about agents' fraudulent activities by Japanese men were common, and legal suits against agencies have also taken place (see for example *Hanrei Tamuzu* 15 January 1995: 226-269). The legal victory of a Sri Lankan woman against a notorious agent in 1994 (*Hanrei Jihō* 11 March 1994: 136-146) shed light on the dark side of the industry,

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<sup>1</sup> It was reported that in Korea, marriage agencies needed permission to set up business from the government (Sato 1989b), and in China, the government made an attempt to control the business in 1993 (Itamoto 1993).

although her achievements largely resulted in reinforcing the popular representation of ‘Asian brides’ as victims (as delineated in Chapter 2) among the general public.

While public discourse portrays ‘Asian brides’ as Others, international marriage agencies emphasise the foreign women’s marriageability when promoting them to potential Japanese male clients. Foreign women are constructed as essentially ‘non-threatening’ to men, or in other words, to gender hierarchy in marriage. A particular racial marker of brides is understated or overstated to amplify their marriageability depending on the situation. When promoting Western men to Japanese women, agencies portray such marriages as offering the fantasy of romance as well as equality, utilising a powerful racial marker ‘white westerners’. The double standards of agencies in selling international marriage – as ‘non-threatening’ to men while offering ‘equality’ to women –, manage to conform to the core patterns of racial, class and gendered hegemony in contemporary Japan, by selectively emphasising different markers.

My main data on marriage agencies was collected through interviews with a sample of agents (see Appendix II, Table 2 for details), various agency pamphlets and advertisements, and relevant secondary literature. I visited five agencies several times, observed their daily business and participated in various social functions, such as the Christmas parties held by agencies. Of the 30 agents interviewed, 28 mainly introduced Japanese men to foreign women, two mostly introduced Japanese women to foreign men, although many agencies were involved in both types. I also interviewed one industry association of marriage agencies and one specialising in marriages between resident Koreans. These two agencies were included in the sample to provide an overall view of the marriage industry.

#### **4.1 Mapping the International Marriage Introduction Industry**

Evidence suggests that the business of arranging international marriages started in the late 1970s in Japan with a few isolated agents. Kitano, an agent who began with a

domestic marriage bureau, recalls his first international matchmaking effort with two Taiwanese women in 1978, which both ended in divorce:

I think I was the first one to start. No one thought about matchmaking international marriages as a business. When I went to Taiwan on holiday, about three girls said that they wanted to marry Japanese and they knew many others who wanted to do the same. So I thought it might be a paying business. The first time failed. That is why I stopped for a while. These women were those who worked in bars and did prostitution occasionally for pocket money. The type who find it difficult to get married in their own country. I couldn't tell this to my [male] clients, of course. They [the women] couldn't get satisfied with their standard of living in Japan. They were used to dining in first class hotels, but in Japan had to live in an ordinary apartment without any pocket money. (Kitano 1996)

In 1981 a newspaper article (*Asahi Shimbun* 12 November 1981: 18) reported on a 'new' marriage business in Tokyo, matching Korean women living in South Korea and resident Korean men living in Japan. From the mid-1980s, the number of agents operating internationally, mainly introducing women from South Korea and the Philippines grew significantly (Shukuya 1988).<sup>2</sup> The sudden increase in the number of agents dealing with South Korea led to the consulate of South Korea in Niigata prefecture in early 1988 requiring that marriage agents provide evidence of their credibility (*Mainichi Shimbun* 5 May 1988). The decline in the number of successful matches in the domestic marriage market lowered the profits of domestic marriage agents around this time (Uchida 1995, Kitano 1996, Takeda 1996). In addition, large capitalised firms using computerised matchmaking systems, and those financed by affiliated companies that had entered the industry since the late 1970s, intensified competition in the marriage introduction industry (Ōno 1990)<sup>3</sup> Some marriage bureaus saw involvement in the international marriage business as one way of remaining solvent. At the same time, a considerable number of new agents entered the international

2 Among the agents I interviewed, three started their businesses in the late 1970s, one in the early 1980s, seven in the late 1980s followed by seventeen in the early 1990s. The figures say more about the rapid opening and closing of the agencies as a feature of the business than the gradual increase in the total number. Only a handful of agents have been continuously operating for more than 10 years (Kitano 1996, Ishino 1995)

3 Examples of established firms that entered the matchmaking industry as affiliated companies include the Mitsubishi group, Jusco, one of the biggest supermarkets, and Unicharm, a sanitary product manufacturer. These companies are usually referred to as offering *kekkon jōhō sābisu* (marriage information services), reported to have become a 20 billion-yen industry (Ōno 1990: 140). Small-scale companies call themselves *kekkon sōdanjo* (marriage bureau or consultant)



marriage industry in search of profits. They often had some-overseas connection or experience. The widespread media coverage on the issue of the international marriage business also had some influence on encouraging new entrants (Kitano 1996). Amongst the thirty agencies I interviewed, only seven companies had initially been involved with domestic matchmaking. The majority of agents entered the marriage market from other businesses (Hamada 1996, Ishino 1995, Nishi 1995).

The major source of foreign brides shifted from South Korea to China from 1989 onwards, coinciding with the move to restrict visas for pre-college students in Japan, from which the majority of the beneficiaries had been from China. Joint ventures between Chinese and Japanese marriage agents were reported to have started appearing in 1991 in Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin (Itamoto 1993). One agent said that it became difficult to attract female candidates from Korea after the Seoul Olympics and the liberalization of tourist visas in 1989 (Kitano 1995). However, some other agencies have continued with the Korean route. Media coverage on Chinese brides became prominent in 1992 and 1993 (for example Higashi 1993; Hasegawa 1993a; Hasegawa 1993b; *Asahi Gemō* 9 December 1993:198-200). Despite the move to restrict commercial marriage agents in China after 1993 (Itamoto 1993:30), at the time of research in 1995 and 1996, a large number of advertisements in telephone directories were from those performing introductions with Chinese women, including women who were already staying in Japan. Some agents also started the introduction of Russian and Eastern European women in the early 1990s. One agent said, 'I was told I was the first Japanese [agent] in Moscow five years ago. But, at that time France, England, America, and German already had offices [in Moscow] then' (Takeda 1996).

Other nationalities mentioned or advertised by the agents include Sri Lankan, Thai, and Vietnamese. It is common for agents to have business connections with several countries. My findings indicate that 20 agents have dealt with more than one country, with 12 mentioning that the majority of their female candidates were from China, six took candidates from the Philippines, five from South Korea, four Russia, and one each sought ethnic Korean women from China and Sri Lanka.

The number of international agents in operation is difficult to determine due to the lack of regulation imposed on new businesses starting in Japan and the tendency for businesses to open and close in rapid sequence. The estimated number varies from 100 (Hasegawa 1993b: 6) to 4,325 (cited in Kojima 1996:86). However, the latter figure is confused because of the inclusion of the large number of domestic marriage agents. My estimation of international agents which have direct overseas ties, from the number of agents advertising in the telephone books and the proportion no longer operating, is closer to the figure of 100. Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand the system of affiliation among domestic marriage bureaus, in relation to the recruitment methods of clients, before making a reasonable estimation of the number or scale of the international marriage industry

Marriage agencies are generally small-scale, operated by a single owner or with two or three employees except for those marriage information service companies affiliated with large capital. Therefore, individual domestic marriage bureaus typically belong to two or three industry associations. The merits of belonging to an association lie in enhancing the chances of matchmaking and hence profit through exchanging profiles of individual candidates among member bureaus. The formation of these associations occurred around the early 1970s and brought a change in the organization of what were until then individually operated go-betweens (Shukuya 1988). There are, for example, three main associations in the metropolitan area.<sup>4</sup> *Nihon Nakōdo Renmei*, a Tokyo-based association which was established in 1974, has 1,200 affiliated marriage bureaus. The majority of international marriage agencies also belong to such associations. Among those claiming to run international services in the association there are, roughly speaking, two types of agencies: those who have their own overseas connections and those who do not have direct connections but introduce their Japanese clients to the first type of agency. *Nihon Nakōdo Renmei*, for example, comprises 400 to 500 agencies

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4 The association charges admission fees of 500,000 yen (approximately A\$ 6,600) on average and other monthly fees to each marriage bureau. Member bureaus receive lists of individual clients seeking marriage with their brief information and photos published by the association every month with a fee of 5,000 yen per month. Bureaus pay 3,000 yen per person when they want to enlist their clients. In the case of domestic marriage arrangements, the main source of profit for a bureau comes from fees at successful conclusion of a marriage arrangement. An individual customer is required to pay 300,000 yen on average at such occasions. Other obligatory fees were registration fees and meeting fees, usually 80,000 yen and 5,000 yen per introduction respectively (Shibuya 1996) (all figures in 1996)

dealing with international marriage, but only 20 were believed to have independent overseas ties (Shibuya 1996). Another smaller association has five or six internationally linked agencies among its 100 members (Nomura 1996). Thus, it is reasonable to say that the number of direct suppliers of foreign brides is much smaller than it appears.

The agencies with direct overseas links receive commissions from a domestic marriage agency with Japanese clients when an introduction is successful. Such commissions are said to be 15 to 25 percent of the amount a Japanese client pays to their marriage agency (Shibuya 1996). Some agencies with international links have their own affiliated agencies with annual fees. An affiliated agency can then use the overseas connection of the parent agent. One of these agencies pays 3 million yen ( about A\$40,000)<sup>5</sup> affiliation fees per year to its parent agency (Kitano 1996). Some affiliated agents become independent from the parent agent after learning the methods and finding their own overseas connections, which is more profitable.

Overseas business partners are used to recruit prospective brides especially when Japanese agencies have no legal rights to operate in a foreign country. These partners can be local marriage agents or private individuals, including resident Japanese or Japanese people who have a business overseas. They include small-scale entrepreneurs such as a restaurant owner (Murayama 1996), and those involved in the education sector (Nishi 1995, Takeda 1996). Shukuya (1988: 67, 97) mentioned a trader, a food producer, and a travel agent as the connections of the Japanese agents she interviewed. It was reported that a recruitment agency for entertainers in the Philippines (Shukuya 1988: 95) and a Chinese national agent who handles the introduction of maids and tutors for the domestic market (Itamoto 1993: 28) had business connections with Japanese marriage agents. Nakamura (1994) noted a similar pattern, that the established recruitment system for female overseas bound labour contributed to the popularity of marriage businesses in the Philippines and Sri Lanka

A marriage business can be derived from a range of connections. As Harris (1996: 135) comments, agents for foreign workers operate like 'termites'. They utilise any available

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5 Exchange rate calculations are based on the exchange rate of 75 yen to one Australian dollar according to the average rate in 1995 and 1996

links, and constantly move in search of less risky and profitable connections.<sup>6</sup> As Japanese agencies attempt to expand their overseas connections, other ‘opportunity’ seekers also often approach them. Examples of individuals approaching agencies offering to act as recruiters included Chinese overseas students (Hamada 1996), a former refugee from Kampuchea (Ueno 1996), a resident Korean in Japan (Kameda 1996), and a Japanese second-hand car exporter to Russia (Kitano 1996). The existence of ‘profile brokers’, those who sell the same profiles of foreign women to several domestic agencies, was also frequently mentioned (Tanaka 1996).<sup>7</sup>

The relationship between agencies and their business partners appears to be fluid and conflicting at times. As the agents in Japan usually have several overseas connections at once and frequently change their partners, so do their overseas connections (Itamoto 1993: 29). The stories of fraud are frequent. Common complaints are that overseas counterparts charge fees to women without informing the Japanese side (Hamada 1996) or pocket betrothal gift money which is supposed to be handed over to the family of the bride (Yamada 1995). Around 1993 and 1994 the media reported on the phenomenon of ‘*Narita jōhatsu*’ (brides vanishing) at Narita airport after their arrival. Shanghai-based brokers were depicted as organisers of marriages for visa purposes and a job in Japan. They allegedly charged between 300,000 yen and 1 million yen (about A\$ 4,000 and A\$13,300) (Ako 1993; Higashi 1993). An article on *Asahi Shimbun* (29 May 1994) reported the arrest of a former overseas pre-college student who had acted as a marriage agent for forgery of a visa. Similar complaints of forgery were reported against Japanese agents (Shukuya 1988).

It is interesting to note that the agents I interviewed tended to stress that their connections are with private partners and not with ‘local brokers’. I often encountered comments such as, ‘I don’t use local brokers. Private connections are safe though they don’t provide many good-looking women’ (Nishi 1995). ‘We use a private person whose

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6 Three agencies seriously approached me with the prospect of conducting business with them or introducing Australian agents to them. I have also seen a number of letters from Japanese agents to overseas counterparts which sounded out new business ties. Another agent acknowledged friction with her connections: ‘The Russian side started to demand more money. They say 1 million yen per introduction. I am thinking of starting with Burma. But the intermediary is a Chinese person and not trustworthy. So I am looking for other contacts’ (Takeda 1996).

7 The existence of similar ‘professional list compilers’ is reported in the US and Europe (del Rosario 1994: 133)

husband was a former security police officer in Shenyang, and a public servant working at the marriage registration office in Harbin' (Hamada 1996), 'an educator in Bangkok' (Takeda 1996) and 'a professor in the Japanese language section of a university in Moscow' (Nishi 1995). This is because the reliability of private overseas connections is one of the most important selling points. The 'reliable' connection is said to be able to ensure the 'quality' of prospective brides (Kitano 1996 and others), which is mainly judged upon the willingness of the women to stay in marriage. This 'quality' is as important for agents' reputations as it is for their male clients. Private overseas connections allow Japanese agents to operate undercover and more profitably and possibly safely than using their local counterparts.

The careers of international marriage agents indicate the complexity of the globalization process in the Asian region. Among the internationally operated agencies, many engage in other business that has overseas linkages, and run the marriage operation as their secondary business. Examples of other businesses that marriage agents are or have been engaged with are various. They include: traders in products such as fish (Nishi 1995, Kawai 1995), semiconductors (Yamanaka 1996) and groceries (Ueno 1996), international business consultants (Ishino 1995, Tanaka 1996), and the chair of a China-Japan business association (Shimizu 1996). Others were involved in overseas restaurant enterprises (Murayama 1996), translation and interpretation services (Okano 1996, Tanaka 1996), and Japanese language schools in the Philippines (Kitano 1996) and Japan (Hamada 1996). Three of these agents were former employees of well-known large trading companies. Their transnational business experience created a basis for them to move into the marriage market. As one explained: 'trading gave opportunity to starting an international marriage business because I had plenty of contacts with foreigners' (Ueno 1996). The business knowledge, legality, connections and capital of some of these agencies made it easy to operate in a foreign country. Agencies in this category can use fewer intermediaries, and thus cut costs and have more control over the system.

The account of a Japanese language school owner provides an example of the effect of changes in immigration policy on his business. Hamada started his school in 1987 (Hamada 1995) when language schools were booming in response to the then Prime

Minister Nakasone's policy of increasing the number of overseas students in Japan and subsequent changes in the immigration law (See Chapter 3). As mentioned in Chapter 3, restrictions on part-time work for overseas students were relaxed. This resulted in an increasing number of work-motivated students, overstays of former students, and the mushrooming of dubious language schools and visa brokers. After 1990 the government altered the policy and tightened control of student visa applications. This had a devastating effect on Japanese language schools (Tanaka 1994). After experiencing a sharp fall in student numbers, Hamada moved into the marriage business in 1992 when a former Chinese student approached him with a business proposal. Hamada said, 'If the school business stabilises, I won't continue international marriage. People expect successful marriage as a matter of course' (Hamada 1996). Economic recession in the publishing industry caused one small-scale publisher to venture into the marriage business. Fukuda, a publisher, entered the marriage business after receiving more than 100 inquiries about a book on the issue of international marriage in rural areas, which his company published in the late 1980s. At the time economic recession caused a decline in publishing and the company decided to move into the marriage business (Fukuda 1996).

The careers of marriage agents also show the characteristics of an unregulated industry that allows persons with little skill and capital to participate. The brochure of one of the industry associations states that entering the industry is 'possible with little capital, only a telephone and a desk needed, .... regardless of age and sex, most suitable for housewives and middle and elderly persons' (*Nihon Nakōdo Renmei* brochure, n.d.). Thus, women often own domestic and international agencies. For example, Uchida, who now runs an international marriage agency said, 'I wanted to do some work. When I was 45, I started a marriage bureau thinking even a middle-aged woman might be able to do it' (Uchida 1995). Takeda used to run a beauty salon but moved into the marriage business after the strain on her body in the salon became unbearable. She and her elder sister now operate an international introduction agency from their residence (Takeda 1996). The lack of regulation for establishing a business tends to attract those marginalised in the labour market. This includes some migrant women who married through an agent themselves and set up their own businesses.

The story of one agent, a Korean-born Chinese person, named Kitamoto<sup>8</sup> demonstrates an example of the marriage business providing an opportunity for employment, although her business turned out to be less than successful. She came to Japan on a tourist visa in the late 1970s from Taiwan where her family had migrated from Korea. She met a Japanese person while working in Tokyo and started living with him. Though she did not realise it at that time, he was already married. In 1980 they faked her marriage to another Japanese person for visa purposes and 'bought' the status of a wife in this person's registration for a considerable amount of money. She acquired Japanese nationality in 1984 from this sham marriage. In 1986, she then separated from her de facto partner due to his violence against her and affairs with other women. She took their child with her. She also ended her sham marriage at the same time. In 1994, she re-married through the marriage agency, but after a year, she decided to divorce again because of violence from the second husband, his mentally disturbed behaviour and the delinquent actions of his teenage son. She found out many things that the agent had not informed her about the second husband, including that he had a Korean wife before her. She now lives with her daughter from the first marriage. She won compensation from the second husband through court action, and used part of this money for investment in a company in Taiwan. A few months before our interview took place, she started an international marriage business affiliated with another agent whose wife is Chinese. The arrangement is that she receives a commission of 500,000 yen (about A\$6,600) out of 3 million yen (A\$40,000), which a Japanese client pays to a parent company for introducing him if the marriage takes place. At the time of the interview, she was considering closing the business as it was not going as well. She pointed out her difficulty with the Japanese language and the general lack of trust of foreigners among Japanese clients. From the way she chose to tell her story, setting up the marriage business was her way of negotiating power, in a still yet 'foreign' country after nearly twenty years of living there. Kitamoto's strength appears to stem from the existence of her teenage daughter whom she plans to send to a university in Los Angeles where her sister lives (Kitamoto 1996). The marriage introduction industry offers relatively easy business access for those with overseas connections, otherwise

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<sup>8</sup> I am using a Japanese pseudonym for this person. I interviewed her as a marriage agent and she is not among the 45 migrant women interviewed

marginalised in the labour force, though not all can gain financial profit from their involvement.

The introduction system predominantly takes the form of a *miai* (an arranged meeting), during an overseas tour of a small group. The tour resembles a packaged group tour where all activities and accommodation are pre-organised for participants. One company not only provides an itinerary and necessary official documents, but also includes advice on trivial travel preparations, such as instructions to pack, 'three or four socks and two or three underpants' (*Kokusai Kōryū Kyōkai* brochure, n.d.). Meetings also take place in Japan when agents are able to bring in foreign women on a tourist or other visa, although this has become harder, or when introducing those already in Japan such as students. The use of the pen-pal system initiating the relationship by correspondence, in which agents provide addresses of members, has not been popular. One agency which claims to offer such a service backs up this approach with the assurance that, 'We will introduce a marriage partner directly if you are not good at correspondence' (International Penfriend Club advert in *Mr. Partner*, February 1996: 96). The business of international marriage in Japan operates within the familiar parameter of the *miai* matchmaking system, and is non threatening to potential male clients. *Miai* in international marriage introduction is incorporated with international tourism, benefiting travel agents and travel insurance companies, as well as the introduction agencies.

The international marriage business is lucrative so long as a regular flow of male clients is sustained. The existence of '*ippatsu-ya* (once only agents)' (Takeda 1996) who arrange a few marriages and disappear from the industry, suggests that a high profit can be made from a single introduction. Despite the fact that long running agents have heavy outlays on expenditure for advertisements, payments to intermediaries, rent and maintenance fees for offices and employee wages, it appears that an annual rate of 15 to 30 marriages pays for the continuation of a typical business (Kitano 1996).

A typical procedure of the marriage brokerage system between Japanese men and foreign women is that a male client receives access to profiles of women once an



admission fee is paid, and his file is sent to overseas contacts. The client selects a few female candidates from the files after discussion with the agents. Following payment of a deposit for a *miai* tour, agents organise one or two tours to the country of the female candidates.<sup>9</sup> The tour which is normally one week in duration, includes meetings, dating, the marriage ceremony, and preparation for applying and obtaining legal documents, including a marriage certificate and spouse visa, to comply with the marriage and emigration laws of both countries. One half to a full day is allocated for meeting with the previously selected candidates accompanied by an interpreter. It is, however, reportedly very common to be introduced to others than the selected candidates. The Japanese husband of a Chinese marriage migrant said, 'I had selected three women, but none was there' (Shuyi's husband, 1995).

After finishing the necessary procedures overseas, a Japanese husband submits his marriage certificate to the relevant public office on return home. He then applies to a regional immigration bureau for a certificate of eligibility for resident status for his wife. Once the certificate is obtained by a husband and has been sent to his wife, she can apply for a spouse visa in her country, which takes between two and six months for approval.

The issuing of the certificate of eligibility expedites visa procedures (Japan Immigration Association, 1991: 57), and in reality is vital to gaining entry for a foreign spouse. Thus, agents instruct Japanese clients on how to write the application and what should be attached, such as wedding photos, in order to prove the marriage is genuine.

One agent commented that the income level of a husband seemed to affect the likelihood of obtaining a visa for a foreign wife (Tanaka 1996). Some agents offer lessons on Japanese language and customs during the time a bride is waiting for her visa approval. Once their spouse visa is processed, the women arrive alone or in small groups with an agent. Three agents among my informants offer post-migration care services including providing various assistance for newlyweds, and hosting welcoming or get-together parties.

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<sup>9</sup> In China, medical examination is required for men when registering their marriages

The fees are charged at admission and before conducting marriage tours. The non-refundable admission fees vary from 30,000 yen to 350,000 yen (about A\$400 to A\$4,660) in return for which the client may receive only company brochures or detailed profiles of some prospective brides. Fees for introduction and marriage vary from 1 million yen to 5 million yen (approximately A\$13,300 to A\$66,600) depending on the company and what is included. Price differences arise depending on the distance from the destination, but the more important factor is the number of intermediate agents involved (Shibuya 1996). Loans arranged through agents and other sources are common as the fees may exceed the annual income of male clients.

A substantial deposit is required at settlement, before the marriage tour is conducted. For instance, one agent charging 2.5 million yen for a 'China marriage tour', requires 1.5 million yen deposit (Kameda 1996), whereas others request 1 million yen deposit from the total cost of 3.5 million yen (Tanaka 1995). The former bureau demands the payment of the remaining 1 million yen within three days of the first marriage trip. If the introduction fails, only 0.5 million yen will be reimbursed. More commonly the arrangement is to offer the client a discount introduction to another woman if the first introduction fails. Meetings arranged with foreigners in Japan cost 1.5 million yen on average when introductions lead to marriage. The problem of 'other agents' charging unauthorised extra fees at various stages of the process after choosing a partner was frequently mentioned by interviewees (Yamada 1995, Kitano 1996, Takeda 1996).

The trend has been for prices to decline in recent years due to increased competition, economic recession in general, and decreasing interest among potential male clients. One agent speculated that other ways to meet foreign women made commercial agents dispensable for Japanese males (Kitano 1996). Due to the slowdown of the trade, seven agents mentioned that they have started to introduce Japanese women to foreign men, in particular, Western men staying in Japan (for example, Uchida 1996, Sako, 1996). Others attempted to make their businesses more up-market, tempting higher income earners with a touch of exclusiveness (Ishino 1995).

Apart from affiliated domestic agents, recruitment of male customers relies heavily on advertisements in various media. Publicity also serves to attract potential affiliate agents within Japan and overseas. Commonly used means are telephone directories, newspapers, certain magazines and, more recently, the Internet. Two major newspapers were reported to refuse the advertisements of international marriage trading agents (Nishi 1995). Some agents concentrate on certain localities whereas others target the whole of Japan. One rural-based agent conducts personal house-to-house visits to families with single males over a certain age, as well as using the strategy of inserting photos of female candidates in newspapers (Yamada 1995).

The general view among the international marriage agents is that the majority of male clients have serious impediments in the domestic marriage market. Male candidates are often described as 'lacking independence' and 'unable to hold a proper conversation' (Yamada 1995; Kitano 1996).<sup>10</sup> Rural based agents tell the story of an old family, where the parents were so fastidious about the status of the household that their son missed marriage opportunities during his 30s (Hayashi 1995). However, the agents also report that the backgrounds of male participants show increasing diversity compared to the early 1980s. The widening age cohort from the late 30s and the early 40s, to the 50s has been noted, and the marital status of male clients has changed from predominantly first marriage to include second marriage clients. Concerning the clients' educational qualifications and occupations, some agents asserted an 'improvement' of standard, whereas others surmised the opposite. This suggests a widening range of educational and occupational backgrounds of male clients. One agent complained about the changing general standard of clients thus:

At first it was those who happened to lack height or education, or are living with parents, but who had sufficient money. Now, increasing numbers are with no height, no education, or ability to make livelihood. The standard of males has fallen drastically (Kitano 1996).

On the contrary, Uchida noted that, to her surprise, she now has 'high standard' clients: 'how can such a person come for international marriage?' She adds, though, that most

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<sup>10</sup> Some female employees commented more severely. 'I don't want to marry any of those who come here. They are odd. No way of doing [having sex] with a person like this, even with the light turned off' (Yoshimi 1996)

clients with a university education are first-born sons with the burden of living with their parents (Uchida 1995).<sup>11</sup> Three agents particularly stressed the high socioeconomic status of their clients and the fact that they specifically choose international marriage (Ishino 1995, Takeda 1996, Tanaka 1996). One of them stated rather boastfully that his clients were mostly university graduates, living in the metropolitan area, and 30 percent of them are public servants, 40 percent company employed and 30 percent self-employed (Ishino 1995). These descriptions are atypical and can partly be 'advertising for the media' as another agent critically observed (Kitano 1996). The changes in clients' backgrounds may also be provoked by the agents' decision to search for new sources due to the declining number of clients. Nonetheless, the diversity of males who used international marriage agencies appears to be on the rise from anecdotal evidence.

Recruitment of female candidates is largely dependant on the agents' overseas links. A popular method appears to be personal introduction by their local connection agents of their own acquaintances and relatives. The frequency of 'personal recommendation' was also suggested in a study of marriage agents in the Philippines (del Rosario, 1994:139). It is consistent with my findings that many foreign women interviewed mentioned some kind of personal tie with agents, or those who had connections with agents. Local marriage agencies also recruit members through advertising, where female clients commonly pay registration and introduction fees. A group of women from Tianjin in China paid fees of 300 yuan in 1993 and 1994, equivalent to one month's salary for one who was a high school teacher (Aimei 1995, Zhenni 1996, Huiying 1996. Also see Chapter 6 for the female participants' accounts of their introduction procedure). One Chinese marriage migrant from the same area paid 2,000 yuan in 1995 (Meishu 1996). The agents in Japan announce strict selection schemes for female candidates, the women suggested no such terms. It is reported that family and friends of local agents in the Philippines 'simply collect applications' without any selection process (del Rosario 1994:150).

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11 The rise of educational qualifications among male clients is parallel with the trend in the overall population. Take as examples, men who reached 40 years of age in 1985 and in 1995. In 1960 which was the year a man of age 40 in 1985 progressed to senior high school, only 59.6 percent of junior high school male students went on to senior high school. Whereas the percentage reached 81.6 percent in 1970 which was the year a man of age 40 in 1995 had entered senior high school. The percentage of those advancing to university among male high school students also increased from 20.7 percent in 1965 to 40.4 percent in 1975 when the above cohorts had reached age 20 (Nihon Fujin Dantai Rengōkai 1994: 295).

Recruitment from the bride sending countries shows a general pattern of shifting from cities to rural areas:

We had problems in Manila where many women come from all over the Philippines. We couldn't check on the [truthfulness of] their data. We started in Negros and Manila at the same time, but stopped Manila, then moved to Iloilo and finally to General Santos in Mindanao (Uchida 1995)

There are already too many [agents] in Moscow disturbing [the market] We have moved to other areas Women are also getting debased [in Moscow]. It is best when they are simple, and the place is unspoiled (Sako 1996)

Large cities such as Shanghai and Manila allow easy access for Japanese agencies through affiliation with local brokers and individual agents. But the more strict control on the activities of the international marriage business, possible conflicts with local agents over profits, false information about bride candidates and the types of women presented, apparently led them to look for more private links in regional areas. Some critics disapproved of this move saying that agents were targeting 'poorer areas' and 'more submissive women' and therefore the marriage business was 'trafficking in women ignoring their personality' (Hasegawa 1993b: 8). The recruitment route is quite opportunistic, and shifts also occur because of conflicts between the agents involved. The search for 'submissive women' is a part of the agents' justification for promoting regional women. Agents will move to wherever they can find safe and inexpensive connections that provide women who are more likely stay in a marriage.

#### **4.2 Problems of Marriage Agents and Reading Legal Cases**

The ban or restriction of international matchmaking activities overseas tends to encourage underground and corrupt business activities. Japanese agents often use tourist visas to enter countries in order to pursue their business, and this increases the risk of deportation. However, agents who have been deported do not necessarily have to withdraw from the business in Japan. Despite becoming aware of 'many stories of agents getting arrested here and there', one agent commented:

It's true it became difficult to operate after the ban (in the Philippines) In fact, everybody is conducting [these activities] with some fear After all, it's illegal They say matchmaking is 7 years imprisonment, but I don't know how it is in reality It is unreasonable to prohibit marriage businesses by law What's wrong with our business? If it's bad because of money involved, then is it all right if we don't charge? We don't take money from women from the outset They should ban not only the matchmaking business but international marriage altogether How about matchmaking by friends? We charge Japanese, and it's legal in Japan (Kitano 1996)

The legality of the business in Japan, and the fact that Japanese candidates are the ones who make payments to agents in Japan are the defences put forward by this agent. Agents can continue their business even after deportation from other countries. One of the agencies had been deported from the Philippines in 1988 (Arevalo 1988), yet was still operating there when I interviewed the company in 1995. The story of this agency raises questions about the effectiveness of the ban on international matchmaking activities in the Philippines. This agency claims an acknowledgment of their business from the Philippines' Presidential office in their company record. The document stated that the voluntary members of this agency sent a written petition to the President in June 1989 after the enactment of the ban on marriage agencies. The reply that the agency received in February 1990 stated that the bill aimed to protect Filipino women from malicious agents and it did not apply to this agency. The letter recognised the company for contributing to exchanges between Japan and the Philippines at the grass roots level (Uchida in 1995). Whatever the validity of this claim, it is true that this agency is continuing business without further problems in the Philippines.

To avoid the risks of deportation and arrest, the use of bribery to deal with local authorities appears common: 'Yes, they have a license system [in China]. But, it doesn't matter if manoeuvring goes well There are some conducting the [marriage] business in civil offices over there charging 800,000 yen per person' (Yamada 1995). The same agent also uses bribery for other purposes: 'A bribe of around 30,000 yen makes the processing of documents fast' (Yamada 1995). Another agent who operates in China comments on the use of connections inside local bureaucracies. His local contact knows a person in a marriage registration section in a civil office, and this person can check female clients' identities 'from their families and criminal record' (Hamada 1995).

The marriage agents' activities in Japan pose an array of problems. Dubious identities of agents, their high charges, the complexity of the business links in Japan and overseas, immigration regulations, and intentions of clients exacerbated the problematic aspects of the largely unregulated industry. An agent's brochure, which provides advice on 'how to choose a good marriage bureau' gives a good picture of the common problems of agents concerning male clients in Japan:

(1) Check the history of an agent Many started this year but many also have gone (2) Check their past results Many agents just take introduction fees and then pass actual business to others (3) Many international agents which do not belong to marriage associations tend to be irresponsible (4) Some contract out to others the administrative work of handling applications for visa and registrations, and this means an extra charge (5) Check whether or not they have a clear written charging system (6) Check whether or not they can provide support services after marriage (7) Extremely cheap fees mean extra charges later (8) Some agents introduce overstaying students (9) Some do not check the personal history of female candidates (10) Some persuade you to become their branch agent and charge fees (11) Agents that charge high admission fees but offer free introduction are not as enthusiastic as those which charge only after successful match-making (Nishi brochure, n.d.)

Between 1990 and 1994 10 official complaints about international marriage agents were received by the Consumer Advisory Bureau in Yamagata. Four concerned the reliability of agents and the large amount of fees, four complained that either a bride did not arrive or returned home after a short period of time, and two complained about the high withdrawal fees (personal interview with an employee of Consumer Advisory Bureau, Yamagata 9 October 1995). One rural based agent revealed that he was being sued by the parents of a male client for failure of arrival of a bride (Yamada 1995).

As the common term '*nakōdo-gochi*' (matchmakers' talk, or saying all sorts of nice things) implies, the matchmaking business inherits the tendency to suppress certain information about candidates, a tendency worsened in the international introduction business. The following legal suit illustrates the relatively lax attitude toward forgery of biographical data and other fraudulent practices common in the industry. A Chinese-Japanese client won his suit against an international marriage agent in the Osaka district court in 1994 for having falsified information (*Hanrei Taimuzu* 15 January 1995). The plaintiff accused the agent of responsibility for his divorce from a Taiwanese woman, whom the agent had introduced, because the agent had suppressed and altered information in his and his former wife's profiles. It was shown that the agent concealed

the woman's smoking and drinking habits, her unwillingness to live with in-laws, and changed her address and telephone number presumably to avoid direct contact between the candidates. From the man's profile, the agent had changed his registered domicile from a region in China to Taiwan, added 'national' after the name of the university he graduated from and changed the annual income listed from 3.6 million yen to 5 million yen. The civil judgment ruled that the agent must pay 1 million yen (about A\$13,300) back to the plaintiff and an additional 3 million yen (A\$40,000) for compensation. While the case may be significant in recognising the illegal actions of marriage agents, it is far from a drastic measure. The reparation amount is insignificant compared with the expected earnings of agents, and the civil court has no power of legal enforcement otherwise.

One of the most notorious cases was that of the Tōshin marriage bureau for its abuse of the training visa, dishonesty and pressure in enforcement of marriages. The agent brought groups of Sri Lankan women to Japan for marriage purposes and matched 60 to 70 couples between 1986 and 1988. He used tourist visas to bring the women to Japan in 1986, but started to use training visas after establishing, on paper, a joint venture with a Japanese-Sri Lankan electric parts assembly factory in Sri Lanka in 1987. Women were brought into Japan on the pretext of training, but some were assigned to assembly line work (with a minimum payment as those with a training visa are not in principle entitled to a salary) while others met prospective partners. The agent received 380,000 yen (approximately A\$5,000) per person from factories in Japan for introducing trainees and 2.5 to 3 million yen (about A\$33,000 to A\$40,000) from male clients for successful marriage arrangements. His abuse of the training visa was brought to question in the National Diet and soon after these women were denied extensions of their visas and returned home in early 1988 (*Hanrei Jihō* 11 March 1994). The agent had also demanded 'virgin certificates' from the first group of women, but later took advantage by overlooking divorce as he could charge fees for each re-marriage (Nakamura 1994:42)



A lawsuit against the same agent was taken out by one of the women who came for 'training' in 1987 unaware of the marriage arrangement.<sup>12</sup> She claimed that the agent urged her to marry one of his candidates with a threat of charging air fares and living expenses if she refused. Soon after marriage the husband wanted to divorce her and discussed it with the agent, but she refused, as divorce was considered undesirable in Sri Lanka. When she returned to Colombo to visit her ill father in 1988, the agent arranged a divorce document with a forged signature, and introduced another Sri Lankan woman to her former husband. The man was charged 5 million yen for each marriage arrangement and 6 million yen for the divorce arrangement. The woman lost her grounds for extending her spouse visa. With the help of influential supporters such as Nakamura (1994), an economist, she, firstly brought a criminal suit against the agent and her former husband for the forgery of divorce documents. Then she brought civil suits against the former husband and his alleged wife to invalidate the divorce document and against the agent for compensation. The agent and her former husband were penalised for the forgery in October 1991, and the woman won the two civil cases, the first in February 1991 and the second in November 1993. She was awarded 12 million yen (about A\$160,000) compensation. The use of the trainee system to legally bring foreign workers to Japan is well documented (see, for example, Mori 1997). Likewise, the system was abused by marriage agencies to bring foreign brides (see, also Chapter 5 for the similar practice by a local government). Further, the case of the Tōshin marriage bureau shows that not only marriages but also divorces have become its commodity.

While the outcome of the judgment in the Tōshin case was welcomed, the comments in the judgment and the way the media reported the case show the operation of a particular discursive construction of 'international marriage'. The judgement of the Kyoto District court stated:

To promote international marriage itself for rural single men and others who suffer from scarcity of potential brides can be approved as one way of international exchange, only if it is based on accurate information and done with both parties' free will, and marriage is realised through truthful understanding of each other (*Hanrei Jihō* 11 March 1994: 145)

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<sup>12</sup> The judicial precedent report stated that this woman herself came with a tourist visa, but there were other women who arrived with her who were aware of possible marriage arrangements (*Hanrei Jihō* 11 March 1994 141-142).

Although the defendant of the case was not a rural resident, the judgement singles out rural men as the group suffering from the bride shortage. The judge also seems to support the idea that their need for marriage is entitled to be satisfied. It then justifies marriage arrangement as a form of internationalisation. At the same time international human rights law was invoked:

Under the cloak of promotion of international marriage, the agent constrained marriage coercively in a cowardly manner, indeed exactly equal to human traffic, for the sole purpose of own profit of the business neglecting the human right of the plaintiff who by no means understood Japanese language and culture (*Hanrei Jihō* 11 March 1994:145).

Following this court judgment, the *Asahi Shimbun* coverage of the case, in an article titled '*Kekkon kyōyō wa "jinshin barbar"*' (Coercive marriage is "Human Traffic") (26 November 1993) echoed the critical tone of the earlier reports on the 1991 ruling. These reports were entitled: 'Bride business is Japan's shame' (*Yomimuri Shimbun* 22 February 1991), 'Legal victory of an Asian bride' (*Asahi Shimbun* 22 February 1991) and 'Tragedy of "Asian brides" bought by Japanese' (*Josei Seibun* 28 March 1991).<sup>13</sup> These titles appear to give the women voices, but in reality their contents give only one voice, that the voice of a victim. The court hearing of this case records that the woman became violent towards her husband, brandishing a knife at times and once turned over an oil-container because of his neglect of her, and that he had consulted a lawyer and the police (*Hanrei Jihō* 11 March 1994:144). In Nakamura's (1994:35) article and the above media coverage on this case, however, it was explained that the reason for the woman's divorce was that she was 'not showing any sign of pregnancy and other reasons.' 'Asian brides' cannot be represented as 'violent' in the public discourse or among their supporters. Violence is an active performance and does not belong to a victim. There was also no positive reason mentioned for the woman's intention to stay in Japan other than the hardship of divorced women in her home country. It appears extremely difficult for Japanese audiences to admit that there are some women who utilise 'marriage-migration' opportunistically, and offer support at the same time. In this light, the Republic Act No. 6955 of the Philippines enacted in 1989, which banned the international matchmaking businesses, is also not exceptional when it stated its intention was, 'to protect Filipino women from being exploited in utter disregard of

<sup>13</sup> The original Japanese titles are '*Hanayome byūnesu wa nihon no haji da*', '*Ajia no hanayome shōso*', and '*Nihonjin ni kawareru "ajia no hanayome" no higeiki*' respectively

human dignity in their pursuit of economic upliftment' (cited in del Rosario, 1994:345). It is contradictory that the triumph of human rights can overshadow multiple identities of 'Asian women' and their process of active struggles in the host country.

### **4.3 Selling International Marriage**

Given problems and moral concerns with the international marriage business, how then can such marriages be imagined and portrayed as worthwhile? The discourse on selling international marriage apparently encounters a number of obstacles. International marriages for Japanese men with 'Asian' women were not popular until recently, let alone those organised through agents. In addition, they had to overcome the negative reputation of 'human trade' placed on the business, and the hostility and contempt towards Asian 'others' in Japan. Moreover, the practice confronts the powerful 'imagination of a national Japanese identity [as] an homogeneous, unified self' (Creighton 1997:213). Indeed, one agent mentioned getting intimidating telephone calls accusing him of 'disgracing the pure blood of the Japanese race' (Fukuda 1996). Thus, how could the construction of the international marriage business take on an aspect of contesting social relations of inequality? In the market of international marriage, existing patriarchal gender relations within marriage govern these narratives. Race relations are shaped within gender relations in such a way as to make 'foreigners' desirable as marriage partners. Racial markers are at times diminished and at other times amplified, depending on whether the particular marker is compatible with marriageability or not. The base narrative of contemporary race relations may influence this inclusion and exclusion of race markers, but race is ultimately subsumed under gender relations. I will trace this firstly in the narratives of selling international marriages and secondly in the making of foreign brides. Lastly, the rhetorics used to sell marriages between Japanese women and European men are discussed in order to illustrate relational constructions of international marriage. Materials used are interviews with marriage agents, their advertisements, brochures, and promotional

information prepared for third parties such as local agricultural associations, collected between 1994 and 1996.<sup>14</sup>

The international marriage business at large has been targeting those males who have some disadvantages in the domestic marriage market. Its advertisements stress the high marriage success rate, and at the same time invoke the fear of being single and present marriage as a kind of initiation: ‘No bride means the end of the family line’ (Nishi’s advert in *Taun Pēji Tokyooto Mimato Shinagawa*, 1994: 445).<sup>15</sup> In this discourse, marriage for men is a way to achieve full adulthood and their needs for marriage should be satisfied.<sup>16</sup> The narrative kindles a desire for marriage as ‘fulfilment of life’ (Ishino brochure, n.d.), ‘departure to a bright tomorrow’ (Kato brochure, n.d.) and ‘everybody has the right to be happy’ (Uchida brochure, n.d.), which in turn highlights the apparent incompleteness of the single life. The chances of marriage with Japanese women are presented as scarce: ‘[there is a] 2.5 million shortage of single females of 25 to 39 years of age’ (Adobansu advert in *Taun Pēji Shizuokaken Seibu* 1994: 533), or more directly ‘2 million [men] can’t get married’ (Kameda brochure, n.d.). Readers are urged to ‘give up the attachment [to marrying Japanese]’ (Nishi’s advert in *Taun Pēji Tokyooto Mimato Shinagawa* 1994: 445). International marriage is projected as a way out of this situation with an underlying message of ‘even you can marry’ regardless of age, appearance, education, marital or job status.

Japan’s relative affluence compared to those countries which are sending brides, is used to construct images of an abundant supply of willing and compliant women: ‘Marriage cannot fail as many brides want to come to *keizai taikoku* (the economic superpower

14 When citing the printed materials of the agencies whose owner or employee I interviewed, I use the interviewee’s pseudonym to correspond with his or her personal interview. Otherwise agency names are given as published.

15 *Taun Pēji* (The Town Pages) is the name of the commercial telephone books published by NTT (Nippon Telegraph and Telephone)

16 An organiser of a group of singles which advocates a re-examination of ‘family-ism’ (*kazoku-shugi*) stated that unmarried men over 30 suffer from public curiosity and prejudices, and are accused of not being fully independent (Manichi Shimbunsha Seikatsu Kateibu Shuzaihan 1992: 174). A survey by the Institute of Population Problems (1994) on the non-married population shows that the three most frequently mentioned benefits of marriage by men in 1987 were ‘peace of mind’ (35 percent), ‘social acknowledgment’ (22 percent) followed by ‘having a family and children’ (20 percent). In 1992, the second and third preferences were reversed and shifted to ‘peace of mind’ (38 percent), ‘having a family and children’ (25 percent) and thirdly ‘social acknowledgment’ (18 percent) (1994: 30).

country)' (Nishi brochure 1995). Furthermore the 'powerful political rhetoric' (Goodman 1993:221) of the international campaigns since the late 1970s was conveniently adopted for some agencies. Phrases such as, 'for those with an international mind, and with a progressive view toward marriage'(Mabuhay advert in *Taun Pēji Tochūgiken Nanbu* 1996: 285), 'for deepening the international exchange with the people in Southeast Asia' (International Penfriend Club advert in *Mr. Partner* February 1996: 95) and 'As Japan's internationalisation progresses, the number of international marriages is steadily increasing every year'(Ishino brochure, n.d.), present the business as a part of the progressive discourse of internationalisation while matching the national interest of the period. It therefore confirms for an audience the worthiness of the clients' marriages and themselves. The discourse also arouses private fantasies of love and sex with expressions such as 'love transcends national borders' (Takeda brochure, n.d.) and 'happy honeymoon that will be the most memorable event in your life' (Kitano brochure, n.d.), obscuring the 'arrangement' aspect of the relationship.

Some agencies attempt to create more diversified images of the client groups. In these advertisements, images were no longer of those who had been disadvantaged in the domestic market, but those who would positively participate in international marriage. The adverts appeal to 'those who want to marry a younger woman' (Erīto Yokohama advert in *Taun pēji Yokohama Kita* 1996: 521) or to 'executives' for 'a first class total consulting system' (Tanaka brochure, n.d.). In this sense, the image of international marriage elevates the client's self-portrait from 'even you can marry' to 'you can marry even foreign women.' This may reflect differentiation of the market or increased competition in sales in a particular market, but it also shows a certain acceptance and penetration of the international matchmaking business. Agents commented that it was 'easier to recommend than before' (Kitano 1996) and there were 'fewer objections' (Yamada 1995) than in the early 1980s. The fantasy of international marriage could now be represented in diverse forms. However, the picture cannot be completed without inventing matching brides.

In the representations of brides in the Japanese international marriage market, some traits are given to all the women regardless of their ethnicity, and others for certain

ethnicities. Brides are supposed to come to Japan with Japanese language skills and manners. To ensure a smooth transition to Japanese family life advertisements declare that: 'Brides receive intensive training in Japanese customs and language until their arrival in Japan' (Kokusai Ryōen Sokushinkai Hombu advert in *Taun Pēji Tochūgiken Nanbu* 1996: 285). A trouble free transformation is also assured with the promise of 'naturalisation within 2 to 5 years' (Tokufūkai advert in *Taun Pēji Okayamaken Tōbu Hokubu chihō* 1996: 223). Photos of female candidates do not convey ethnic markers such as traditional clothes, but in the family photos of the married couples, foreign women sometimes bear ethnic markers that present an image of a traditional yet harmonious and stable relationship. Wilson (1988), in her reading of 'mail-order' bride catalogues in America, pointed out that the catalogues did not highlight 'Asian markers' (1988:119). This rendered Asian women as 'familiar and Western' making 'them marriageable', though retaining 'just enough Oriental flavo[u]r' (1988:121) to be different from 'rude' and 'demanding' (1988:120) American women.

In Japan, while images of Asian woman in the matchmaking trade are constructed as 'other', what is important is their representation as 'not quite other' in order to make them 'marriageable'. The image of brides promoted in the marriage market is different from the portrayals of 'Asian brides' in the mass media illustrated in Chapter 2. For example, the former does not have an image of 'ignorance of modern life', which is favoured in the media. Instead, brides in marriage business discourse are modernised. They 'are educated and have a middle-class background' (Uchida brochure, n.d.). The representation of the 'Asian bride' in the matchmaking businesses is also distinct from the portrait of other 'Asians' in wider advertising where they are 'stereotyped into lower-class positions or roles' appearing mainly in advertisements 'for designated ethnic products' or 'for cleaning products, suggesting stereotyped labour roles' (Creighton 1997: 226). On the surface at least, the discourse of the marriage industry digresses from the tendency toward a one-dimensional discriminatory gaze among Japanese which looks down on other Asians. In the international marriage market Korea is sold as 'the origin of Japanese culture' and Koreans as 'the same Oriental race' (Yamada brochure, n.d.). A phrase such as enjoy 'Japan-Korea mixed love dishes cooked by your wife' (Kameda brochure, n.d.) shows the selectivity of signs used as a selling point.

These signs are nevertheless defined in relation to stereotypes of Japanese women, and traditional/modern roles. Certain characteristics of other Asian brides are glorified in advertisements and brochures for internal consumption. For instance:

- 1 A gentle and simple type of woman who has become scarce in Japan. (Hamada brochure, n.d.)
- 2 [They have] humbleness, shyness and consideration which Japanese women have begun to lose (Kitano brochure, n.d.)
- 3 [They have] charm and patience which Japanese women are on the edge of losing (Uchida brochure, n.d.)

'Asian' brides become desirable not from spatially marked cultural differences as in the case of 'mail-order' brides in America (Wilson 1988: 120), but from the time difference which attributes 'Asia' to the past. 'Asian brides' are desirable because they are familiar. In both America and Japan, they are unspoiled, submissive and therefore manageable for men. In the Japanese representation, the 'poverty' of the bride's home country works to symbolise their submissiveness as it makes the women 'warm-hearted' and 'grateful' for 'just taking her to a cheap restaurant' (Happi Sākuru brochure 1996). This 'poverty' in turn makes men 'feel comfortable as one does not need to act big' (Happi Sākuru brochure 1996):

I [an agent] would like them [Filipino women] to have a life in Japan like the one in the heaven. They can have this feeling even with a lower level of life in Japan (Happi Sākuru brochure 1996)

This articulation of poverty places any Japanese man in the position of superiority and constructs the women as vulnerable and dependent on men

On the other hand, certain interracial realities of marriages such as religious and language differences are minimised. In particular, skin colour difference is suppressed. When promoting Filipino women to a male client on the telephone, an employee of an agent explained: 'They all *become white* within two or three years after living in Japan without knowing why' (emphasis added) (an employee of the Kitano's agency 1996). The agent also frequently used the description 'just like Japanese' with photos of female

candidates. Likewise, some agents stated that concern over the colour of any offspring was a hindrance to promoting marriages with Filipino women:

*It has become much easier to promote international marriage now. They [clients] used to worry seriously that a child might be born with dark skin and that a child may get teased. Because there were no other people around, we couldn't give them an answer, then. But now, we can say, 'You must be joking, these kids are whiter than Japanese' (emphasis added, Kitano 1996)*

Skin colour of Filipino women and any offspring is a topic that is excluded in representations because the visibility of skin colour makes the hybrid nature of the marriages discernible. Japanese occupy relative and symbolic 'whiteness' in their images of hierarchy among Asian identities.

The sexuality of 'Asian' brides is confined within a model of fertility and virginity. Some agents simply stated that they preferred 'those who can give birth' (Hayashi 1995), or 'We introduce Filipino women because 98 percent of them will have a baby' (Kitano 1996). Enhanced by family photos of smiling couples holding their children, brochures remark on family life, with children as the source of happiness and vitality. Rural based agents explicitly stress the importance of fertility. Though not mentioned in the printed advertising materials, the matter of virginity did arise at interviews. Virginity is glorified in relation to the stability of marriage: 'Those women who married with their virginity are reliable and never causing any troubles' because 'they do not compare' their Japanese husband with their previous partners (Kitano 1996). Both fertility and the innocence of young 'virgins' promise a steady married life for male clients. The allure of the female body is silenced in the gender construction of 'Asian' brides. The lack of sensuality in marriage introduction publicity distances them from 'Asian' entertainers (whose singular representation is as a prostitute), and in this way fabricates the brides' marriageable status. This narrative may implicate fantasies of sexual intercourse with 'virgins' or 'fertile' women, but apparent sensuality is not ascribed to the 'Asian brides'.

In contrast, sensuality together with a vision of romance, is attributed to 'white' Russian and Eastern European brides. Through her study of Japanese advertisements Creighton (1997) illustrated that images of white Westerners, particularly white women projected a standard of progress and beauty as well as sexual allure. Themes of 'whiteness,



nudity, sexuality' (1997:217) are often blended to represent 'a fantasy mood and exotic sexuality' (1997:218). The images of white foreigners are also utilised to break Japanese social conventions in advertising, for example, when including self-centred assertions or portraying kissing in public. In recent advertisements, there is a tendency for white foreigners to be used 'to highlight the economic dominance and world prominence of Japan' (1997:220) and this, according to Creighton, indicates 'the possibility that mainstream Japanese have moved into the *symbolic space* of "white", the cognitive space of prominence and ascendance' (original emphasis, 1997:221).

Creighton's analysis is useful as a reference point from which to examine similarities and differences between consciously used images of white foreigners in advertisements in general and the rhetoric of promoting Russian and Eastern European brides whose whiteness is fundamental to their identity. These representations of 'white' brides show marked difference from that of 'Asian' brides. Russian and Eastern European brides are described as 'white', 'stunning beauty' (Roshia Shinzen Kyōkai brochure, n.d.), 'smooth skin', 'top looks' (Tanaka 1996) and 'sexual satisfaction is guaranteed with Russian woman' (Takeda 1996). A specific country such as Russia or Poland has no meaning in these images. The selling point is a powerful cultural marker, 'whiteness' – a model of sensual beauty represented by 'European' women. This explicit sensuality does not lead to lewdness; instead, it is juxtaposed with 'refined attractiveness' and 'intelligence' (Roshia Shinzen Kyōkai brochure, n.d.) as the Occidental 'other' indicates a standard of progress. In contrast to portrayals of 'Asian' brides, there is no emphasis on family life or children; only romance and the temptation of alternative lifestyle is offered:

You will watch a famous ballet or opera alone together in the reserved seats for honoured guests at the Bolshoi theatre in Moscow. Usually, she can watch only from the gallery. Around you there are only upper class people of America and Europe. Most of [Japanese] men, and European women as well, become fascinated by this romantic experience in a European city – such a different environment from that of Japan. A man who is tired of busy daily life and everyday of work in Japan questions the meaning of his life through this experience (Roshia Shinzen Kyōkai brochure, n.d.)

It is not Russia, but Japan's Occident highlighted by the ideas of 'European women' and 'European City'. The historic construction of the Occidental 'other' as a target of adoration makes romantic love possible in contrast to the representations of 'Asian'

brides whose identity is defined by the same themes that define 'traditional' Japanese women and their suitability for marital life. The image of white women willing to marry Japanese men reminds the men of economic achievement (which is possibly translated into cultural terms). The image also invites the men into a space of symbolic whiteness, where they have achieved a level of sophistication that allows them to enjoy high culture. The trope of the 'opera' and the fantasy of mingling with the noble 'upper class', white 'Americans and Europeans', signify the achievement. Imagining the European as upper class reinforces the fact that the view on 'racialized class' (Young 1995: 95) has been internalised. Japan's economic achievement has created the categories of 'honoured white' rather than challenging racial relations. While celebrating Japan's economic growth, the above passage is silent about the decline of Eastern European power. This makes it possible to imagine 'European' brides 'wanting to marry Japanese not for the purpose of money or entering the country, like Southeast Asians' (Roshia Shinzen Kyōkai brochure, n.d.). A selling point is therefore not the decline of Russian power but the rise of Japanese power in the collective imagination of Japanese men. Thus, cultural hierarchy becomes the underlying message carried by the 'white' Russian and East European brides.

Russian and Eastern European brides are also given qualities of 'domesticity', 'devotion' and 'humility'. Such images touch on traditional patriarchal power relations between a husband and wife, and make the women marriageable as well as desirable. The specific space of Russia and Eastern Europe is significant in this context. These women are compared with other European women as well as with Japanese women: 'Compared to other European women, they are humble and submissive' (Tanaka brochure, n.d.) and 'They have gentle-heart and innocence which Japanese women had lost' (Roshia Shinzen Kyōkai brochure, n.d.).

The imagined audience for these 'white, intelligent, beautiful, sexy, and devoted' Russian and Eastern European women is 'urban executive-class' men who can view these women as a marriage partner (Takeda 1996). Several agents noted the difficulty of promoting these women in rural areas 'even to wealthy farmers' (Takeda 1996) because of their apparent racial difference. A white woman is too much of an outsider to be imagined as a family member in rural Japan. They are not as women who 'will become

yellow after living in Japan' as in the case of Filipino women. Instead, their visibility as different is promoted to the urban upper class for which 'white' represents a symbol of status. Dominant race relations are superimposed upon urban and rural class relations.

Alongside the promotion of Russian and East European women, there is some evidence of a shift in the representation of Filipino brides in order to market them to 'urban higher income earners'. The re-making of Filipino brides draws them close to their European counterparts. The assigned markers include phrases such as 'well educated', 'speak English', 'Catholics', 'have Europeanised life style, because of historic Spanish and American influences' (Ishino 1995). Nevertheless, the 'elevated' images of Filipino women do not occupy the same space as those of European women in their relation to Japanese men. In short, Filipino women are the 'reach-able West' (a public speech by Sasakura 1996)<sup>17</sup>, not 'the West' itself. They are attractive because Japanese men do not need to feel inferior to them:

We grew up on powered milk given by Americans. We have somehow got a complex from that. We have a complex towards Westerners, but not towards Southeast Asians. The fundamental basis of international marriage for Japanese lies in this point (Ishino 1995)

Filipino women with overt signs of Western culture pose no threat to Japanese men, but offer elements of symbolic white status. There is no imagining of Filipino men as the 'reach-able West'. This gendered and racialized construction of status is occurring when the presence of Filipino women in Japan as wives of Japanese has been dramatically increasing. Filipino women are no longer defined in relation to Japanese women, but to European women. At the same time, this change of reference point shifts the symbolic position of Japanese men who marry Filipino women. It assures them that

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<sup>17</sup> The comment was made by Sasakura Akira, a writer, in a seminar in Tokyo on the issue of children of Japanese-Filipino couples (30 January 1996). Before the phrase cited, Sakura stated that Japanese males have the sentiment of adoring the West. Then he continued: 'Some say the Filipinos were the reach-able West. They are Asiatic, but also Western-like, different from Taiwanese or Chinese.' 'Some Japanese have contempt for Filipino women, but this is from ignorance towards Asia due to the teachings about the West as beautiful, correct and excellent.' 'Westerners mostly discriminate against Asian heredity, but Japanese discrimination towards them is learned due to external factors such as economic imbalance. Japanese do not in essence have contempt for Asians.' His problematic statement indicates ambivalent feelings of admiration and antipathy towards the West. It also reveals Japan's prejudice to 'Asians'. His statement rationalises such discriminatory attitudes, blaming 'their' economic problems without mentioning Japan's exploitative relations with the region. The statement also downplays the racism of Japan against 'Asia' by positioning these two in comparison with the West.

they are not 'marrying down' because of their disadvantages in the Japanese marriage market, but indeed, 'marrying up' because they prefer Filipino women who now symbolise the 'West', a standard of 'progress' and 'status', and yet a controllable one. This particular construction of Filipino brides makes it possible to attract Japanese males categorised as 'urban' and 'high level income earners', widening the social range of male clients.

*In the making of international marriage, the power of a husband over a wife is unchallenged regardless of her race. She is constructed to pose no threat to his position of superiority and thus to dominant models of gender relations. Sinke and Gross (1992) in their study of German women immigrants to America during the 1870s stated that, 'just as the international labour market served to advance capitalism, so too the international marriage market served to maintain existing forms of patriarchy' (1992: 70). The rhetoric of selling international marriage in contemporary Japan also primarily affirms patriarchal gender relations, and this transcends the race of the brides. The dominant race relations of the West and Asia are largely translated into class relations shaped by the urban and rural dichotomy within Japan. Nevertheless, as exemplified by the construction of Filipino women as the 'reach-able West', the rhetoric of selling international marriage shows differences from the mainstream narratives of the Asian 'other' depicted by Creighton (1997). The inclusion and exclusion of certain race markers is determined by marriageability. The race markers of Chinese and Korean women diminish their marriageability. Hence, their resemblance to the Japanese is emphasised. With European women, certain ethnic markers are amplified as they symbolise advancement in Japanese men's status by 'acquiring' these women. Filipino women are made to have plural characters depending on the target male audiences. Yet, transcending all these differences between racial backgrounds of foreign brides, their marriageability is fundamentally constructed within conventional gender relations.*

The representation of international marriage for Japanese women is constructed differently from that for Japanese males. Both portrayals highlight the marriageability of foreign candidates, but the definitions of marriageability are different. Several researchers have analysed the representation of 'Asian' brides in the catalogues of the

'mail order marriage' business (for example, Wilson 1988; Villapando 1989; Robinson 1996). However, few have studied the representations of European men in marriage markets in Asia. An analysis of how such marriages are sold in Japan offers another side of the picture and suggests some reasons why Japanese women choose this approach to marriage.

In the American and European marriage markets images of Japanese women are familiar in the 'mail order marriage' business. The activity of marriage introduction agencies dealing with Japanese women was reported in 1973 in North America (Godwin, cited in Mullan 1984: 104). The number of Japanese women in the American mail order bride's catalogues has increased since the early 1980s (Tsuji 1987). Apart from the 'mail order marriage' system, evidence suggests that some agents in Japan started to arrange introductions between Japanese women and resident Western men around 1990. These agents tend to charge Japanese women higher joining fees than they do Western men. One agency charges a membership fee of 10,000 yen (about A\$130) multiplied by the client's age for females, but nothing for males, reflecting the relativities of supply and demand in this market (Aoki 1996). The local market is on the increase but the shortage of males against the growing demand from Japanese women has encouraged the agents to turn to the catalogue marriage business as well, where they work as a 'local supplier' of Japanese women for particular American and European agent/s.

One agent described his clients' profiles. Amongst his over 300 members, male clients are mainly around 30 years old and typically work in a computer-related field. Most female members are in their late 20s to early 30s, and 30 percent of them have college (two years) education, 60 percent have university degrees and 10 percent postgraduate qualifications. Many have the experience of studying overseas in institutions ranging from English colleges to universities. Some women work at banks or stock companies,

but are not usually in a 'managerial track'.<sup>18</sup> Some join with dreams of 'living in America' or 'showing off their white partner'. Inquiries from females, particularly those past their mid-30s, have been increasing rapidly (Aoki 1996).

The advertisements, in English for male readers, invite 'foreigners of any visa status' and 'all levels' (International Marriage Consulting Association advert in *TOWNPAGE-English Telephone Directory Greater Tokyo* 1994: 684) or anybody with 'a steady job, sincere heart and healthy body' (Aoki's advert in *TOWNPAGE-English Telephone Directory Greater Tokyo* 1994: 685) to become members. Yet the dominant sales image of these marriages for female Japanese audiences is that of 'elite', 'white' Western males and 'attractive', 'educated', 'able' Japanese women of 'good family background' with overseas experience. For example, one agency advertises their male clients to Japanese female audiences as 'reliable white English speaking European and American men' and 'university professors, businessman, engineers, and English teachers' (Uchida's advert in *Mr. Partner* November 1996: 154). Another agency's advert reads: 'From European men: please marry us! We are looking for kind, interesting, individualistic, and overseas-minded Japanese women' (Manhattan Club advert in *Hiragana Times* August 1996: 120). An agent attributed the success of his business to the promotion of the 'myth of white' in the media (Aoki 1996). In the popular 1980s image of international marriage in the female-oriented media, where foreigners invariably meant 'white' Westerners. Marital relationships with foreigners were depicted as 'independent, free, and, romantic . . . With them [Western men], we can share the enjoyment of work and life to the very end, and have an intelligent comfortable married life . . . like lovers' (*Elle-Japon* 25 February 1988: 46-47). Though marriage between Japanese women and foreign men of other races also shows an increase in Japan outside the marriage business (see Chapter 3), these unions lack sufficient demand to become a competitive business. This is reflected in prices charged for 'meeting' parties run by marriage agencies and professional party organisers. One company that specialises in holding 'international' meeting parties charges 3,500 yen

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18 Many large-scale firms in Japan divide women workers in two different career streams, *sōgō shoku* (managerial track) or *ippan shoku* (clerical track), theoretically based on merit (Nakamatsu 1995) Those in the managerial track can expect better promotion and wider job range. However, because of the expected male-structured work norms, the women in this track tend to face difficulties in continuing their work. Hence, the managerial track is often not feasible or attractive to many women. The division rarely applies to male workers.

for Western males and 5,500 yen for Japanese women attending an ‘American and European male party’. Whereas, charges for males for an ‘Asian and African male party’ are 9,500 yen but Japanese women are given a gift coupon of a free invitation (*Mr. Partner* November 1995: 54).<sup>19</sup>

Marriage between a Japanese woman and a Western man is presented not as an ordinary ‘marriage’ but marriage with a ‘brand’ name (*Shūkan Hōseki* 2 April 1992: 194) where the fantasy of romance as well as of equality in marital life can flourish. Western males are not only imagined as ‘sophisticated’ and ‘elite’, but also caring, and understanding women’s needs (Aoki 1996). The commentary by a feminist lawyer, Fukushima Mizuho, on this issue quoted in a weekly magazine reinforces such images: ‘They [the white men] treat partners as women, not as “housewives”, which Japanese men do’ (*Shūkan Gendai* 2 February 1996: 182). ‘White’ Westerners project a standard of ‘progress [and] beauty’ (Creighton 1997), but progress here is defined as the willingness to satisfy female needs. The ‘loser’ image of Western men who marry Asian women in the West (Aoki 1996), which is similar to the representation of Japanese men who marry ‘Asian’ women in Japan, is in stark contrast with Western men’s image in the Japanese marriage market.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Japanese women in the Western marriage market have been portrayed as possessing the traits of obedience and faithfulness (Godwin, cited in Mullan 1984: 104). However, these traits contradict their image of themselves as ‘intelligent’, ‘individual’, ‘mature’ and ‘of overseas oriented’, as promoted in the international market in Japan (see for example adverts in *Mr. Partner* November 1996: 154; *Hiragana Times* August 1996: 120). Yet, such characteristics do not necessarily lead to any idea of taking responsibility for productive labour after marriage. Marriage is fundamentally shaped by the rhetoric of romance where women can expect a ‘Love Letter from England’ (London International Club advert in *Mr. Partner* November 1996: 76-77) and a ‘romantic life in a charming foreign land’ (Aoki advert in *Hiragana Times* June 1995: 72). These descriptions are implicitly tied to the fairy tale image of happy marriage with romantic love anticipated between a couple. What is sold is therefore the

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19 In the parties where both are Japanese, fees are higher for male participants with the notable exception of such people as male doctors (*Mr. Partner* November, 1995: 54) indicating their sales value in the marriage market.

20 Aoki, an agent, acknowledged at the interview that his female customers do not realise ‘why these men have to come to a place like us’ (1996)

life of a 'comfortable upper class housewife' (Aoki 1996) which is 'given' by an 'elite white' man who loves 'you'. In this rhetoric, marriage with Westerners is portrayed to offer Japanese women an escape from conventional Japanese married life, as well as from dead-end careers in Japan. Such imaginings echo those of the 'Asian' wives of Japanese men whom I interviewed (See Chapter 6).

Another interpretation of this construction of international marriage lies in the agents' descriptions of their female Japanese clients. The descriptions indicate that the women have certain disadvantages in the domestic marriage market. Their age, overseas experience, and expectations of marriage and married life make these women marginal in the domestic market. 'Some Japanese men tend to withdraw if a woman mentions her overseas experience' (Aoki 1996). The international marriage business offers these women the opportunity and the fantasy of marriage, which is similar to what is offered to Western men in catalogues of 'mail order Asian brides'. This fantasy can also be imagined by those who are more marginalised in the domestic marriage market. In a letter to the magazine *Mr. Partner* (November 1995: 18-19) a female reader wrote that the reason she avoided Japanese men and preferred corresponding with a Western man through marriage catalogues, was because she used to get bullied at school and other places due to her appearance. She described herself as overweight with listening and speaking disabilities. She wrote that she might be different from the general 'super woman' image of those who marry Westerners, but encouraged other women by saying: 'If you can speak English reasonably, don't worry about other things' (1995:19).

Wilson (1988: 122) asserts that catalogues of Asian brides allowed men a 'private fantasy and private ownership'. However, fantasy does not only belong to men, but also to the women who gaze at catalogues of Western men and pour over personal letters from them. This private fantasy of romance and marriage is open to those women and men who are disadvantaged in the domestic marriage market. A woman may privately dream of 'being owned' (by a man) rather than owning them as the women's collective fantasy has been constructed under the influence of male desire. At the same time, this passive form of fantasy draws some women to take steps toward realising the possibility of 'living overseas' and 'becoming a different self', as my informants from China, Korea and the Philippines mentioned (see Chapter 6).



#### 4.4 Conclusion

International marriage agencies operate within a web of business connections inside and outside of Japan. These links are formed opportunistically and are largely transitional. The Japanese agencies' overseas ties and their other businesses reflect the pervasiveness of the globalization process in the Asian region. They have been most active in China, South Korea, and the Philippines. Domestically, agencies utilise the existing connections of the marriage business industry, acting as suppliers of foreign brides to other affiliated agencies. They also adapt the existing introduction matchmaking system to their international business, combining it with a popular travel pattern of a group tour. The matchmaking industry offers an easy entry for anybody interested and this includes those marginalised in the labour market. Marriage agents may exercise power over their clients but their bargaining position is therefore limited in the labour market.

The practices of international marriage agencies take place in obscurity and can be exploitative to both male and female clients. A large number of complaints against the fraudulent conduct of agents by Japanese men were reported. The legal suit against the Tōshin marriage bureau by the Sri Lankan woman illustrated the extent of its exploitation of (this and other) women and the loopholes in the immigration regulations. The publicity surrounding this case nonetheless tended to reinforce the image of foreign brides as victims rather than leading to an appreciation of the women's agency.

In promoting international marriage, foreign brides are essentially constructed as non-threatening to the conventional gender hierarchy in marriage. The racial markers of the brides are toned down or exaggerated to maximise their marriageability. When agents promote Western men to Japanese women, the desirability of the men is portrayed through the images of a progressive, racially marked West, that can provide women with romance as well as equality in marriage. Marriage agencies' double standard in promoting the image of 'non-threatening' marriage to men and 'equal' marriage to women demonstrates the two faces of the same gendered construction of the marriage contract. For Japanese men, marrying foreigners and living with them in Japan

challenges the imagined racial homogeneity and associated social stability of Japan. Yet the international matchmaking business does not challenge core patterns of racial, class, and gendered hegemony in Japan, rather it operates within the existing hierarchal power relations.

## 5

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### Villages, the State and International Marriage

One of the highly important factors in the development of the international marriage business in contemporary Japan has been the involvement of rural local governments, an involvement which attracted much media attention and public interest.<sup>1</sup> While the aim of marriage agents was to expand their businesses, the purpose of rural policy makers was to prevent depopulation of their towns and villages, thereby safeguarding their political power base. The active interest of the rural public sector in marriage, to the extent of promoting international marriage, indicates the degree of their involvement in constructing the family, and shows that the private sphere cannot be understood independently of its relation to the public sphere.

This chapter delineates the extent to which marriage and fertility were assigned collective meanings in state and local government policy. It begins with an historical overview of the way women's fertility was mobilised during the colonial and military expansion of Japan. It moves to the 1970s, when marriage and fertility became concerns of rural local governments facing the trend of depopulation, and follows some rural local governments' involvement in international marriage introduction in the late 1980s. Lastly rural policy makers' rhetoric in promoting international marriage is studied in order to understand how they promoted such marriages to achieve acceptance among their residents.

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1 For the purpose of the organisation of local government, Japan is divided into 47 prefectures, that consist of one metropolis (*to*), one district (*dō*), two municipal prefectures (*fu*), and 43 regular prefectures (*ken*). Each prefecture is further divided into cities (*shi*), towns (*chō*, or *machi*), and villages (*son*, or *mura*), with Tokyo-*to* having an additional division, *ku* (or ward). Tokyo-*to* has 23 such wards whose jurisdiction is in accordance with that of cities.

## 5.1 The Politics of Fertility at the Policy Level

Marriage and fertility were a vital part of the political agenda of the state during Japan's territorial expansion, particularly from the end of the 1930s to 1945. The narratives of '*tairiku no hanayome*' (literally, brides of the continent) in the history of building colonial Manchuria make this explicit. The sending of Japanese farmers to colonial Manchuria began in 1932. The policy was to provide landless second and third sons of farming families with the ownership of farms, and build a strategic base for advancing into Russia (Furukubo 1997). Japanese women were trained and recruited through district offices, women's associations, public organizations and schools to be brides of colonial farmer settlers.<sup>2</sup>

Training schools for prospective brides, which started in 1937, claimed that women would enhance successful settlements, reproduce offspring of *yamato minzoku* (pure Japanese race), and introduce Japanese womanhood to colonial Manchuria (Kanō 1993). The Department of Overseas Affairs governed the schools with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Education (Imagawa 1990). In the 1940s, when the demand for brides increased, nationalistic propaganda on the need to maintain racial purity was simultaneously accelerated to encourage migration of the 'pure' Japanese population to new territories (Furukubo 1997: 15). Marriage and fertility were encouraged by the government and local agencies to provide human resources of both 'quality' and quantity for the foundation of its colony.<sup>3</sup>

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2 It was reported that private agents were active in recruiting and training prospective brides at the first stage of this program in the early 1930s (Imagawa 1990 86)

3 Among the studies on 'brides of the continent', some depict these women as victims who were exploited for their sexuality (Suzuki 1992), whereas others stressed the importance of acknowledging that these women were also participants of colonial settlement (Kano 1993). Based on interviews with the women, Jinno (1992) recounts motivations of the women as yearning for escape from poverty. Furukubo (1997) analysed the meaning of *akogare* (yearning), and remarked that while there was no dispute that possessing one's own land appealed to male farmers, for women one of the attractions was to have a 'modern family', based on affection between a husband and wife, and division of labour between the two, away from heavy double burdens of productive and reproductive roles and/or the role of 'daughter-in-law' in the rigorous household system of Japan at the time

Government policies regarding population changed quite dramatically in a relatively short period of time. Prior to the mid-1930s, Japan was considered to have an ‘over population’ problem. But as World War II developed, the definition of ‘the problem’ shifted to become ‘depopulation’ (Tipton 1995: 46). The National Eugenics Law (*Kokumin Yūseihō*) enacted in 1940, which was patterned after the law in Nazi Germany, was followed by the establishment in 1941 of Eugenics marriage bureaus (*Yūsei Kekkon Sōdanjo*) as enforcement agencies of the Law (Tokyo-to Kekkon Sōdanjo 1996). Abortion and contraception were strictly controlled. The Cabinet’s Outline for Establishment of a Population Policy (*Jinkō Seisaku Kakuritsu YōKō*) in 1941, announced the policy of increasing the population and launched a campaign to ‘*umeyo, fuyaseyo kuni no tame* (give birth and multiply for the country)’. The policy advocated an average of five children for married couples and encouraged early marriage, before 25 years of age for men and 22 for women. Following this policy, the Ministry of Welfare started to reward couples with more than 10 healthy children over 6 years of age (Imagawa 1990).<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, reflecting the Government policy of promoting marriage, civic marriage bureaus were established in various places (Tokyo-to Kekkon Sōdanjo 1996).

Women’s magazines were also mobilised to promote the official view of marriage (Orii & Iwai 1990). A slogan ‘*kekkon hōkoku* (serving the nation through marriage)’ encouraged youth to marry early, linking patriotism to marriage (Tokyo-to Kekkon Sōdanjo 1996: 14). In short, marriage and fertility were urged in order to maximise human resources for the wartime government.

That population control was a political device was demonstrated when, in the early post-war period, the government revised the 1940 National Eugenics Law, and enacted the Eugenics Protection Law (*Yūsei hogo hō*) in its place in 1948. The new law adopted the concept of protection for the mother’s body, as well as continuing its original notion of the eugenics protection. Subsequent revisions legalised induced abortion when there was a serious risk to the health of the mother from physical danger or economic

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4 The regulation was that these ten children must be born from the same parents, with all the family members demonstrating good character (Imagawa 1990 151)

difficulty (Coleman 1983; Iwamoto 1992).<sup>5</sup> Though the enactment of the law was the government's response to the demand for legalised abortion from obstetricians, gynaecologists and women's groups, it also reflected the need for population control in the aftermath of the war (Iwamoto 1992).

The state and local governments maintained their interest in marriage and fertility during and after the post war period whenever these affected their political base, although their rhetoric shifted from the 'national benefit' to the welfare of residents. A large number of programs to stem rural depopulation in the wake of the industrial boom of the post war years were implemented under a policy of *teiryū sokushin* (settlements promotion) with subsidies from the state. One of the most notable examples was the introduction of various schemes to promote marriage among residents in depopulated towns and villages. Depopulation in rural farming areas was caused by the large population shift from rural to urban areas due to rapid economic growth and industrial development in urban areas from the mid-1950s, as well as the introduction of labour-displacing agricultural technologies in rural regions. Many of the members of farming families such as second and third sons and daughters who had no expectation of inheriting land moved to urban areas as agricultural industrialisation reduced the demand for manual labour. This decreased the total number of farmers and proportionally increased the number of part-time farming households whose main income was from non-agricultural sources (Jussaume 1991: 41). Around the same time, the marriage difficulties of farming heirs began to be considered as a problem by rural policy makers. Rural local governments and civic groups such as agricultural cooperatives started to implement various countermeasures against rural depopulation. These included the introduction of marriage advisers, marriage bureaus, and monetary incentives for newlyweds and successful go-betweens (Imagawa 1990).

In the 1970s, the terms '*hanayome ginkō*' (brides bank) or '*hanayome sentā*' (brides centre) were widely used to describe the system established by these local organisations to deal with the '*yome busoku*' (brides shortage) or '*yome kikin*' (brides famine). In

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5 This reference to economic difficulty gave women, who previously had little access to abortion facilities other than black market operations, a considerably greater degree of access to legal abortion.

languages that clearly commodified women, as Imagawa (1990: 218) points out, it was implied that the rural problem could be solved if a sufficient number of 'single women' could be made available. In contrast to this 'bride shortage', the immediate post-war period marriage market was described as *torakku ippai no onna ni otoko hitori* (a truck-full of women for one man) in the general public (Tokyo-to Kekkon Sōdanjo 1996: 24). The latter account shares a common male reference point with the 1970s' version. The surplus ratio of females to males in the immediate post-war period was treated as a boon to the male population, rather than a 'problem' for women. In contrast, when men found it difficult to marry in the 1970s, it was perceived as a major problem which required local government intervention to resolve.

In rural areas where the population is small and the normative inheritance pattern still in the male line, the weight of one male heir's marriage is more significant to the vitality of the community as a whole than is the case in urban areas. From the late 1970s measures for assisting farming heirs shifted from gathering information on potential brides to arranging various publicly funded events to give opportunities for local male residents to meet women from other areas. Many towns and villages funded invitations to urban women for 'interchange' fairs or farm experience tours. Commercial magazines assisted in the recruitment of female participants for some of these events (Imagawa 1990: 227). In the seminars organised by Nihon Seinenkan (Japan Youth Assembly) for those involved in promoting marriage in rural districts, strategies for encouraging the courtship of youth were discussed, and their achievement was assessed by the number of marriages achieved.<sup>6</sup> Concern about the 'unsuccessful' outcomes were expressed by participants:

Heirs of dairy farmers can milk cows, but they can't touch women's breasts. We felt so impatient that we gave them advice like 'write a letter to her quickly', 'send your picture' and 'make a chance to meet' (Nihon Seineikan Kekkon Sōdanjo 1988: 59)

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<sup>6</sup> For example, a person from Fukui prefecture commented after holding an event 'We have made five couples. The question for us now is how to follow-up in order to guide these couples [to marriage]' (Nihon Seineikan Kekkon Sōdanjo 1988: 72)

One area which had achieved relative success proudly reported its well-organised cooperation among towns and villages within a prefecture:

We have a list (of unmarried people) for the whole prefecture, and as each municipality has marriage advisers, we know all about who and where these single persons are. We have achieved 32 matches over the four years since we started (Nihon Semeikan Kekkon Sōdanjo 1989: 118)

The collective paternalism expressed in these statements works to legitimate the involvement of public institutions in the marriage of its residents. Encouraging marriage was seen as a welfare issue, and respect neither for the subjectivity of young men, nor for their privacy was much in evidence. Concern for women is absent altogether. Mitsuoka (1989), speaking from the viewpoint of agricultural studies, argues that marriage for rural men was a matter of human rights, and thus should be encouraged by all means. His main concerns were about an anticipated reduction in birth rates, the degeneration of basic social services such as schools, and an ageing population (1989: 17). Referring to one town that had 13 unmarried men over 30, he stated:

These single men live with their parents at the moment. Their parents will gradually age. If they unfortunately become bed-ridden, or develop dementia, it may be necessary for their sons to drop work to look after them. Moreover when these men themselves get older, they may have to suffer with a lonely dreary life. (Mitsuoka 1989: 17)

Clearly, the normative role of a wife is to be engaged in the reproductive work of bearing children, caring for the aged, nurturing husbands, and in the productive work of farming and other income-generating activities. Instead of promoting a welfare system which serves the elderly, Mitsuoka assumes women will undertake these duties. There is no recognition of, or negotiation over 'men's advantage' (Eveline 1994: 129) in Japanese domestic arrangements. What is under threat now is not men's human rights, but men's advantage in marriage, through which they would gain the wife's productive and reproductive services.

Methods of maintaining 'men's advantage' include the practice of awarding the title of *mohan yome* (model wives) by some prefectures. An analysis of the characteristics of successful 'model wives' in one prefecture where this award was given between 1970 and 1985 revealed that awards were invariably granted to women who had nursed their parents-in-law with good will, brought children up well, and were hard working and



healthy (Kumazawa 1993). This award allowed a civic body to promote a certain type of woman, a practice which was self-serving and disregarded women's own needs and interests. The lack of a similar award for a 'model groom' reveals the normalised male gaze, while concealing 'men's advantage'.

Large numbers of local governments used state funds to establish programmes to encourage marriage and childbirth among their residents. In particular, funds which had been injected under the policies of supporting depopulated regions (*kaso taisaku*) were used for these purposes. The first document which explicitly identified *kaso* (regional depopulation) as a problem was *Keizai Shakai Hatten Keikaku* (the Plan for Economic and Social Development) in 1967 (National Land Agency 1996:1). The government enacted legislation to aid designated depopulation areas in 1970, and has since revised the designations at ten year intervals.<sup>7</sup> A sum of 25 trillion yen was provided for the scheme between 1970 and 1990. In addition, the designated towns and villages also received state subsidies at a special high rate, amounting to 60.5 million yen for the same period (National Land Agency 1996: 2-12).<sup>8</sup> With this financial support, the designated towns and villages implemented various measures to 'protect the basis for local communities and the public administrative and financial system of the municipalities, as well as preventing further depopulation' (National Land Agency 1996: 2). Although nearly half of this investment was used for the improvement of roads during the period of 1970 to 1990, funds were also used to establish marriage and birth incentive schemes within settlement promotion programs. In this way the state became influential in manipulating marriages and fertility in villages through large-scale funding and guidance.

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7 The number of designated towns and villages changed according to the census data. There were 1,119 such local bodies in 1980 (National Land Agency 1996 6).

8 In general, a poorer local government is more dependent on these state subsidies. The lack of autonomy of local government in Japan is often called '*sanwari jichi*' or '30% autonomy' because of the centralised finance and administrative system, that comes with control (*Seiji Keizai Shuryōshū* '94 1994 116-121). This promotes 'patron-client democracy' (Sasaki, cited in Eccleston 1989 131), particularly in agricultural communities, where support for certain political candidates is more or less grounded on their ability to influence the allocation of the state public investment (Eccleston 1989 131).

The need to solve the 'marriage difficulty of heirs' was advocated as a countermeasure against regional depopulation until the late 1980s, after which a more popular scheme was introduced, funding settlement programs targeting a wider range of people. In particular, schemes targeting younger people to encourage them to stay in villages became more common. These included incentives for employment within a region as well as funds to assist a return to villages and for building housing for youth. Rural public sector involvement in international marriage introduction occurred in a period when 'getting brides' was given priority. Although villages justified their engagement in international marriage as 'unavoidable' or as 'the last resort' (in a document of a village in Nīgata 1988), their involvement was merely the result of a transitory population policy.<sup>9</sup> The shift in these schemes in regional areas reflected a change in government policy (National Land Agency 1992: 103-109). A surge of measures in response to the 'marriage difficulty for heirs' was one phase of rural administrative policy against depopulation, which was also influenced heavily by central government policy guidelines.

## 5.2 International Marriage in Rural Politics

Public sector involvement in international marriage arrangements began in 1985 in Asahi village in Yamagata prefecture. Interestingly, the statistics for Yamagata prefecture show a high marriage rate. The rate of married population in Yamagata has been higher than the national average throughout the period of 1970 to 1990. The prefecture had the highest rate of married females in Japan in 1990, and among men the third highest. At the same time, the male married population in the 30 to 44 age cohort in Yamagata had been declining over the years and more rapidly than that of women. For example, 91.9 percent of the men in the 30 to 34 age bracket were married in 1970,

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9 Two rural local government officials I interviewed agreed that their villages' involvement in international marriage was transitory (personal interviews with Director of Agricultural Committee, Mogami Village November 1995, the former Section Head of Area Promotion, Mogami Region October 1995)

but the figure declined to 67.4 per cent in 1990. The percentage of married men between the ages of 35 and 39 dropped from 96.3 per cent to 79.5 per cent over the same period of time. In comparison, the figures among women in the same age cohorts showed a gradual decline between 1970 and 1990 from 92.7 per cent to 87.7 per cent in 30 to 34 age cohort and 92.3 per cent to 90.7 per cent in the 35 to 39 age cohort (Yamagata-ken Kikaku Chōsei-bu Seishōnen Josei-ka 1994: 13). Although the declining trend and its gender difference in the proportion of married population in Yamagata prefecture is in accordance with the decrease in the national figure, marriage difficulty for males in this region ‘appears’ more severe because of its very high percentage of married population in the 1970s.

Asahi village, which inaugurated the international marriage scheme, was one of those designated as a depopulated area in 1970, and received subsidies from the state accordingly. Before the introduction of international marriage, its long-standing conservative mayor committed himself to a policy of mitigating the marriage difficulties of farming heirs, treating this as one of the most important items on the political agenda. He implemented a ‘One person Matchmaking One couple’ scheme, and established a Tokyo branch office for this purpose in the early 1980s (Imagawa 1990: 246). The branch in Tokyo connected the village to one private marriage agency, and eventually led the village to an international marriage scheme. In the mid and late 1980s, Asahi village’s interest in overseas brides attracted much attention from the media. Its policy was soon taken up by other towns and villages affected by depopulation in such prefectures as Nīgata, Akita, Fukushima and Tokushima. A sense of growing crisis and of having run out of effective measures to increase the number of resident marriages was widely shared among concerned policy makers at the time (Nīgata Nippōsha Gakugeibu 1989). Competition among villages to find a satisfactory solution to this matter intensified the sense of urgency (personal interviews with Section Head of Planning and Coordination, Tozawa Village October 1995; the former Section Head of Agricultural Committee, Ōkura Village October 1996).

Though Asahi village at first denied it, they in fact collaborated with a private marriage agency introducing Filipino women (Shukuya 1988:44-45). Other villages that

followed Asahi were also dependent on the resources and connections of marriage agencies, or on individuals involved in overseas trading.<sup>10</sup> Typically, recruitment of male candidates for international marriage was performed by public bodies such as the industry promotion and public relations sections of a village public office, educational committees, and agricultural cooperatives. Private agents or individuals acting as agents carried out the rest of the process including assistance in obtaining visas for foreign brides. Introduction tours were arranged, as described in the previous chapter. Official members, in some cases mayors, accompanied such tours, which were generally subsidised by public funds (Nihon Seinenkan Kekkon Sōdanjo 1993: 92).

Some villages concluded pacts with towns in the Philippines, whereas others made sister-city agreements. There were also semi-public or volunteer-based associations newly established for the purpose of organising international introductions (Shukuya 1988: 73-79) and existing groups with cultural exchange purposes also became involved. Although the intention of the newly formed associations was to avoid criticism of the direct involvement of local government in the matter, in reality village officials occupied important positions in the associations. In some cases a village chief acted as the head of an association.<sup>11</sup> Villages which participated in international marriage introductions claimed to have carried out thorough research into their overseas counterparts prior to their engagement. However, their claims were questionable as their mediators appeared to have played a leading role in arranging the scheme as well as establishing the overseas connections. In Ōkura village in Yamagata, for example, Filipino women entered Japan on a tourist visa after a marriage ceremony in the Philippines, a practice contrary to immigration policy. As a person in charge of the

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10 For instance, some resident Japanese businessmen in the Philippines have been introducing brides to several villages as sidelines (personal interview with the former Section Head of Area Promotion, Mogami Region October 1995) Thus their role is no different from that of private marriage agencies

11 One such association in Akita prefecture stated in its regulations that its aim was to discourage people from leaving farms and contribute to maintaining Akita as a farming prefecture (Newsletter, *Firipin Hanayome o Kangaeru Akita no Onnatachi no Kai* 1988 10) This indicates that newlyweds were expected to remain in the same occupation and the same region

project later admitted, the village did not know the circumstances very well (Shukuya 1988: 61-62), and this suggests a heavy reliance on intermediaries.<sup>12</sup>

One town explicitly used their state subsidies to promote international marriage among its residents. The Ministry of Home Affairs put in practice the so called *furusato sōsei ichuoku-en jigyo* (reviving home town one hundred million yen fund project) in 1988. Under this scheme, all cities, towns and villages received one hundred million yen as their local tax allocation, and were able to decide its use (Hisamoto 1991: 13-25). One town in Tochigi prefecture took advantage of the fund to promote marriages between resident farming heirs and Brazilian-Japanese women (Kosuga 1989).<sup>13</sup>

The move from domestic to international ‘solutions’ enhanced expressions of local political power. The highly political aspect of the local government sectors’ involvement in international marriage put pressure on local officials to succeed, which in turn strengthened their control over projects. Initiatives by local officials involved all stages of the process. It was common for official members to visit households with a single male to invite them to become involved in the international marriage project (for example, Nīgata Nipposha Gakugeibu 1989: 78-79). There was also a report that a male participant was persuaded by his company manager because the manager supported a village chief’s election promise of introducing Filipino brides (Nishizawa 1988a: 9).<sup>14</sup> Some officials were reported to have considerable influence on men’s marriage decisions (Imagawa 1990: 12).

Furthermore, pressure on officials for the success of the project intensified their interests in the private lives of the newly married couples. Their focus was particularly

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12 The background knowledge of intermediaries was often rudimentary. For instance, one mountainous village in Yamagata has a pact with a fishing based town in Cavite, the Philippines. This was because their intermediary, a resident Japanese business man, thought that the village in Japan was also a fishing-based region as its name is the same as a type of fish (personal interview with Section Head of Agricultural Committee, Sakekawa Village October 1995).

13 Examples of the range of uses to which this fund was put include human resources development, holding events and developing products (Furukawa 1992 14-15).

14 This report is from Nishizawa’s articles, ‘*Tokushū: Mura no otoko no kokusai kekkon* (Feature Article Village Men’s International Marriage)’ which appeared in *Yamagata Shimbun* between September 27 to 30, 1988

directed at fertility. The intensity of this local voyeurism was such that a Head of the Japan Youth Association Marriage Bureau received a telephone call from the person in charge of the Asahi village's international marriage scheme to inform her that a couple had 'finally copulated' three days after they started living together (reported at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Adult Education Promotion Assembly in Mogami, 27 October 1995). Similar expectations of reports to officials on 'matters of sex' were revealed elsewhere: 'I was able to marry my wife thanks to the village office. So, I had to report (about sexual life) to them, if they asked' (Nishizawa 1988b: 10). Such open scrutiny by the officials is not common for Japanese couples or those who had not used the town's matchmaking scheme. I also encountered a similar situation during my fieldwork. When I went to a coffee shop with a Filipino woman who married through the local government's marriage scheme, the village chief's wife happened to be in the shop. On her way out, the wife said to my informant, 'How about having one more child? Have a son next time. You should have the first son.' Even though the Filipino woman humorously replied: 'I can't make a baby by myself. Tell that to my husband' (Comrie 1995), the blunt comment by the village chief's wife underlined the history of the village's involvement in the politics of fertility.

While, on the one hand, rural policy makers justified their participation in international marriage arrangements as a necessity, on the other hand they generally avoided certain issues and responsibilities by claiming that 'family' was an arena of non-intervention. Post-migration supports were often neglected and justified as 'private matters', including providing basic information to brides on residential status. As the fundamental aim of introducing international marriage for rural towns and villages was to prevent further population decline, the whole project mirrored desires for rural power, which was, as Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989: 6) said of the state, 'essentially male in its capacities and needs'. In the case of rural Japan, male power was more precisely that of patriarchs – male elders. Hesitation among young males to participate in the international marriage scheme and some alleged confrontation between authorities and male participants in the scheme reveal the operation of male elders' power in rural politics. The project of international marriage was at base an attempt by

rural authorities to revitalise their undermined power base through collaboration with the private business sector and overseas counterparts.

Some villages and associations utilised a trainee system for acquiring potential brides, inviting young women from the Philippines, Brazil and China to stay for an extended period. Although the system was once advocated as an alternative to the more controversial 'instant' marriage arrangements, offering 'more time to choose partners' (*Asahi Shimbun* 11 June 1988), the use of a trainee system posed other problems.

Some villages used traineeships in cooperation with a local factory; others used it on the basis of cultural exchange. A town in Yamagata invited five Filipino women under the trainee system in 1988 in cooperation with a gourmet factory in the town which was planning an offshore move to the Philippines. The intermediary on the Philippines' side was the same Japanese person arranging marriages for other villages and individuals. For both the Japanese and the Filipinos, 'training' was a misrepresentation from the beginning. Two female participants said:

I worked next to this Philippines Japan Introductory Services. Once they introduced me to a Japanese man, but my mum was not happy with the guy. [When the talk of training came], I said I wanted to go, I wanted to go. If it's training, it's easy to get a visa. It was the easiest visa to get. [This scheme] was for international amity, because there is a shortage of [young] women here [in Yamagata]. (Melly 1996)

You have to admit that we faked. Once you admitted it, it is easy. We didn't really come here for sewing. (One) should take a chance. Some people didn't like the arrangements. Others were afraid of going to Japan. But I wasn't. Because the guy who was organising this was my neighbour. (Rose 1995)

These two women received 40,000 yen per month from the company for living expenses and the same amount from the village (Rose 1996).<sup>15</sup> The village paid 220,000 yen per person to the mediator, rented an apartment for the 'trainees' and planned to offer a three million yen subsidy per household for refurbishing a house (such as attaching a shower facility if a marriage were to take place), but the scheme was discontinued after the first year because of the 'inefficiency of the expenditure' (Nihon Seinenkan Kekkon Sōdanjo 1989: 87). The scheme also failed to attract wider

<sup>15</sup> Rose felt 'very rich' during this time as 10,000 yen a month was enough for living expenses in Japan, besides which she was on paid leave from her job in the Philippines (Rose 1996)

interest from the potential male residents (Nihon Seinenkan Kekkon Sōdanjo 1989·87).<sup>16</sup>

In Fukushima prefecture, an organisation was established in 1988 mainly by municipalities and officials of agricultural cooperatives, ostensibly in order to promote exchanges between farmers from Japan and Brazil (Fukushima-ken Nōgyo Kōkeisha Kokusai Kōryū Suishin Kyōgikai 1994a).<sup>17</sup> The project aimed to provide nine Japanese-Brazilians per year, with three to six months agricultural training while staying with farming families. All the trainees were women, and while the program was supposed to be an exchange of agricultural techniques, one of the pieces of advice from the organiser to the receiving families stated that ‘as the trainees do not have real agricultural experience, they should be assigned mainly light easy tasks’ (Fukushima-ken Nōgyo Kōkeisha Kokusai Kōryū Suishin Kyōgikai 1994a: 4). Another organization in Iwate prefecture, formed in 1980 for the purpose of an exchange with Shanxi province in China, started to invite mainly female trainees to villages in 1994. A document addressed to municipalities by the organization (dated 11 Sep. 1995) stated that female trainees were all single and between 20 to 30 years of age, and estimated the cost of 300,000 yen per trainee for the 1996 scheme. The paper noted that previously the Chinese side of the exchange selected urban-oriented women in spite of the association’s preference for rural women, but now Japanese language classes had started in rural areas of Shanhsi province to attract rural women who could engage in farming after marriage. The document also noted that ‘remitting money home was unthinkable for Chinese women as “keeping one’s face” was highly regarded in China’. These statements express clearly whose needs the trainee-ships were serving.

In these examples of the use of trainee schemes to bring in foreign women, villages could justify marriages, if they happened, as the outcome of mutual love. Even if a

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16 Two women married through this village-sponsored project, though at the time of my research in 1995 one was already divorced. While these two married in Japan at the end of their ‘training’, another participant wanted to marry someone from another village so she had to return to the Philippines, and get married there (Melly 1996)

17 The project was initially a five year plan from 1989 to 1993, but was extended three more years. During the first five years, 58 Japanese-Brazilian women and 28 towns and villages in the prefecture participated (Fukushima-ken Nōgyo Kōkeisha Kokusai Kōryū Suishin Kyogikai 1994a)



marriage did not take place, as one official spelt out (*Asahi Shimbun* 11 June 1988), the programme could be claimed to be achieving 'international cultural exchange'. The scheme also benefits private companies and, to a lesser extent, farming families in supplying labourers. The trainees system was an attractive alternative 'solution' to policy makers in municipalities rather than to individual resident men. The youth's opinions were largely ignored among the public administrators and private agencies involved (Nihon Seinenkan Kekkō Sōdanjo 1988: 132). The general lack of active interest from young Japanese males in the programs (Nihon Seinenkan Kekkō Sōdanjo 1989: 87) appear to stem from the self-interested intervention of the power holders. A public administrator involved in the agricultural scheme for Japanese-Brazilians in Fukushima revealed that the prefecture's interest in the scheme started from a suggestion by first generation Japanese-Brazilians, reporting the abundance of single Japanese-Brazilian women willing to marry Japanese. However, as he discovered himself in Brazil, the young second and third generation Japanese-Brazilian women had a completely different attitude toward marriage from their parents or grand-parents generation, and had no interest in coming to Japan for the purpose of marriage introduction per se (Nihon Seinenkan Kekkō Sōdanjo 1989: 88). In both Brazil and Japan, the scheme took place without much consultation with the young people, confirming the initiative of the policy makers, whose views were often influenced by the male elders in communities.

Furthermore, the use of a training status at the municipality level was compatible with the tendency toward relaxing regulations relating to trainees at state level. As described in Chapter 3, the 1990 amendments to the Immigration Control Act and subsequent reforms relaxed conditions for inviting trainees.<sup>18</sup> Although the immigration policy in principle prohibits unskilled labour migration, a side door was opened for *Nikkeijin* or Japanese descendents mainly from South America, and trainees from neighbouring Asian countries, to perform unskilled work (Mori 1997: 132). The decision of some rural municipalities to use the trainee system for marriage programs to combat rural

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18 Misuse of trainee status to mitigate labour shortage in the unskilled labour force became evident first in the mid 1980s (Ebashi 1992: 31-33). Trainees were not covered by labour laws, and not entitled to remuneration except compensation for commuting and living expenses (Mori 1997: 124).

depopulation was in line with that of private enterprises to utilise trainees as unskilled labour; and both were made possible with the encouragement of the central government.<sup>19</sup>

Rural towns and villages promoted their international marriage policies in the context of the internationalisation of local communities. The concept of 'internationalisation' was advocated by the central government, which issued guidelines for municipalities on international exchange in 1987 (Nagasawa 1987), followed by projects to promote international exchanges by the Ministry of Home Affairs (Ochiai 1992). The state guidelines recognised the need to revitalise the regions, and to invigorate regional industry and economy through establishing and promoting 'regional identity' to the international community (Nagasawa 1987: 27). Although these projects have gradually come to include services for foreign residents (Furukawa 1992), the initial and fundamental aim was to promote international exchange as a means of reviving regions. The rhetoric of internationalisation was therefore readily available in the state's policy as a rationale for local government's involvement in international marriage. The rural farming heir or depopulation issue was transformed into an internationalisation issue in accordance with the current trend in state policy. However, while internationalisation policies of the national Ministry initially focussed upon Western countries,<sup>20</sup> for the rural municipalities internationalisation was directed towards neighbouring Asians and Japanese descendants overseas.

Official discourse typically presented internationalisation as a response to the times, and opposition to it as somehow behind the times. The public information bulletin of

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19 It must be noted that when trainees are invited by the central government or a local government, fewer conditions are applied (Japan Immigration Association 1991 100-107) Since 1992, Agricultural Cooperative Associations were included in organizations authorised to invite trainees (Mori 1997: 120)

20 For example, referring to the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, Nagasawa (1987:32), of the Ministry of Home Affairs, stated that 'foreigners are interested in something like the origin of Oriental culture'. His 'foreigners' are clearly from the Occident. The JET Programme was started by the Ministry of Home Affairs in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education from 1986 Its aim is to invite foreign youths for the purpose of language study and cultural exchange The program initially was prepared for youths from America, England, Australia and New Zealand (Nagasawa 1987)

one village in Yamagata featured their implementation of international marriage in 1986 as taking 'a lead toward the coming internationalised society'. The editorial asserted that international marriage was 'an unavoidable issue in the coming international society', and the role of municipalities was 'to promote it positively': 'Our community will be vitalised with new breath. At the same time, it is confirmed to be an effective answer for the marriage issue of heirs' (*Kōhō Ōkura* October 1986: 2-4). Other municipalities also frequently used the terms 'internationalisation' and 'international exchange' in their public bulletins and other documents. These 'authorised' terms were beneficial to local policy makers to justify village involvement in introducing foreign brides, making the matter virtually indisputable. In addition, public sector involvement was presented to offer 'care' and 'security' compared with private marriage agencies arrangements (see for example, *Kōhō Uragawara* June 1987: 9; *Nihon Seinenkan Kekkon Sōdanjo* 1988: 11; Kobayashi 1994: 107).

The application of the discourse of internationalisation to the promotion of international marriage becomes paradoxical in light of another prevalent rhetoric, which portrays brides from Asian countries as resembling Japanese women and hence as being assimilable. Comments by some officials and those appearing in public bulletins included:

Our neighbour Korean is the same race as Japanese, and they can understand us without explanation as we share cultures. They can use chopsticks, eat *sashimi* (raw fish), and do *seiza* (sitting with legs folded) (*Kōhō Uragawara* June 1987: 7)

Filipinos have excellent adaptability as a result of their great tactics against the colonisers over a period of 300 years of colonial experience (Sugai 1987: 54)

All villagers will continue to extend a cordial arm [for Filipino brides] to become a good village resident and wife of a Japanese (*Nihon Seinenkan Kekkon Sōdanjo* 1988: 11)

They [Korean-Chinese] have resistance to cold weather and are patient. They eat rice, respect seniors and parents, and have no religious conflicts with us. After the colonial experiences, they now drink *miso* soup. They have Confucian ideas and good manners, and care for parents-in-law more than [they care for] a husband. Exactly the same as Japanese [women] before. (Kobayashi, Seminar speech, 16 August 1994)

While the towns and villages' move to international marriage was projected as a part of the internationalisation of rural villages, it was necessary to portray foreign brides as culturally similar in order to promote them as desirable marriage partners. The colonial experiences of Filipinos were valued for being instrumental in developing their

adaptability, while those of the Koreans at the hands of the Japanese were diminished to merely stressing 'no difference'. The expectation of assimilation to rural Japanese norms is also evidenced by the practice of giving a Japanese name to Korean and Chinese brides in some villages. A 'bride from "Asia"' was constructed as 'a Japanese woman of the past', and thus imagined to subscribe to patriarchal norms, particularly a respect for the elderly and the village community. Behind the rhetoric promoting the international marriage scheme was the rural dominant parties' desire to re-establish their powerful position in their communities and local politics which had been waning with the population shift to the cities.

Despite Nitta's (1998) suggestion that the phenomenon was a reflection of 'the greater Japanese acceptance of intercultural marriage' (1988: 206), in reality the project needed to presuppose foreign women's assimilation in order to attain certain approval from power holders in rural households.<sup>21</sup> Specified gender and race were essential to assume the smooth assimilation of foreigners into 'internationalising' rural Japan. Furthermore official rhetoric portrayed these women as having a middle-class background:

[During our research in the Philippines, we found that] women from the middle-class or above had a high educational qualification and a job, and were working diligently despite the high unemployment in the country. However these women from the middle-class or above have faced intensified marriage difficulty due to the long term overseas employment of males, they say as many as two million, in such countries as Saudi Arabia, which created a scarcity of males from affluent families, coupled with the general tendency of overwhelmingly high proportion of females in the ratio of male to female in the country (Sugai 1987: 54).

The emphasis on a middle-class background suggests that the motivation of Filipino women is not money-related, and the lack of marriage opportunities implies mutual benefit to these women. The statement completely ignores the massive international

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21 One may still question how strong believers of homogeneity like the Japanese can accept foreign blood even though assimilation was presupposed. One explanation is that Japanese households are rather a management unit where survival or enhancement of a household takes precedence over blood relations and condones adopting non-kin when necessary (see Kawaguchi 1987: 348-350, Ueno 1994: 85, 94). This tendency may have worked to help to accept the assimilation of 'outsiders' into a household in order to survive. The acceptance of international marriage in rural areas may thus suggest that the ideology of homogeneity is bent to practical considerations. It must however be noted that some resentment against international marriage by introduction was generated in the communities that experienced international marriage. I heard such negative comments a number of times during my fieldwork. For example, one middle-aged Japanese woman in a rural area commented that she would dislike having an 'Asian woman' as a member of her family.

migration of female Filipino labour. Local municipalities' concerns were also reflected in the criteria for women candidates proposed by some municipalities, which stressed that women not send remittances home, and also that they should have no previous exposure to Japanese language – as a way of ensuring that they had no past experience as 'entertainers' in Japan (Shukuya 1998:51-56).

Evidence suggests that these criteria were not strictly imposed on brides, but were directed towards domestic audiences in villages. The consequence of these promotional distortions was that the receiving families of foreign brides were unprepared for likely cultural differences and language barriers. These official lines also placed the families in a difficult position to discuss certain matters openly. For instance, open discussion of foreign women's need for remittance became taboo, as brides were not supposed to have such needs despite the promotion of Asian family values which would make remittance a logical responsibility for these women. When I asked a public servant who initiated an international marriage project in 1986 about the fact that some Filipino women left the village after 10 years, he commented:

We should have considered their *honno* (a true intention) more. For example, remittance, an expectation to lead an affluent life in Japan, and other things. There was such an atmosphere that to express *honno* was somehow bad (personal interview with the former Director of Agricultural Committee, Ōkura Village October 1996)

The rhetoric on international marriage and foreign brides presented by villages caused problems for the participants - brides, grooms and their cohabiting Japanese families. Yet, the evidently contradictory ideas of internationalising rural communities and making foreign women as assimilable and adaptable as possible was presented as if unproblematic in the interests of revitalising villages and rural political power.

### **5.3 From 'Japanising' to 'Promoting Differences' in the Policy of Internationalisation: A Case of the Mogami Region**

In most villages that promoted international marriage, assimilation of foreign brides into Japanese society was taken for granted – at least in the beginning. Village policy makers apparently did not perceive a foreign bride as a migrant, and so at first were not

prepared for the need to have support schemes for migrant women. Lack of adequate Japanese language courses, information booklets in various languages, or interpreter services were widely reported (Nihon Seinenkan Kekkon Sōdanjo 1991; 1992; Kokusai Nihongo Fukyū Kyōkai 1995). When some villages eventually did set up Japanese language classes, reading and writing skills were not included in the curriculum. This indicates the negligence of officials toward the needs of migrant women. Certainly they were not likely to want to encourage the independence and empowerment that these skills might enable. A lack of awareness among officials of issues surrounding the residential status of foreign brides and the nationality of their children adversely affected some women's choices (see Chapter 8 for a fuller discussion on the issue of residential status). This lack of understanding was still apparent among some officials who were in charge of the support programs in 1995 and 1996 when I interviewed them: some did not know the differences between naturalisation and permanent residency, or misunderstood the procedures for obtaining either status. Nonetheless the availability of support programs has gradually increased with the help of volunteer groups in some regions.

An analysis of the support programmes offered by the Mogami region in Yamagata as the region actively implemented such schemes shows how internationalisation policy was adapted at a regional level. Since about 1990, this region has 'led the way' (interview with the officer in charge in the region, Ōtomo 1995) in implementing various support programs and services including Japanese language classes, interpreter assistance for medical check-ups, multi-language information booklets, and church services for Catholics. The International Exchange Centre in this region, which was established in 1989, was the main public body responsible for these schemes in conjunction with the municipalities and public health centres of the region. The Centre belongs to the Administrative Association of the region which was itself started in 1970 in order to coordinate effective regional administration covering eight municipalities with a combined population of about 101,000. The region had four municipalities directly involved in the promotion of international marriage in the late 1980s, and by 1995 it had over 170 foreign brides, though the majority of these came through introduction by private agents, outside the government scheme.

The early work of the International Exchange Centre had been to establish overseas connections through a sister-city affiliation, donating such goods as sewing machines to these affiliated cities. The Centre also maintained a connection with a liaison officer in the Philippines who assisted in setting up marriage-meetings. The Centre then shifted its target to the implementation of post-migration programmes, concurrently holding symposiums on the matter. The central theme in these programs was internationalisation. In 1994, the Centre received the Chief Secretary's Prize from the National Land Agency for activating the region by international exchange through settlement programmes for foreign wives. As various documents by the Centre proudly show, the prize from the central government has ensured the uniqueness and importance of their post migration programs for foreign brides in the region, and boosted confidence among the policy makers. The state's 'sanction' of the region's 'international' move towards international marriage arrangements to facilitate the revival of the district obscures the controversy over the involvement of public bodies in international matchmaking and their connections with agents. The Centre continues to maintain a liaison officer whose duties resemble those of a marriage agent in the Philippines (personal interview with Director of the Education Committee, Tozawa Village November 1995), and one village in the region has been continuing marriage introductions through this officer (personal interview with Section Head of Agricultural Committee, Sakekawa Village October 1995).<sup>22</sup>

The Centre's internationalisation policy has two effects on its representation of foreign women and their families. First, in its various documents and seminars, the Centre uses the term 'international' extensively: '*kokusai kazoku*' (international family), '*kokusai-ji*'

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22 The 1994 budget of the Centre allocated the amount of 340,000 yen (about A\$ 4,500) to the office in the Philippines. A Japanese business man, long-term resident in the Philippines, acted as the Centre's liaison officer. In a project guideline of the Centre, one village states vaguely that its marriage consultancy project for heirs aimed to provide a grass-roots exchange through a sister-city visit, and an exchange with local youth in the Philippines for those who were interested

(international children)<sup>23</sup>, and *'kyōshitsu no kokusaika'* (internationalisation of the classroom). These terms have the effect of homogenizing cultural differences among foreign wives and their children, and blend their differences with the positive discourse of internationalisation. In other words, these expressions mask cultural conflicts and uneven power relations. Second, the more the region promotes internationalisation, the more these women are confined to a narrow identity by the representational practices of the village.

Where it became convenient, the discourse of internationalisation fixes those differences around acceptable stereotypes. For example, Korean women are identified with *kimchi* (Korean pickles).<sup>24</sup> One of the villages in the region has promoted *kimchi* made by Korean women and local women of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry as a village speciality. The product has been publicised through sending it to exhibitions such as the 'All Japan Village Renaissance Exhibition' (*Nippon Zenkoku Mura Okoshi Ten*) in 1992; holding 'Kimchi forums' and making mail order catalogues. This project received considerable media coverage, where it was reported as 'Village resuscitation by *kimchi*' (*Tōyō Keizai Nippō* 11 February 1994), 'grass-roots intercultural exchange' (Tomura 1992) and *kimchi* 'a medium for internationalisation' (*World Plaza* no. 33 1994). Even though some of the Korean women had never made *kimchi* in Korea, the village publicised the authenticity of the product 'taught' by the Korean brides, and stressed that the project had popular support among the residents.

Examining the positioning of 'Asians' in Australia's official discourse of multiculturalism, Ang (1996: 37) stated that 'racially and ethnically marked people are no longer 'othered' today through simple mechanisms of rejection and exclusion, but through an ambivalent and apparently contradictory process of *inclusion by virtue of othering*' (emphasis original). In contemporary rural Japan, the official discourse of 'internationalisation' has a similar effect of including foreign brides '*because of*' (1996: 44, emphasis original) their differences. While multiculturalism at the policy level

23 Ueki, an academic mentioned the internationalisation seminar in Mogami region that the word 'international children' was coined by him (4 December 1994)

24 Pronounced as *kimuchi* in Japanese



celebrates diversity within a given society, internationalisation in this context applauds differences which attribute to a village a 'regional identity' in comparison with other villages. One Korean woman articulated the superficiality of 'internationalisation' rhetoric:

For us who are living here, those events which one can see from outside, like international symposiums or international panel discussions, can only be 'a show off' to others. Without thinking about our real concerns, it's just for them to say that they 'achieved' an international symposium this year. Instead of these self-satisfied things, it would be better if they could have some facilities where we could go and consult when we have problems at home. (Soo-Mi 1995)

'Internationalisation' for rural villages is a means of promoting themselves among competitors for state funds. Mogami region in Yamagata developed various support programs for foreign wives. The implementation of such schemes was prompt and relatively diverse compared to other municipalities which continued to offer very limited assistance to foreign wives in their towns. While the importance of post-migration programs in the region should not be underestimated, the discourse of rural internationalism nevertheless confines foreign women within the very stereotypical racial and gendered identity of 'Asian brides' of rural Japan.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

Marriage and fertility influence demographic change, and population trajectories in turn affect the political power base of policy makers at the state and local level. The Japanese government was explicitly concerned with its subjects' marriage and fertility during its colonial and militaristic expansion in the Asian region. The slogan 'give birth and multiply' encapsulates the nation's need for human resources and the expected role of women. After the war, policy makers maintained their interest in women's fertility. When depopulation of some rural areas became problematic, 'marriage enhancement' for (male) heirs in their municipalities became an important political issue. Various measures to counter the 'bride famine' were implemented using state subsidies, and the officials in rural towns vied with each other in finding solutions. Their concerns met the interests of private marriage agencies who were keenly

promoting international marriage. The involvement of the rural public sector in international marriage arrangements was made possible through their collaboration with private marriage agencies or brokers. The nature of the scheme and the extent of the officials' involvement reflected the interests of rural power holders: policy makers and male elders. The scheme echoed the wartime slogan, but this time for the sake of home villages.

Internationalisation of rural communities became a new slogan and justification for promoting the international marriage scheme: international marriage promised revitalisation of rural regions. In the discourse of rural internationalisation, women were presented as assimilable, their cultural similarities with Japanese and middle-class background stressed. The example of post-migration support programs in the Mogami region revealed the instrumental aspect of internationalisation discourse. Foreign women's cultural differences were either ignored, or accepted because these differences could be 'authorised' and promoted, in effect giving a 'regional identity' to the area.

Direct public sector involvement in international marriage was concentrated in the late 1980s. Most of the towns and villages initially involved have since officially stepped back from their engagement, partly due to, as one official said, 'unexpected problems' of international marriages (personal interview with the former Section Head of Agricultural Committee, Ōkura Village 1995). This official said, 'These women married for various reasons and so did the Japanese side. But what each side wanted was very different. It spread around that [arranging international marriage] was not that easy. Then, this halted suddenly' (personal interview with the former Section Head of Agricultural Committee, Ōkura Village 1995).

International marriage did not 'solve' the depopulation problem of towns and villages as the marriage schemes were halted before sufficient numbers of women arrived to reverse the depopulation trend. The schemes failed partly because it did not win the wider approval of rural youth, and partly because foreign women came with 'differences', and neither expected nor were willing to become substitutes for Japanese

women. Nor were they willing to conform themselves to the narrow cultural identity that village policy makers wanted to impose.<sup>25</sup>

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25 In the mid 1990s, a more subtle alliance of local public administrators and private agents emerged using indirect approaches, such as inviting private agents to seminars by town or village marriage counsellors (Hamada 1995, Okano 1995).

## PART II

When my mother visited me here, she felt sorry that I lived in such a countryside. She asked me to come home. Well, I said to her, 'I may not look happy now, but just wait. I will make it happen' (Sok-Chun 1995)

This section examines the women's experience of the marriage introductions, their decision to marry, the process of establishing married life and as residents in a foreign country. The chapters in this section argue that: the motivations and outcomes for the marriage migrants are much more complex than the accounts previously given of them; and that, for these women, the international marriage business is about marriage *and* migration. Focusing on conflicts (Vasta 1991) that the women faced and their multiple adaptive strategies (Chai 1992), the chapters in Part II demonstrate why these women are best described as active female marriage migrants (see Kofman 1999: 286). The dominant dichotomised account of these women as 'money-motivated disguised labourers' or 'mail order bride' victims, is challenged in this section. The women's narratives illustrate the incommensurability of setting up theories of agency and those of oppression as polar oppositions. Following Ortner's proposal (1996) to incorporate mutual determination of structure and agency, the chapters seek to identify the marriage migrants' aspirations and struggles as the agency of the oppressed, and to trace the ways in which they conform to and/or transform dominant social practices that are imposed on them. Further, the section demonstrates heterogeneities among the women, for instance, in social backgrounds, coping strategies, or their decisions on residential status.

Chapter 6 deals with the women's social background, their reasons for marriage introduction, and initial migration experiences. The chapter asserts the significance of the intersection of marriage *and* migration that appealed to the women participants. Chapter 7 looks at constraints that my informants felt and struggles with which they engaged at the sites of marriage, family, and paid work. Chapter 8 focuses on the complexity of power relations in marriage and migrants' relationships with marriage agents, local governments, and non-government organisations. The chapter also covers the women's relations with the State in terms of residential status and examines how the

State regulates foreign wives of Japanese, and the effects of this regulation on them. The chapters in this section contribute to ‘a gendered understanding of the social process of migration’ (Pedraza 1991: 305) in relation to migration through international introduction marriage that involves the lives of women from other Asian countries in Japan.

The information in this section is largely drawn from the interviews with the female participants in international marriage introduction and participant observation on various occasions such as women’s gatherings and Japanese language classes (see Table 1 in Appendix II for the biographical profiles of each interviewee). Table 6-1 shows the breakdown by ethnic background and length of residence of the women interviewed. It indicates that 26 women had lived in Japan for more than five years. At the time of the interview, 35 women lived in Yamagata prefecture and ten in or near Tokyo metropolitan area (see Table 6-2).

**TABLE 6- 1 Ethnicity and length of stay in Japan at the time of interview**

<i>Length</i>	<i>South Korean</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Korean-Chinese</i>	<i>Filipino</i>	<b>Total</b>	
					Frequency	Percentage
1 year or less	-	2	2	-	4	8.9
2 to 4 years	4	7	1	3	15	33.3
5 to 7 years	12			6	18	40.0
8 years or more	2			6	8	17.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**TABLE 6- 2 Ethnicity and place of residence in Japan at the time of interview**

<i>Place of residence</i>	<i>South Korean</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Korean-Chinese</i>	<i>Filipino</i>	<b>Total</b>	
					Frequency	Percentage
Regional village/town	12	5	3	9	29	64.5
Regional city	3	1	-	2	6	13.3
Greater Tokyo metropolitan	3	3	-	4	10	22.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 6

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### Marriage and Migration

In 1986, Vicky Kimura, a Filipino, who married a Japanese man under a village international marriage scheme, was in tears when she spoke at a seminar organised by the Japan Youth Association: 'I married a Japanese person because I wanted not only *kokoro*<sup>1</sup> (love), but also a better life' (Nihon Seinenkan Kekkō Sōdanjo 1988: 16). The media's reporting of this statement (for example *Mainichi Shimbun* 1 March 1988; *Yomiuri Shimbun* 21 February 1988) highlighted the prevailing view that 'Asian brides' married for economic reasons. While a number of women in my study also implied that economic betterment in Japan was a motivation for marriage to a Japanese, closer examination revealed several things. By no means were all the women from poverty stricken backgrounds, and the definition of economic betterment significantly differed among individuals. Gender relations had a significant influence on the decision to marry and emigrate. Moreover, it was *marriage and migration* which attracted them: the image of a 'happy' marriage in an affluent country. Marriage may have been a means to enable them to migrate to Japan, but at the same time it was an end in itself.

The decision-making process and the degree of autonomy experienced in the course of meeting a male candidate and subsequently deciding to marry differed amongst individuals. Some 'chose' their partners, while others can be described as having been 'chosen'. In either case, when they came to Japan these women's expectations of marriage were often unfulfilled, and the prospect of life with a foreign person in a foreign country led them to question constantly whether their initial decision to participate in international marriage was worthwhile.

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<sup>1</sup> *Kokoro* literally means the heart, the mind or intent

## 6.1 Social Background of the Women Participants

A brief social profile of the informants will help to deepen our understanding of why they became involved in international marriage. Table 6-3 indicates the age distribution of the subject of this study at the time of marriage upon arrival in Japan. The average age of Korean women<sup>2</sup> was highest (30.8 years old), followed by Chinese and Korean-Chinese. The youngest group was the Filipino women (24 years old). By contrast, the mean age at first marriage was 24.7 years in Korea, 22 in China and 23.3 in the Philippines.<sup>3</sup> Considering that 82 per cent of them had never married previously (see Table 6-4), the figures for the Korean and Chinese women in particular were higher than the average age of first marriage in their countries of origin

**TABLE 6-3 Age at the time of marriage with a Japanese husband<sup>a</sup>**

Age	South Korean	Chinese	Korean- Chinese	Filipino	Total	
					Frequency	Percentage
Below 20	-	-	-	3	3	6.7
20 to 24	1	1	1	6	9	20.0
25 to 29	4	3	1	5	13	28.9
30 to 34	10	5	1	1	17	37.8
35 and above	3	-	-	-	3	6.7
Total					45	100.0
Average age at marriage	30.8	30.1	26	24	28.1	

<sup>a</sup> Age at the first marriage with a Japanese person is used when married more than once.

**TABLE 6-4 Marital status at the time of meeting a prospective Japanese spouse prior to migration**

Marital Status	South Korean	Chinese	Korean- Chinese	Filipino	Total	
					Frequency	Percentage
Never married	15	8	2	12	37	82.2
Divorced/Separated	3	1	1	2	7	15.6
Widowed				1	1	2.2
Total					45	100.0

<sup>2</sup> 'Korean' in this study refers to those from South Korea unless otherwise indicated

<sup>3</sup> The figure for Korea was during the period of 1980-90 which had risen from 21.6 in 1960 (Yousefi 1997: 65). The Chinese figure was for 1996 rising from about 20 in 1971 (Riley 1997: 91) and the Philippines for 1983 (Cabigon 1988: 10).

**TABLE 6- 5 Educational background**

<i>Education</i>	<i>Korean</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Korean- Chinese</i>	<i>Filipino</i>	<b>Total</b>	
					Frequency	Percentage
Some or Completed Primary <sup>a</sup>	2			1	3	6.7
Completed Secondary <sup>a</sup>	12	2	3	8 <sup>b</sup>	25	55.6
Completed Vocational Training or College	3	2		3	8	17.8
Completed University	1	5		3 <sup>c</sup>	9	20.0
Total					45	100.0

<sup>a</sup> The age of completing schooling differs among countries.

<sup>b</sup> Two women in this category proceeded to a university but did not complete.

<sup>c</sup> One woman in this category proceeded to the postgraduate level but did not complete.

Table 6-5 summarises the educational background of the women. The majority of women (93.4%) had secondary education or above including nine women (17.8%) with university education. Table 6-6 shows the occupational backgrounds of these women. The 'Professional and clerical' category includes accountants, teachers, laboratory technicians and secretaries. Work in departments and retail shops was the most common form of employment among those engaged in sales and services industries. Those who were self-employed, most notably among South Korean women, typically owned small businesses such as clothing shops. Production and process workers include those in the textiles and food processing industries. A majority of the women who were in the 'Not employed/not in the labour force' and 'Other' categories had held a full-time job one or two years prior to their marriage. Prior to the time of migration, the majority of women resided in urban areas, in or around a capital city or a regional city such as Tianjin in China and Taegu in South Korea.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The particular regions from where these women came were influenced by the locality of the connections of Japanese marriage agents. For example, some agents who were active in Yamagata prefecture had their business partners in such places as Seoul or Tianjin.



**TABLE 6- 6 Occupation at the time of meeting a prospective Japanese spouse**

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>South Korean</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Korean-Chinese</i>	<i>Filipino</i>	<b>Total</b>	
					Frequency	Percentage
Professional/Clerical	1	8		4	13	28.9
Sales/Services	3	1	2	4	10	22.2
Self-employed	6		1		7	15.6
Production/Process Workers	2			2	4	8.9
Other <sup>a</sup>	3			2	5	11.2
Not Employed or Not in the Labour Force	3			3	6	13.3
<b>Total</b>					<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> Casual jobs such as occasional baby sitting.

A typical South Korean woman was likely to have a high school education and nearly ten years of experience in the labour force, engaged in more than one job. Textile industry-related jobs such as sewing, clothes design, and boutique ownership were characteristic. Chinese women tended to hold higher educational qualifications, and hence were likely to have held professional employment including teaching and accounting positions. This feature did not extend to the three Korean-Chinese women, who worked with family-based businesses and had less formal education. Filipino women showed the greatest diversity in their educational and occupational backgrounds – an office clerk, factory worker and university students among them.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of women commented on their standard of living in their countries of origin as ‘average’. Among those who mentioned dissatisfaction with their economic situation, the degree of hardship varied from ‘occasional shortage of food’ (Virginia 1996) to ‘not enough for going out, for example, to a night club’ (Tessie 1996). Six women mentioned growing up in impoverished households. On the other hand, eight women

5 CFO (Commission on Filipinos Overseas) reported the characteristics of 4,825 Filipinos who married Japanese and migrated to Japan in 1990. Almost all of them were females and the average age was 25 years old compared to 34 for their Japanese husbands. With regard to the level of education among Filipino women, 86.3 per cent of them were high school graduates, 26.5 per cent had some university education and 10.4 per cent completed university, compared with 48.3 per cent, 18.2 per cent and 21.8 per cent respectively among Japanese males. 93.3 per cent of Filipino women had never married before, but 31.6 per cent of Japanese men were divorced (cited in Kojima 1996: 101). Kojima (1996) suggests the possibility of manipulation in the high educational level of Japanese males. The same can be speculated about the high percentage of Filipino women in the ‘never married’ category (see Appendix 1 for the social background of Japanese husbands in my samples).

stated that they had a rather affluent upbringing. For example, Suk-Shin's family owned a successful factory and she 'was able to buy everything' she needed. She did not need to seek employment after having failed a university entrance exam (Suk-Shin 1996). Some women reported variable economic states. One felt financial difficulty when her elder brother became incurably ill (Yimei 1996), whereas some others enjoyed relative affluence once they became successful in their own careers. One's class position can be variable as Kendall (1996) suggested. Looking at weddings in contemporary Korea, Kendall (1996) stated that '(I)f styles of weddings are to be taken as indicators of "class", then class itself is a highly variable proposition amidst the changing circumstances of families' (1996: 229). The economic state of some of the informants changed over time due to such variables as a parent's death, illness of a family member, success or failure of a family businesses and one's own career. The timing of these events also determined the economic well-being of a family.

One notable feature of the study was that 38 per cent of the women had lost their fathers prior to their migration to Japan. This was particularly striking among the South Korean women, where 11 out of 18 women fell into this category. The impact of the father's death on their economic situation varied depending on the timing of the event, age of other siblings, mother's occupation and the family's accumulated wealth. For example, Yongsu described how her father's death changed her family's economic situation completely. She lost her father at the age of eleven, and had to leave school to take responsibility for household duties, including the care of two younger brothers, in place of her mother who had to take up employment. She later supported her family financially, working in a boutique as a dress maker from the age of 17 years, and continued to do so during her first marriage with a Korean man as well as after divorce (Yongsu 1996). On the other hand, Rose had an affluent childhood with a doctor father, a midwife mother and some servants whose schooling the family sponsored. A month after her graduation from university her father died and, as the eldest daughter<sup>6</sup> in the family, she became responsible for the support of her seven younger siblings. She

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<sup>6</sup> She is the third eldest among seven brothers and sisters in her family. In the Philippines, it is common that the eldest child, but often eldest daughter, financially supports other siblings until his or her marriage. In the case of the eldest daughter, such family responsibility tends to delay her marriage (Australian Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs 1982: 13, del Rosario 1994: 159-60)

described how her family 'crumbled' at her father's death, but the need was not for day to day necessities, but for younger siblings' tertiary education fees (Rose 1995).

Other women commented that their economic states were not so affected by their fathers' deaths. Despite losing her father at the age of 11 years, Sok-Chin did not suffer from extreme economic difficulties. Her mother and father both had established businesses. She did not have younger siblings and her older brother who was in his mid-20s at the time was already working. After high school, she was employed in a foreign-owned trading company, and started living on her own earnings without needing to contribute to her family (Sok-Chin 1995). Another woman, Soo-Mi had opened a boutique with her mother's financial assistance and had a successful investment in land, before losing her father when she was 26. Her family ran an up-market restaurant, and her mother mainly managed the business, while her father did some accounting (Soo-Mi 1995). Thus, the degree of economic impact of their fathers' death was felt differently. Nevertheless losing a father transformed the economic state of some women, and may have had other social impacts.<sup>7</sup>

Amongst the 45 women I interviewed, 14 women had sisters, female relatives and friends staying in Japan as students, workers, or wives of Japanese men, before or around the time of their arrival. Among these relatives and acquaintances, seven women themselves married through an agency introduction or individual go-between. One of my respondents had an aunt, a mother's sister who married a Japanese man and had been living in Japan for around 20 years, as well as four other relatives resident in Japan (Emillie 1996). The small number of informants limits my study from claiming a general trend in migration, but this is suggestive of the existence of chain migration and specifically of marriage migration in contemporary Japan.

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<sup>7</sup> Korean women with no father might be considered less desirable as a marriage partner when 'family' is an important factor. Single parent families can still be considered as deficient families in Korea (Kurihara 1995: 48), which may disadvantage children of single parents at marriage or employment. Kendall (1996) demonstrated the importance of family ties with the story of an orphan woman who described herself 'no better than chaff' because she had no family, saying 'There isn't anyone who would want a woman like me for a daughter-in-law', except her mother-in-law (1996: 128). From a different perspective, having no father might also work to loosen parental control over a daughter, giving her more freedom with respect to her marriage. I did not come across any literature to support this proposition.

## 6.2 Choosing International Marriage Introduction

Previous researchers attributed women's motives for international marriage in Japan to economic goals, such as the desire for a better life in Japan produced by images of affluent life styles (for example Nakazawa 1996; Shukuya 1988; Sugaya 1995). In the case of Koreans, the limited life opportunities for women were also highlighted (Sasagawa 1989). Most of these studies failed to analyse the women's definitions of 'a better life' or how and when individuals felt a 'lack of life opportunities'. My findings suggest that women decided to marry for multiple reasons, many of which were gender-related. There were also those who mentioned 'curiosity' as their reason for choosing international marriage. The underlying desire for an affluent life was not necessarily for its own sake, but to obtain affluence in the context of marital life. Marriage can serve as a means of upward social mobility (see for example, Thadani & Todaro 1984). However, the analytical reduction of marriage to a 'means' of upward mobility obscures other 'incentives' of imagined marriage such as family, affection and love.

Kendall (1996), while valuing Bourdieu's account of marriage strategies as "something people *make*, and with which they *do* something" for stakes that may be both material and symbolic', pointed to the limitations of his work in 'its reduction of complex human motivations and feelings to self-interested political strategies' (1996: 16, emphasis original). Marriage may result in upward social mobility but deconstructing the meaning of 'a better life' is of importance. My informants demonstrated their autonomy by taking charge of themselves in choosing international marriage. On the other hand a certain passivity which is nurtured in prevalent gender relations was evident in their description of 'being chosen' at marriage introductions and their assumption that their lives would 'be changed' by marriage or a man.

Among South Korean women, the decision to enter international marriage was most commonly made when they experienced some setbacks or uncertainty in their lives: bankruptcy, declining sales in a retail business, resignation from a full-time job, or failure to gain university entry. Breakdown in relationships with Korean boyfriends or

partners also affected their decision. Soo-Mi's engagement with a Korean man had been broken off because of his affair with someone else. At about the same time she incurred financial loss from her boutique business. She 'became sick of the world', and 'wanted to have a rest' from running the business, thinking that to have 'a stable ordinary family is the happiest', like her sister who had married a Japanese man after an introduction by a go-between (Soo-Mi 1995). As her sister put it, running your own business is 'painstaking even if you make profits' (Wha-Sook 1995). For Yongsu, her divorce experience seven years prior to marrying a Japanese had limited her life opportunities. A proposal of marriage from a Japanese man came at a time when she felt that life was unbearable because of a downturn in her clothing shop business, and her family's continuous financial and emotional dependence on her. She felt at the time that she 'wanted someone to hug me' instead of supporting others all the time (Yongsu 1996). In the domestic marriage circumstance, her status as a 33 year old divorcee would have penalised her. The prevalent Confucian moral code in Korea, with its presumption of a woman's primal role in maintaining family relationships (Palley 1990), lowers the status of divorced women, even though agitation by the women's movement has resulted in the Family Law reform (Moon 1998).<sup>8</sup>

Gender specific notions also hindered other women. Jung-Hee had a boyfriend for six years, but their relationship did not lead to marriage because of his parents' objection to her being five years older than him: 'Well, marrying a younger man is now popular in Japan, but that is not allowed [in Korea]. We talked about getting married, but I didn't have enough confidence [to pursue marriage against his parents' wishes]. He is the first-born son, and that means we would have to live with his parents [sooner or later]' (Jung-Hee 1995). '[G]ender-specific notions of what is most material, vital, and desirable' (Kendall 1996:94) in the contemporary Korean marriage myth makes Jung-Hee's age undesirable as a subordinate wife or daughter-in-law in the conventional gender

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8 The revised Family Law was put into effect in 1991 in Korea. The pre-1991 version gave the husband a number of rights over other family members such as the right to expel a family member from the family register, and the right to exercise primary custody over a child in case of divorce (Moon 1998: 53). The law also granted compulsory inheritance of household headship for male descendants, and there was no alimony provision for the wife at divorce (Nam 1995: 117). The revised Family Law greatly reduced such rights of the husband, but still prohibited marriage between persons with the same family name and ancestral seat. This prohibition manifests the patrilineal aspect of the Law, assuming the importance of one's father's blood in determining one's identity (Moon 1998: 53).

hierarchy. Nor does her high earning capacity as a successful business woman work in her favour.

Juxtaposed to these sentiments of being worn out, or wanting to escape from difficult or unpleasant situations, was a sense of 'adventure' (San-Min 1995) and 'curiosity' (Jung-Hee 1995): 'Why don't I try a different life?' (Ji-Hye 1996). International marriage seemed to hold out the promise of a different life. A majority of Korean women were in their late 20s and early 30s at that time, and the pressure to marry was very strong. The image of the life of a middle-class housewife in an affluent country appealed to these women as an alternative to their present situation. They wanted to attain a 'stable', 'comfortable' (Soo-Mi 1995, Jung-Hee 1995) marital life with 'free time' (Yongsu 1996) to enjoy themselves including the chance to pursue a career (Soo-Mi 1995) or further studies (San-Min 1995, Young-Joo 1996). Moreover, some women imagined international marriage would bring 'equal relationships' (Sok-Chin 1995) with an 'understanding husband' (Jung-Hee 1996) who would be quite unlike a 'dishonest' (Soo-Mi 1995), 'domineering' (Young-Hee 1996) Korean husband. The rhetoric used to sell international marriage by introduction agencies delineated in Chapter 4 seems to be at work here, presenting foreign men as sophisticated and caring, and thus desirable marriage partners. Marrying a promising stranger and living in a new country was a worthwhile adventure for these women.

Like their Korean counterparts, experiencing difficulties combined with a sense of adventure and curiosity also encouraged some Chinese and Korean-Chinese women to seek international marriage by introduction. Their adversities included single or multiple incidents of failed relationships, and various other traumatic experiences. Meishu described her failure in a university entrance exam as a 'most remorseful experience' which significantly narrowed her career path compared with her two successful sisters. She did not have a boyfriend and was interested to see the lifestyle of Japanese women which was seemingly different from women in China who 'marry around 20 years old' (Meishu 1996). Wenyan wanted to end her relationship with a married man with a child (Wenyan 1996). Yuping, a Korean-Chinese, had been feeling other peoples' inquisitive attitude towards her after her divorce. One day her home was burgled while she was visiting her father who had collapsed suddenly. These overlapping experiences, and her father's later death, triggered her decision to go

'somewhere' (Yuping 1996). Matters of ethnicity and parental control narrowed marital choices for Pingping, a Korean-Chinese. Her parents had 'old ways of thinking' and objected to her marriage with a Chinese man. She had also tried some arranged meetings with Korean men from South Korea, but her mother disapproved of the person she liked (Pingping 1996).

Four Chinese women in their late 20s and early 30s at the time of marriage with a university education mentioned that they used the services of marriage agencies because they could not find suitable partners, that is, men who matched their social status (Shuyi 1995, Huiying 1996, Yimei 1996, Zhenm 1996).<sup>9</sup> Career and age may have marginalised them in the gender-unequal domestic marriage market. Living overseas, marriage with a foreigner and possible career advancement attracted these women.

Filipino women cited economic reasons more frequently than other groups of women as their reason for participating in international marriage. These ranged from support for the family and material satisfaction for themselves, to desire and curiosity about living in 'affluent' Japan. Connie named 'material reasons', but for her own benefit. She did not need to support her family members. She was using almost all her salary to support herself in the Philippines. Her elder sister worked in the Middle East as a midwife and her younger sister in the USA so that her family did not need much of a contribution from her salary (Connie 1995). Gina wanted to support her parents who were experiencing economic difficulties, as well as satisfy her own sense of adventure (Gina 1995). Grace married to secure a 'better future' for her two children from her previous marriage and to enrol them in a private school. Describing herself as 'ambitious', she had been wanting to go abroad. Grace had met an American man through an introduction agency, but a marriage did not take place because of objections from his children. The fact that four of her female friends married Japanese men also influenced her decision to take this path (Grace 1996). The idea of marriage migration, especially to America, was more familiar and favoured among the Filipino women than among the Korean and Chinese groups. When asked whether marriage was an alternative to

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<sup>9</sup> Two of these women live in regional town/villages, one in regional city and one near Tokyo metropolitan area. See Table 7-1 for the women's educational backgrounds and their place of residence in Japan. See also Table 4 in Appendix I for comparisons of the educational backgrounds of the Japanese husband and foreign wife couples

working overseas, Gloria answered that it was marriage which attracted her (Gloria 1995). Not all Filipino women cited economic reasons. For instance, Cynthia who was in university wanted to 'marry anybody and go abroad' after bitter arguments with her half brothers and sisters over the inheritance left by her wealthy father (Cynthia 1996).

Marriage migration emerged as an attractive gateway when women faced constraints in their own countries with relationships, careers, child rearing and money related matters. Kim (1998) refers to a history of 'female insubordination' of Korean women 'who left Korea and stayed away ....because they could not or would not conform to the expected gender roles' (1988: 106). Living overseas appeared to offer an opportunity for them to re-create themselves. Cahill (1990) stated that because of inadequate employment opportunities in the Philippines, many Filipino women 'felt forced to grab' other opportunities presented 'whether as overseas contract workers and/or as partners in an international marriage' (1990: 29). Filipino as well as other women in my study differentiated marriage migration from labour migration. International marriage projected an image of re-creating oneself as a middle-class housewife in an overseas setting with opportunities for self-advancement. The prospect of financial security and a middle class life-style was certainly evident, but it was not financial gain alone that motivated the women. Imagined pleasures of marriage – a caring husband, children, affection and love which did not seem attainable for one reason or another in their countries of origin also attracted the women.

Beside the predisposition posed by their personal backgrounds and socio-economic situations, a sense of 'being chosen' among women at the marriage introduction meeting triggered their immediate decision to participate in international marriage. Amongst the interviewees, 23 women were approached by intermediaries with a potential marriage proposal. Seven respondents came to know agencies through a friend or advertisements and became members, mostly fee-paying. Eight women knew agents personally, including two who worked at agencies. Five attended a group meeting and two met a partner through a trainee program, both of which were organised by a Japanese village and its local agent. How these women came to know agents and attend meetings made a difference in the process of deciding to marry. There was no



evidence that agents and intermediators coerced women into marriage, but persuasion and sometimes pressure were apparent, in particular when the women passively attended meetings. In several cases, a discourse of 'being chosen' swayed the women's decision.

Those who joined marriage agencies on their own initiative were for the most part determined to get married, and thus were fully aware of their actions and prepared for the occasion. In this respect they 'chose' their partners. For example, Jung-Hee had attended Japanese language school so that she could ask male candidates questions directly during meetings without the intervention of an interpreter. She met three candidates before her final decision:

The first one was a public servant working at a fire-brigade station, but he was a little old for me, 40 something. I was 29 at that time, so I refused. The next person was also a public servant, but he seemed like a womaniser. As I expected, when we went to have some coffee in a trendy cafe, he was looking at other women. The first one was from Chiba [prefecture], and the second from Tokyo. When I looked at [my husband's] personal history, it said that he had farms, and an [annual] income of ten million yen. So I thought this [person] might be good. He was 35 and the youngest [among the three]. Naturally, he had a country-looking face, but had a good build. And, perhaps *en* (fate) made us meet. When I went to the agency [to meet him], we bumped into each other in front of an elevator. I thought the way he laughed was very manly. (Jung-Hee 1996)

She had some difficulty in deciding, so she took her sister to see him. Her sister also received a good impression of him, and she then decided to marry. Other family members respected her decision. Among other examples, Cynthia, despite intending to 'marry anybody', refused the first candidate and finally chose 'a kind looking' person (Cynthia 1996). Shuyi chose a 'good-looking person' from the photos at the agency. She was initially concerned with his shorter height, but overcame her doubts when a friend pointed out the similarity with the Japanese royal couple (Shuyi 1995).

More than half of the interviewees were approached individually by agents or more often persons acting for the agents with a particular potential marriage proposal. The immediate contacts of the women included family members such as an elder sister, relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. Their decisions to meet a Japanese man and subsequently to marry were in some way driven by the situation at the time. They attended meetings after having been persuaded by those affiliated with agents, even though they were not serious about getting married. Although the degree of hesitancy differed among the women, statements such as 'just refuse if you don't like the

person' (Young-Joo 1996) convinced them to go to meetings 'just for fun' (Sok-Chun 1995), 'just to see the face [of a candidate]' (Il-Mi 1996) or 'as practice for the real meeting in future' (Suk-Shin 1996). One woman did not know about the involvement of a commercial agent until she saw about ten other women waiting at the meeting place. She was upset and wanted to leave, but her sister and the acquaintance with her convinced her to 'just see the man' (Wha-Sook 1995).

In the course of such meetings, some were attracted to the male candidate. Some agreed to engage immediately after, while others took a few days to decide and answer. Fely, who was 19, never intended getting married, but felt attracted to the candidate. Her mother approved her decision and she was engaged the following day (Fely 1996). Young-Hee also made the decision without much hesitation, thinking, 'I could live the rest of my life comfortably' from the warm-hearted impression of her meeting partner (Young-Hee 1996). Yongsu neither liked nor disliked the male candidate, but decided to marry thinking that 'love might occur after living together' (Yongsu 1996).

There were women who took more time to decide. Suk-Shin met strong objections from her family, and given her own uncertainty, took four further meetings to reach a decision (Suk-Shin 1996). Wha-Sook at first turned down the marriage proposal because of the appearance and occupation of the Japanese candidate, a carpenter, though he seemed honest (Wha-Sook 1995).

Despite their dissatisfaction with candidates or disapproval from their family, these women arrived at a decision to be engaged in the end. Many women pointed out that they felt strong pressure from the intermediaries and from their prospective husband, which made them feel 'selected' and 'wanted': 'He met three other women, a nurse, a post office clerk and a shop assistant. All of them were apparently good-looking, and all wanted to marry him. But he wanted me' (Suk-Shin 1996). 'I heard he met six other women. The agent called me to say that he could not forget me, and wanted to see me again' (Soo-Mi 1995). Time pressure and the interest of the agents and their intermediaries in obtaining matches may have contributed to their constructing a discourse of 'being chosen'. Looking back on their marriage decisions, the women referred to their decision as: 'a slip of the tongue' (Suk-Shin 1996), 'I wasn't thinking

properly' (San-Min 1995), 'immature' (Myung-Ja 1996), and 'foolish' (Il-Mi 1996). Nevertheless, at the time, this sense of 'being chosen' appealed to them sufficiently, to trigger their decision to marry. Also, considering their social situations, it seemed worth trying their luck; to 'at least go there' (Il-Mi 1996) and 'come back if things go wrong' (Soo-Mi 1995).

The sense of 'being chosen' was also expressed by five Filipino women who married through meetings organised by Japanese villages and their intermediaries. These women attended group meetings in a very casual manner. Gloria went to a meeting with her friends 'for fun'. She was 19 years old and had no plans to marry before attending (Gloria 1995). Connie had a boy friend, but attended with her two sisters 'as a joke' (Connie 1995):

There were about 50 women and five Japanese men. We were surprised that the girls were all pretty. [They were] much prettier than me. [I said to myself there was] no chance for me, so let's just enjoy the nice food served. I couldn't believe it when I was told that I was selected (Gloria 1995)

I saw about 20 women at a meeting. When I was chosen, I felt like I was going to be a princess (Connie 1995)

Both women's statements confirm the festive atmosphere and momentum of the occasion. Gloria decided to 'take a chance' with great excitement, in spite of her father's strong objection to her marriage with a Japanese, suspecting the involvement of a *yakuza* (gangster), infamous for forced prostitution (Gloria 1995). Connie's comment on 'becoming a princess' confirms her overwhelming joy at being 'selected' as well as her passivity in the process – attending a meeting where a woman waits to be found. As the Japanese villages officials and the female participants claimed, it was true that nobody was forced to attend these meetings. Yet the male gaze thoroughly pervaded the meetings, regenerating a readily available female fantasy – to be chosen, to be a Cinderella – a fantasy of unequal gender construction.

Regardless of their accounts of the meetings framed in terms of being 'chosen', all the women had the final say in their marriages. Many indeed laughed when asked 'who made the decision to marry', insisting they had always made decisions in their own affairs. Some women decided their marriage without consulting their families, and asked them to attend a ceremonial engagement suddenly (Sok-Chun 1995, Cynthia 1996).

As the majority of the women faced family objections, they clearly made independent choices to proceed with the marriage. Some of these women chose marriage migration, not as passive victims of family or household systems, but rather confronting familial power over them. In these cases, the decision for marriage migration appeared a solution to their immediate experience of patriarchal gender relations and patriarchal capitalism which disadvantaged them. However, the passivity of the women who described themselves as 'chosen' at meetings suggests another layer of subjection in the gender-specific expectations associated with marriage by introduction, or with marriage in general. The construction of 'marriage' in wider society influences the image of marriage by introduction. Marriage, 'romantic' or 'arranged', is ultimately a patriarchal contract (Pateman 1989) that asserts a man's domination over his woman, while claiming to offer the woman economic protection and a social identity. The passivity of the women participants in my study is explicable in the context of such relations of providers and protected (and implicitly of domination and subordination) that govern relationships of a husband and wife in marriage in patriarchal societies. This dependence is true for all these women including those who 'chose' their partner in the sense that their expectations for a 'renewed' life were shaped by a man. Nevertheless, when these women entered into marital life they asserted various strategies of resistance to the intricate forms of power that they have to confront: patriarchal gender relations; racial discrimination; labour exploitation; and problems with citizenship.

### **6.3 In Transition**

Normally several months elapsed between the women's decision to marry and their arrival in Japan. During this period, some attended Japanese language classes organised by their marriage agents and exchanged correspondence with their husbands. Various preparations and arrangements, including obtaining visas, kept the women preoccupied.

Each woman arrived in Japan with different expectations. Nonetheless, they all faced 'unexpected' experiences in the course of leading a marital life in a foreign country with unfamiliar people. Negative images of Japan associated with World War II and the

*yakuza* (Japanese gangsters) were commonly held, but the image of affluence and sophistication and the possibility of romance were for many overriding. But the idea of a 'foreign' man and country, which once captured the women's imagination, often became a source of alienation.

The first day in Japan left a strong impression on many women. Some women arrived alone, others in a group. Most of the husbands came to meet them at the airport. Kyung-Sook, then 39 years old, arrived at the Sendai Airport with her mother in winter. She felt deeply lonely seeing the heavy snow and watching her mother's pale face, although she and her mother spoke of the beauty of snow to her husband (Kyung-Sook 1995). Suk-Shin from Seoul failed to recognise her husband when she arrived at Narita airport with several other Korean women: 'He looked different from the last time I saw him. He didn't seem like the same person'. Her husband came to help her with her suitcase which was filled with personal items from underpants to needles. They then got on a minibus with other couples organised by the same agent. The bus ride took twice as long as she had expected. When the bus finally stopped, she saw a small gloomy shopping street in darkness: 'I was frightened with the thought that I might have been sold off.' Then, her husband led her to his car, and after a short drive, they arrived at their house. She found 'his mother and grandmother sitting in a huge dusky old room as if a ghost would come out'. She told herself 'I must trust my husband' (Suk-Shin 1996).

Il-Mi's account of the first day illustrates her expectations and disillusionment. Il-Mi, who was a factory worker in South Korea, felt unwelcomed by the chill atmosphere of her new home:

On the first day, that day, the house and rooms were all cold. As it was April, we still had snow, too I felt very cold. When I entered a house, I sat at *kotatsu* (a lower table-style heater with coverlet) [The house had] a very lonely atmosphere I felt awkward, and alone I felt really terrible I thought I should have not come I knew it was cold from the talk of the marriage agent in Korea. But it was somehow different from what I was told I have seen *tatami* (straw-matted rooms) on TV, but never expected that they were still used in Japan now. (Il-Mi 1996)

Japanese style rooms with *tatami* are widely used throughout Japan today. Yet, *tatami* was not a part of Il-Mi's imagined Japan, an advanced futuristic country.

Like Suk-Shin and Il-Mi, those who were to reside in the regional areas of northern Japan were disappointed with the remoteness and the climate; however they appreciated

the tranquillity and beauty of the countryside. Sok-Chin from Seoul laughed recalling her surprise to see no lights from her window at night (Sok-Chin 1995), and Aimei from Tianjin telephoned her friend the next day, commenting on the inactivity of the area, 'I saw one car today' (Aimei 1995).

At the beginning of their marital life, communication difficulties were felt most acutely. Limited communication intensified loneliness, isolation, tension, and produced a sense of frustration, dislocation and anxiety. Health problems such as headaches, aching of the body parts, losing or gaining weight were also commonly experienced, and several women had miscarriages. Crying, throwing and destroying things, or refusing to talk were used to show dissatisfaction. Those who became pregnant within a few months of arrival faced communication difficulties at home and at clinics, severe morning sickness, unfamiliar food and different customs during pregnancy. Ji-Hye lost 10 kg during her early pregnancy and was hospitalised. She went back to South Korea, and gave birth there (Ji-Hye 1996).

For the 36 women who lived with parents-in-law, communication difficulties caused a feeling of isolation within the family because the wife could not join in conversations and often felt ignored. While five women valued living with parents-in-law as they learnt the language, Japanese cooking and other customs from their mothers-in-law (Shuyi 1995, Gloria 1995), for the majority communicating with their parents-in-law was more difficult than with their husbands. Connie's mother-in-law used to give no instructions on how to cook or clean, but just left ingredients out to cook in the kitchen or a vacuum cleaner in a room (Connie 1995). Most of these women at first could not enjoy gatherings of their husbands' relatives, and felt isolated on those occasions.

The communication gap tended to cause misunderstandings and suspicion when a wife, a husband and/or his parents felt uncertainty towards each other. Sok-Chin, who worked for a marriage agent, mediated many such situations. For instance, while a wife thought her husband was hiding her passport, his intention was to keep it in a safe place. When a letter to a wife was damaged, she wrongly suspected her mother-in-law of inspecting the contents. A husband and his parents became overly sensitive and suspicious of a wife's conversations in other than Japanese (Sok-Chin 1995). Sok-Chin mentioned that

doubt between a husband and wife over each other's motivations for marriage worsened the communication gap (Sok-Chin 1995). The marriage introduction fees paid by a Japanese husband caused potential problems. Many women did not realise before their marriage that their husbands had paid a large sum of money. Problems occurred when marriage agents occasionally embezzled betrothal money meant for a bride and her family. San-Min was frustrated with repeated questions from her father-in-law about the betrothal money which she did not receive, but her Japanese language at that time was not good enough to satisfy him. His inquiry continued until her father who spoke Japanese explained the situation when she and her husband visited Korea (San-Min 1995). Lack of trust between a wife and her husband (and her parents-in-law) was prone to surface over money matters in these marriages by international introduction.

While their husbands were at work, the women often had to spend 'long' 'boring' and 'lonely' hours alone. There was not much household work to do for those living in apartments. Distance in urban areas and transportation difficulties in rural areas made it difficult to meet other women or relatives and acquaintances in Japan, if there were any (Cynthia 1996, Meilin 1996, Wenyan 1996). Young-Joo did not have a Korean friend at first and felt happy to hear someone chatting in Korean at a supermarket in suburban Tokyo, but she did not have the courage to strike up a conversation (Young-Joo 1996). Where there were other members of the family at home, the women tended to stay in their own rooms in their husbands' absence because of communication difficulties and other problems. Yuping remembered that she spent long days worrying about her future and her daughter in China when she was still unable to express her thoughts to her family members and did not have many things to do (Yuping 1996). Il-Mi's truck driver husband was absent from home for most of the weekdays. She was left alone with her mother-in-law without much interaction (Il-Mi 1996). Gloria said that it was fortunate that her house was so untidy and that she had plenty of cleaning to do when she felt lonely (Gloria 1995). Women commonly commented that they enjoyed going out with their husbands on their days off.

The majority of women came with an expectation of marrying a financially comfortable person in an affluent country. Jung-Hee thought that she could live the life of an affluent housewife as her future husband's background data had indicated he earned ten

million yen a year (Jung-Hee 1995). Another woman 'bought a lot of things at first because I thought we were rich' (Kyung-Sook 1995). 'Misunderstandings' over the wealth of their husbands caused conflicts. The women expected they would be able to purchase 'expensive' personal items such as cosmetics with brand names, or send remittances and gifts to their parents, and they were taken-aback that their husbands were not amenable. Two women felt disappointed by the small scale of their marriage reception held in Japan and the gifts they received, and were disturbed by the reality (Lanlan 1996, Meishu 1996). The cost of international calls including collect calls from the woman's family back home also became a quarrelling point. Some women made international calls as often as every second day or once every week. At first, they did not know how expensive these calls were and assumed that their husbands were able to afford them. These incidents caused frustration.

These women sooner or later came to realise that the real financial state of their husbands, and the standard of living of the country itself, did not match their earlier images: 'Japan is not a country in which you can have all the dreams fulfilled' (Fely 1996), 'The economic power of Korea as a country may be weaker than that of Japan, but the standard of living of each household [in Korea] is higher than here' (Soo-Mi 1995). This was a disturbing realisation at the time. For her first year in Japan, Meilin kept thinking everyday that 'Tomorrow I will go home' (Meilin 1996); Others too repeatedly questioned whether to stay or return home: 'If snow fell heavier than this, I would go home' (Sok-Chin 1995); 'I could go home if there were a freeway connecting Japan and Korea' (Il-Mi 1996). There was no such freeway; and snow never fell heavier than 'this', as the reference point 'this' would change. These were 'excuses' or coping strategies for them to stay on one more day. Wenyan said, 'I compared living in China and Japan a lot, and thought I would like to go home. Well, but every time I ate *sashimi*, it was tasty and made me feel happy', and she laughed (Wenyan 1996). Life in Japan went on with such small but meaningful encouragements of their own making.



#### 6.4 'Alias' : Symbol of Subordination?

A common practice among 'Asian' women who married Japanese men was to adopt a Japanese given name as an alias. The practice often met with criticism that it was an indication of forced assimilation, 'Japanising' them (Sasagawa 1989a; Sasagawa 1989b). Sasagawa (1989a) noted that the giving of a Japanese alias was more common to South Korean than Filipino and Taiwanese brides. He criticised the practise as a denigration of Korean culture, echoing the enforcement of Japanese names on Korean people in 1940 under Japanese military occupation.

Adopting a Japanese name was an issue for Korean residents in Japan with regard to their identity and their experience of institutional and social discrimination past and present. After World War II, a majority of resident Korean and Chinese people continued to use their Japanese names as an alias, concealing their ethnic identity in order to survive in post-war Japan (Ijichi 1994: 19-21). When applying for *kaka* (naturalisation), it was almost compulsory to register a Japanese-style name as the applicant's official name on an application form until 1986. Since the 1980s there have been legal suits by ethnic Koreans to regain Korean names which they had to relinquish at naturalisation (Ijichi 1994: 97-100). The question of continuing or discontinuing the use of their Japanese names is still a current issue among young second and third generation Korean residents who appear to hold more diversified identities than their parents' generations (Fukuoka & Tsujiyama 1991).

It is evident that pressures toward 'Japanising' 'Asian brides' were in force, and that historical constructions of 'Koreans' in Japan influence South Korean marriage migrants of today. Nonetheless, one should be careful not to apply automatically the colonial roots of identity politics of long-term resident Koreans to South Korean wives of Japanese men of the 1980s and 1990s. Such an approach would mistakenly regard 'Korean' as a single entity, and blur the specific problems and particular patterns of resistance of different Korean subjects

Among the 45 women I interviewed, 15 out of the 18 South Korean women used a Japanese alias, together with all nine Chinese women, two among three Korean-Chinese, and two out of 13 Filipino women. Thus, most Korean and Chinese women adopted a Japanese given name, by contrast with a very small proportion of Filipino women. Three Korean women did not use Japanese given names: one refused to use a Japanese name on principle (Hye-Jin 1996); another thought it unnecessary (Myung-Ja 1996); the third one and her husband could not think of any good name and used a Korean name 'because it's natural anyway' (Kyung-Sook and her husband 1995). For others, having a Japanese name was understood as 'customary' (for example, Soo-Mi 1995, Young-Hee 1996; Meilin 1996): 'I thought that's how it should be because we lived in Japan' (Soo-Mi 1995). One Chinese woman mentioned that her Chinese friend who married a North American man used an American name in the US (Zhenni 1996).

None of the 28 women who used a Japanese name considered themselves forced to use it. A majority of them chose a name with their husband or chose a name which their husband prepared retaining Chinese characters in their original names. One of the women did not like the *ko*-ending of the name<sup>10</sup> which her husband's father suggested because of its old-fashioned tone, and changed it to another name (San-Min 1995). Being called by a new name was 'interesting, as if becoming a new person' (Aimei 1995, Emillie 1996) and 'odd at first, but I got used to it' (Wha-Sook 1995). For Aimei and Emillie, their new names suited their expectation of leading a new life and living in the present.

Sasagawa's study (1989a: 250-253) argues that the women themselves did not appreciate their aliases, and that they used their original names among themselves. My informants who used Japanese names appreciated the pragmatic benefit of doing so, or at least did not regard the practice as oppressive. I also frequently observed that these women used other women's Japanese names when conversing in their first languages.<sup>11</sup> Using a Japanese name is 'convenient' and 'not an issue': 'An alias is convenient. [Using it] is a trivial matter. If that is awkward, our marriage itself is more awkward' (San-Min 1995). An alias is easier for their Japanese family to pronounce and helps to avoid the unnecessary curiosity of strangers: 'Once at a hospital, when a nurse called

<sup>10</sup> Japanese female names commonly end with *ko* such as Keiko, Noriko and Etsuko

<sup>11</sup> None of the women said that they used their Japanese aliases with their families and friends in their countries of origin

my Korean name, people looked at me. I didn't like that' (San-Min 1995). A Chinese person commented 'our face does not show our nationality, so a Japanese name is handy outside' (Wenyan 1996). The physical similarity of Korean and Chinese with Japanese people and their Japanese names enable a certain degree of invisibility in public where cultural and political hegemonies disadvantage difference.

While the pragmatic use of an alias is shared by these marriage migrants and long term Korean and Chinese residents in Japan, my informants' concerns with an alias are different from the 'coming out' questions of the resident Korean and Chinese who were born in Japan, who may speak only Japanese and use a Japanese alias. My informants, for instance, do not need to question whether they are more Korean/Chinese or Japanese, or whether they should reveal their ethnic identity at school or workplace: 'Everybody around me knows I am Korean, so how I live is more important than my name' (Soo-Mi 1995). When Soo-Mi, her Korean friend and I went to a second hand clothes shop which was providing a gathering space for local women, the shop owner introduced Soo-Mi to other Japanese customers who were having coffee there. Using her Japanese alias, the owner said she came from South Korea. The Japanese women then rained questions on her, saying, 'Is that name also popular in South Korea?', 'Were you told to use a Japanese name?', and 'Who gave you that name?' Soo-Mi replied, 'It's not that I have to use this name. My Korean name is Soo-Mi. But it sounds funny when Japanese people pronounce it, particularly when my husband says it I don't want to hear it'. The way she said it made all of them laugh, and the questions to her stopped. She had been asked similar questions many times, and she had learned how to deal with such voyeuristic sympathy. The use of an alias may symbolise the subordination of individuals to the dominant culture, but power works differently on subordinates whose historical and social settings are different. Resistance consequently takes different forms. The use of an alias for my respondents was less significant or at least not the most important issue in regard to their ethnic identities. The initial issue was establishing oneself in an unfamiliar marriage as the wife of a Japanese man.

## 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined the women's experience in deciding on marriage migration and their initial experiences in Japan. The varied social backgrounds of the women indicate that their marriages were not typically the consequence of economic desperation. They were by no means 'slaves' who were forced to sell themselves to supposedly wealthy Japanese men for the sake of their families. Their backgrounds do not form a socio-economically homogeneous category. Examination of their motivations and the circumstances of the introduction meetings demonstrated that they were more or less active participants in marriage and made independent decisions in such a way as to take responsibility for their lives. An existing discourse of 'being chosen' in gender-unequal marriage and society influenced some women's decisions, but they nonetheless 'chose' their marriages.

The incentives were primarily the prospect of a 'happy' marriage, with a wealthy understanding man in an affluent country where seemingly they might achieve what were unattainable goals in the oppressive social structures of their countries of origin. For most of the women, their initial experiences in Japan did not meet their expectations, and they felt a deep sense of dislocation. The nature of their marriages aggravated their loneliness. Nevertheless, the women devised their own coping strategies.

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### Reproduction, Production and the Politics of Affection

As expected, the post-migration experiences of women married through introduction were shaped primarily by their gender and wife/mother status, but also by their ethnicities. Negotiating their position in the family and establishing relationships with partners and other family members were prime concerns of the foreign women. These became contested arenas intensified by the nature of their marriages. When the women participated in the labour force, as with Japanese women, their 'housewife' status limited their market position, with their ethnicity and lack of Japanese language proficiency causing further restrictions.

Some of the previous studies draw attention to the fact that foreign brides perform reproductive and/or productive work in order to highlight the aspect of labour migration (for example Truong & del Rosario 1994; Truong 1996; Kajita 1994). This chapter focuses on the ways in which such women performed reproductive and productive labours, and how, in performing these work, they conform with and/or confront expectations of the host family and the country. The study can then depart from structural approaches that are not tested by the narratives, and analyse the women's multiple subjectivities and resistance, alongside the operations of hegemonic power. The focus on the women's experience also enables us to see a much wider range of perspectives on foreign women married through introduction.

Some data on the social backgrounds of Japanese husbands and their comparison with those of the foreign wives are provided in Appendix I. At the time of marriage, the majority of the husbands (53.4 %) were in their late 30s, followed by those in the early 40s (33.3 %). Most of them were five or more years older than their wives, with one third of them having more than a 10 year difference in age. The great majority of the husbands (81.4 %) completed secondary education including three (7%) university

graduates, that amounts to most women (84%) marrying men with equal or higher educational qualifications than their own, except seven university women graduates. The husbands' main occupation at the time of interview included 13 (28.9%) in the professional/clerical category, 11 (24.4%) construction or factory workers, nine (20%) skilled workers in trades, seven (15.6%) farmers, four (8.9%) in the transportation industry and one (2.2%) small business owner. The majority of 35 families in regional areas own some farm land, but the husbands' main occupation is not farming, except those seven whose households run the farming business on a large scale.<sup>1</sup> Table 7-1 indicates the foreign wives' educational background and their place of residence in Japan at the time of interview, in order to give further background to their migration experience in Japan.

**TABLE 7- 1 Marriage migrants' educational background and place of residence in Japan**

<i>Place of Residence</i>	<i>Educational background<sup>a</sup></i>			
	<i>Some or Completed primary</i>	<i>Completed Secondary</i>	<i>Completed Vocational training or college</i>	<i>Completed University</i>
Regional village/town	3 (6.7%)	18(40%)	4 (8.9%)	4(8.9%)
Regional city	-	3(6.7%)	1(2.2%)	2(4.4%)
Greater Tokyo metropolitan	-	4(8.9%)	3(6.7%)	3(6.7%)

<sup>a</sup>Figures in brackets show percentage of a total of 45 women.

<sup>1</sup> Farm holdings in Japan are generally very small. As much as 71 per cent of farm owners have less than one hectare land, which is not sufficient to generate necessary incomes (Eccleston 1989: 174). Having regular or seasonal employment is thus very common for many in rural households. Non-agricultural incomes provide over 80 per cent of the total incomes in agricultural households (Eccleston 1989: 174).

## 7.1 Contesting Marriage and Family

The couples married through international agencies did not know each other before marriage. Their knowledge of each other therefore was fully played out within the expectations of husband-wife relationships. The couples needed to overcome suspicion over each other's motives for marriage. Such doubt was often manifested as a concern over financial matters. In cross-cultural marriages, as Refsing (1998) states, gender identity and gender roles are among the issues which become subject to negotiation. For the couples in my study, becoming aware of similarities or differences regarding gender expectations, and negotiating such differences were important processes in the making of marital relationships. Issues such as household chores, resource management, and views on participating in the paid work force became some focal points to be negotiated by the foreign wives. Further, for many of these women love in the marital relationship was also a field for contestation with their husbands.

'Love' in marriage mattered to the women married through introduction, though they married 'without love'. Although falling in love may be a social practice of class or class 'habitus' in Bourdieu's sense (Wilkes 1990: 123-124), deconstructing 'love' in this way is not to deny its place, real or idealised, in a modern marriage relationship that celebrates the notions of love and affection (see Chapter 1). Marriage through introduction presupposes no mutual romantic love at the beginning of the relationship. Nonetheless, the conduct of marriage without love, and developing or not being able to develop love was a recurring concern among my informants.<sup>2</sup> Even though the women initially decided to marry 'without love', it did not mean that the participants did not seek love and affection in their marital relationship. As the romance of the 'chosen

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2 There were no questions in my interviews which asked directly whether or not an informant loved her husband. The question of love was brought up in response to the questions about relationship with their husbands and also when asked whether or not they would recommend international marriage by introduction to other women. One of the questions frequently asked me by the women was whether my relationship with my partner was based on 'love'. Questions touching on relationships with their husbands included activities they did together in leisure time, the level of satisfaction with communication between them, conflicts and how to solve them if they arise, change in relationship with a husband, and the level of satisfaction with the relationship at the time of interview.

Cinderellas' shaped the rhetoric of selling international marriage (see Chapter 4), so its discursive power influenced the participants' expectations of an ideal marital life, including love and material comfort. The modern marriage 'myth' prevails in many societies, shaping the meaning of marriage to women. When this ideal marriage became unachievable, marrying without love and/or having a 'loveless marriage' confronted many of the women. Affection and love became arenas of struggle for many of the couples married through introduction.

Japanese husbands were generally portrayed as caring, earnest and hard-working, but lacking communication skills and enjoyment of life. One Korean woman said, 'He doesn't know how to enjoy life. But I like his honesty. [An honest man] is the best husband' (Hoo-Jung 1995). While two women described their husbands as 'short-tempered' (Connie 1995, Melly 1996), 'reserved', 'gentle' or 'weak' were more common descriptions among others. A university graduate, Aimei, bluntly commented about her high school-educated husband, 'he is neither handsome nor has a good education. But he has a big heart' (Aimei 1995). Rose regarded her husband as 'weak'. 'I always win the arguments. I want him to win sometimes' (Rose 1996). Pingping's husband 'cries after [their] quarrels' and she 'feels sorry' (Pingping 1996). A majority of the women expressed the wish to talk with their husbands more on daily matters, to plan for a common future and enrich their marriage.<sup>3</sup>

The degree of satisfaction in their relationship with their husbands varied, but many perceived that their marital life had been improving: 'Our marriage was by introduction so our relationship naturally deepened over the years' (Cynthia 1996). When the women expressed unhappiness with the relationships with their husbands, the nature of their introduction marriage tended to surface: 'I don't feel enjoyment because I came here without loving him.' (Il-Mi 1996) and 'I feel regret for not marrying with love. Why did I

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3 Although this is beyond the scope of my study, the images of these husbands and their participation in the household duties described later in this chapter may suggest diversities of Japanese male gender roles in marriage. Alternatively, it may indicate possibilities of some diversion from conventional male gender roles in marriage with non-Japanese partners, or, less likely that husbands in their diverse countries of origin display more machismo in comparison to their Japanese husbands. See also footnote 9 this chapter for statistics on participation in household duties by working men.



marry a person I don't love?' (San-Min 1996). Dissatisfaction in marriage could occur in any couple whether in 'love' or 'introduction', mono- or cross-cultural marriages. However, the women in my study blamed their present unsatisfactory relationship with their husband on having a marriage by introduction. This indicates 'love' matters to these women, underpinning their notion of marital happiness.

Three women<sup>4</sup> strongly expressed dissatisfaction in their relationship with their husbands. Different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, age, interests, and ways of thinking were the reasons for the dissatisfaction with partners. San-Min, despite recognising improvement in her husband's commitment to domestic work and his efforts at understanding her needs for the last four years, continued to notice differences between her own and her husband's thinking. The differences were at times described in terms of social background, her urban and his rural upbringing, a substantial age gap, mentality, exposure to the world, and ethnicity. On one occasion, while San-Min, her two Korean friends and I chatted over drinks, her Japanese husband cooked dinner. When I commented she was lucky to have such a helpful husband, she answered that she did not value it that much, but rather she 'wants someone who talks sense' (San-Min 1996). Her friend asked San-Min's husband, 'Do you have anything you want to do in future?' The husband replied, 'My dream? To build a house, have a wife and bring up children.' His simple pragmatic response was met with a deep silence by the women for whom these were not dreams but mere realities of marriage. His answer echoes San-Min and other women's frustration with their husbands and other Japanese who appeared to be preoccupied with the mere performance of daily life goals. Eun-Kyung, who feels she 'cannot communicate with her husband' because of their differences noted, 'All my husband and other people here do is work, eat and sleep. I wonder whether they enjoy their lives. Women too. They work, and even on Sundays all they do is clean and wash. That's boring' (Eun-Kyung 1996).

Others were more content with their husbands, but whether they 'loved' their partners was a different question. These women accepted their marital life, but mutual 'love' – the core of 'happy' and 'appropriate' marriage – apparently did not develop, and its

continued lack clouded their marriage. Meilin, aged 29 with two children at the time of the interview, in her comfortably large apartment in the outskirts of Tokyo, stated that she has gotten along with her public servant husband over the three years of their marriage, but 'I can't say I love him'. She added that it is much better to marry someone you know well 'like your classmates' (Meilin 1996). Wha-Sook had been married for ten years with two children and assessed her marital life in Japan as reasonably satisfying. She answered my questions about marital satisfaction from an economic point of view and commented that they had a house and some savings and she did not need to work outside thanks to her carpenter husband's satisfactory earnings. Of her husband, she said:

I think he is also very patient. If he had married a Japanese woman, she would have worked very hard and contributed to the household. Korean women do not work that hard and live at ease when they have [school age] children like I do. I think he is tolerant. (Wha-Sook 1995)

Describing her husband as 'like a guardian' due to their seven year age difference, she then simply added, 'I still don't love him, though' (Wha-Sook 1995). Even though she might have not expected to love him, its lack in her present marriage constantly reminded her of her 'instant' marriage. Wha-Sook was one of the 29 women who thought that they would be reluctant to recommend marriage migration to others if it is by introduction:

I don't think I would like to recommend *omiai* (marriage by introduction). After all we have to stay here until we die. That thought of staying here until I die makes me uneasy. So I don't think I recommend it. Other people may be different from me. Some may think they can live anywhere. But, I somehow feel I want to go back. Once my children grow up, I am alone with my husband. When I came here at first, I really thought this [marriage] gave more benefits to my husband. I felt I was too good [for him]. I could marry [in my country] if there were a suitable man. I questioned myself about coming here all the way. So I don't think I would recommend this kind of marriage to others. I would do so if it is a love marriage because you are living with a person you love. But mine is not a love marriage. (Wha-Sook 1995)

Wha-Sook took Japanese citizenship and Meilin has already applied for it. Both women have sisters in Japan who also married Japanese men through introduction. Both appeared content with their marital lives in general including their relationship with their husbands. Both however revealed that love was unattainable in their

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4 This excludes one woman who had been separated from her husband at the time of the interview

marriage, that it confronted them with a deep sense of solitude at not fully belonging with their husbands or the host country.

On the other hand 38 year old Young-Joo expressed her satisfaction with the depth of her relationship with her company employee husband. They were married for eight years with two children and lived in a neat house nearby Tokyo. Young-Joo, who enjoyed playing the piano and baking bread, discussed 'everything' with her seven years older husband and was very satisfied with their relationship. She liked talking to her husband who is 'like her counsellor' and she could even discuss things with him which she could not tell her sisters. Her husband was converted to her religion. When she expressed her wish to improve her Japanese language skills and eventually study visual arts in university, her husband encouraged her and helped her to enrol in a local night secondary school which she immensely enjoyed. Although she showed dissatisfaction with her responsibility of caring for her bedridden father-in-law in daytime, she did not blame her husband for this situation but rather expressed this as a common burden shared by her husband and herself. Young-Joo said that she recommends marriage by introduction to others and in fact she introduced a Japanese man to her friend although no marriage took place (Young-Joo 1996). Young-Joo's example indicates that mutual affection and possibly love can be attainable in cross-cultural marriage by introduction.

The grounds for successful marriage however can be fragile. Fely, who was married for ten years and had two children, was 'very satisfied, finally' in her relationship with her husband and her life in Japan. She had many Filipino friends through a Filipino women's association and church based activities. She would recommend marriage migration to others in the Philippines who had financial problems, or like herself were unable to go to university or obtain employment because of a lack of personal connections: 'I would like to tell them that "you will not regret coming to Japan. If you come, you'll never regret it,"' although she added that endurance and tolerance of each other in marriage were also important, as coming to a foreign country did not automatically grant opportunities, happiness or success (Fely 1996). She introduced her husband's Japanese friend to her childhood friend in the Philippines. Nonetheless, Fely revealed the still fragile ground of their relationship. She held a spouse visa and had

been considering applying for permanent residency for the last two years. Her husband was reluctant to support this until very recently as he was concerned Fely might 'run away' once she obtained residential status. Dismissing his idea as 'nonsense', she said, 'If I were to run away, I would have done so long before I endured this much' (Fely 1996).

Marrying a foreigner through introduction is 'like a gamble' (Emillie 1996). Some may win and work out satisfactorily and achieve 'love'. Nonetheless, for many, the 'love' which they hoped to win in their marriage was difficult to realise. Official statistics on divorce recorded approximately 6,000 cases in 1994 between Japanese men and foreign women (Ministry of Health and Welfare 1996: 415).<sup>5</sup> The estimates of such divorce cases in their areas by local town officials in Yamagata varied between zero and 58 per cent of all marriages with foreign women (personal interviews with local government officials of eight towns and villages in Yamagata, September ~ November 1995). Among my 45 respondents, three women were divorced or separated from their first Japanese husbands.<sup>6</sup> The reasons they gave included the unfamiliar living environment and difficulties with parents-in-law, but the fundamental reason was that their husbands could not understand them or support their position when faced with problems. One woman commented that her previous husband was 'kind when the mother-in-law was

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5 The figure from the Ministry of Health and Welfare (1996) includes couples of Japanese men and long term resident Korean and Chinese women of non-Japanese nationality. The actual number is 6,174 in 1992, 5,987 in 1993 and 5,996 in 1994. In 1994 2,835 divorce cases reported were with Korean women, followed by 1,323 with Chinese women, 1,281 with Filipino women and 239 with Thai women. The divorce statistics for marriages with Filipino and Thai women have increased 23 per cent and 28 per cent respectively showing the biggest increase after the category 'Other foreign countries' at 34 per cent increase. The breakdown by prefecture indicates that Yamagata prefecture recorded 65 divorces between Japanese men and foreign women of which 53.8 per cent were with Korean women, 35.4 per cent Chinese women and 9.2 per cent Filipino women (Ministry of Health and Welfare 1996: 415-19). The general tendency shows higher divorce rates with these foreign women than that of the national figure (1.57 in 1994).

6 The small number of divorcees in my sample was because I was primarily looking for married women for my respondents and had no access to the women who were divorced and returned to their countries of origin or moved to some other cities in Japan. At the time of the interviews two of them had remarried Japanese men and one was in the process of finding a new marriage partner through the marriage agency which organised her first marriage (see Chapter 8 for details). Of two women who remarried, one returned to her country of origin after divorce and remarried through the same marriage agent which introduced her first marriage partner. The other woman remarried through an introduction from a Japanese acquaintance while staying in Japan before her spouse visa from her first marriage expired.

not around' and the family was generous with money, but, 'He did not understand my feelings. It's not money [which is important]' (Emillie 1996).

Some other women at times thought about divorce, but did not take the issue forward. They were concerned with children's custody and welfare, expected difficulties in finding a job upon return to their countries of origin, and were conscious of the social stigma of divorced women particularly if they 'failed' in a foreign country. When they had not yet obtained permanent residency or citizenship – that is, their visa status was as the spouse of a Japanese national – staying in the marriage was essential to maintaining their residence status. 'My husband told me to leave the children if I wanted to divorce. I can't do that (San-Min 1995)'; and 'My family [in China] won't like it if I come back' (Meim 1996). One woman noted that she has been presenting her marriage as happy and comfortable to her friends in South Korea, and this helped deflect thoughts of divorce (Soo-Mi 1996).

Divorce from a Japanese man had particular stigma in some cases. As one Korean woman said:

I thought of divorce. Divorce among Koreans [in Korea] is increasing nowadays, but if one separates from a foreigner, in particular Japanese, it is very discreditable (*sekentei ga sugoku warui*). It's like, 'There you are!' There is deep anti-Japanese sentiment in their psyche. That's why I can't divorce even if I wanted. In any case, I will regret it if I divorce because the problem is with my mother-in-law, not my husband. (Hye-Jin 1996)

For seven women who experienced divorce in their countries of origin, a second divorce was a more difficult option: 'I am the only one divorced among my sisters and brothers. I would feel ashamed and pity myself if I had to divorce again' (Grace 1996). It was also essential for her to send remittances to her two children from the previous marriage in Manila (Grace 1996).

Divorce as 'failure' was most strongly expressed by Eun-Kyung, a 38 year old Korean woman of rather wealthy background<sup>7</sup> who had given up communicating with her husband:

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7 For an account of class influence on upholding patriarchal ideals in South Korea, see Kim (1998)

One does not marry just for play. Marriage lasts until one dies. I don't think about divorce at all. I won't mention divorce or going home even when I argue [with my husband]. That's a last word. Marriage is not a play. I will die in this house. If I were to be told to get out, I would rather commit suicide here. (Eun-Kyung 1996)

Summing up her life in Japan as 'so-so', she added 'I am still here not because I am happier than those others who *gave up halfway* and went back. Well, I have my child, and that's perhaps the best thing. Marriage is [part of your] life, so there is good and bad' (Eun-Kyung 1996, emphasis added). Although she saw other Korean women divorced, she sustained a rigid Confucian notion of lifetime marriage. When divorce is out of the question and mutual love cannot be attained in marriage, cross-cultural introduction marriage causes 'deep pain' (Eun-Kyung 1996).

As the discursive power of an ideal love marriage pervades society, more than anybody the women who married through introduction knew their marriages were a 'gamble,' 'instant' (Emilie 1996) and peculiar. 'Winning' a successful happy marriage was therefore very important. Mutual love in marriage was part and parcel of that ideal happiness. Many women adapted relatively quickly to daily aspects of marital life in a foreign country and to their husbands. But developing love in marriage posed a more difficult challenge. Social structures, cultural values and the images they held made divorce a difficult option. The lack of love in marriage then evoked a deep sense of isolation and loneliness.

The allocation and control of household finances within a marriage often provoked confusion and disputes. The management of finance can lead to great misunderstandings in a cross-cultural marriage (Breger & Hill 1998). In an international marriage mediated by an agent, the implication of financial matters may be more significant: a large sum of money has already been spent on the introduction itself - a subject often regarded as 'taboo' within these marriages; and the husband's earning capacity and/or his family's resources often disappointed foreign wives. For the foreign women their active involvement in the management of financial resources expressed trust between them and their husbands, gave them a sense of belonging as a family member, and represented a power base enhancing their status as wife and/or

mother. Conversely, conflict over a financial matter was often the outward sign of deeper doubts and reservations about trust.

It is common practice for a Japanese husband to hand over his entire salary to his wife, who manages the household budget and controls spending, especially where the wife primarily looks after domestic matters. This practice indicates not so much the woman's power, as her (house)wife's duty in sexually segregated Japanese society (Eccleston 1989: 187-189). My informants' cases, except for a few, do not conform to this pattern: in the beginning of their marriage, some received monthly allowances of 10,000 yen to 30,000 yen (about A\$130 to A\$ 400)<sup>8</sup>; some asked for money when needed; others received part of their husbands' salary and managed day-to-day living expenses. These practices were common regardless of their residential locations and family patterns. Many women thought these practices disturbing, indicating their husbands' lack of trust and challenging their ability as capable wives. A university graduate, Remy, who lived with her husband at an apartment near Tokyo, managed part of the household spending. She complained that her husband did not inform her of the amount of his salary: 'The thing I most hate is that he does not show me his pay-slip. Why? I can manage properly' (Remy 1996). Managing the household finance may be a duty of Japanese wives, but for foreign wives who are negotiating their roles as wives, being able to perform this function was an important achievement.

My informants generally increased their control over the household budget or at least their say in spending matters over time. Even when receiving an allowance, they made efforts to gain control over the way of receiving it to suit their needs, particularly when they were dissatisfied with what had been suggested by their husbands. For example, Soo-Mi, a boutique owner in South Korea, insisted on receiving a yearly rather than monthly allowance as she could finance her needs better that way: 'I couldn't buy even a dress with 20,000 yen [about A\$ 270]' (Soo-Mi 1995). Yuping refused to receive a monthly allowance and preferred to receive money whenever she needed it because she thought a fixed allowance would not cover contingent expenses (Yuping 1996).

The issue of household finance was especially complex for the 32 rural informants who lived or had lived with an extended family. In this area in Yamagata, a young couple commonly hands over part or all of their income to their cohabiting parents who manage the household budget, and allocate certain allowances to the young couple. The parents also handle expenses for the couples' children. Combining the resources of all family members can maximise the household's interests as a management unit,<sup>9</sup> although such interests may precede an individual's needs. A handover of *uchi no saifu* - the 'household wallet' - to the younger generation would eventually occur. Almost all foreign wives who came to this region did not know of such a conventional arrangement, and the majority found it inconvenient, unacceptable and threatening to their status as a wife and to their autonomy as individuals. Il-Mi recalled her frustration at her mother-in-law's control over her husband's salary: 'Every time I needed some money like for cosmetics, having my hair done or going out I had to ask my mother-in-law for money, say, 3,000 yen or 5,000 yen [about A\$40 to A\$70]. I felt disgusted. Even a student has that amount. I am an adult, married woman. I used to manage all my salary by myself before marriage' (Il-Mi 1996). One other woman said that she 'hated to hear' her husband asking his mother for money when she suggested buying something (Pingping 1996). For these women this 'one household wallet' custom was a hindrance to their husbands' independence from their parents and the couples' efforts to establish their marriage. The solution for these women was to work outside so that they could earn their own money, which they were able to 'use freely'.

Intense disputes sometimes arose when a wife started working and was asked to hand over her salary to the household. While a small number of the women accepted this

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8 The calculation is based on an exchange rate of 75 yen per one Australian dollar

9 The average wage of both male and female workers in Yamagata is below that of the national average, with the gap significantly larger among males. But household income is considerably larger than that of the national average because of the widespread extended family setting in Yamagata that generally increases the overall household income. In 1992, the average monthly wage for males was 373,976 yen in Yamagata compared to a national average of 475,344 yen, and 226,560 to 243,067 yen for females. The combined household income was 736,254 yen in Yamagata compared to the national average of 563,855 yen (Yamagata-ken Kikaku Chōsei-bu Seishōnen Josei-ka 1994.33-34)



arrangement as a custom (Lisa 1996, Huiying 1996) as practised by Japanese *yome* (daughters-in-law) in the area, others disagreed and argued for full control over their own earnings (for example Il-Mi 1996, Soo-Mi 1995, Aimei 1995, Shuyi 1995, Pingping 1996, Grace 1995, Tessie 1996) Il-Mi's action of not handing over her salary made her mother-in-law angry:

She was very unhappy for several days, and my father-in-law quizzed me as to why I would not show the payslip to my mother-in-law. I answered back that 'When have you ever showed me your payslip? I'm doing the same thing as you are doing [to me]' I won't give my salary to her [mother-in-law] I will handle it by myself (Il-Mi 1996)

Grace lived with her husband, a sickly construction worker, and his dominant father. She began working when she realised her father-in-law's reluctance to provide sufficient allowances to the couple. With bitterness she recalled the first day she received her salary:

I was overjoyed when I received my first salary, though it was only 40,000 yen [about A\$ 530]! Can you believe it was only 40,000 yen! I thought I would use 20,000 yen for my children [in the Philippines] and the rest for us [her and her husband] [When I returned home,] I happily told my father-in-law of my first salary today. He looked happy too. I was so happy so I cooked a lot of dishes. But when I served dinner, *ano oyaji* (that father) looked angry. I didn't know why. Then, around eight o'clock he suddenly went outside, shutting the door very hard. I didn't understand what was going on. I asked my husband, but he said 'I don't know. Don't worry about him. He is just like that, odd and stingy.' But he [father-in-law] was very angry until late at night. So I telephoned my husband's aunty and asked why. I was very shocked to hear that was because I didn't hand over my salary to the father. What! [I have to give] even my salary! I cried. I thought, 'I can't stand this. I should return home [to the Philippines]' (Grace 1996)

Her husband begged her to stay and promised to do something about the situation. She kept refusing to hand over her salary despite the pressure from her father-in-law. The situation was not resolved until she summoned her husband's aunts to discuss the matter five months later. With strong persuasion from the aunts, the father finally agreed to let her manage her and her husband's salaries. Her struggle is not a typical experience among other women: Her Japanese family belongs to one of the lowest socio-economic groups among informants' families; her father-in-law is aggressive; and she has an extreme need to send remittance to the Philippines. On the positive side, she has support among her husband's relatives. Nonetheless her story is a powerful

example that resistance is possible despite economic hardship and a domineering patriarch.

On the other hand, Rose's relatively wealthy family understood her request to handle her own salary from the beginning. She commented on the 'household wallet' system: '[Giving one's own salary and receiving] an allowance is not good at all. Because if my mother is buying things I don't like, and I am thinking she is using my money, it will surely cause a quarrel. [When I handle my own salary] I can think that that's not my money she is using, so I don't need to worry too much' (Rose 1995). Rose has a different problem: she has 'not spent a single cent' on her children partly because of her family's financially comfortable state. When she buys something for her sons, she gives a receipt to her mother-in-law and receives a rebate (Rose 1995). This made her feel that she was not a full member of the family. Rose and the others were willing to help with the household budgets and longed for participation in the management of household resources if their views and ways of doing things were recognised.

Three women now control the 'household wallet' in an extended family after their parents-in-law retired from the role. Full control over the household finances meant full responsibilities for one of the most important household duties. They commonly mentioned the difficulties of managing the household economy, recalling, ironically, the 'easy days' of receiving an allowance from a parent-in-law (Virginia 1996; Connie 1995; Glona 1995). Apart from household expenses, there were always sudden expenses for various events such as weddings or funerals. Managing some savings was hard to achieve, and the women often had to restrict their personal needs: 'I have been managing the budgets since last year. I hardly saved any money. I haven't been able to send any money to the Philippines' (Connie 1995). Virginia was making an effort to keep a housekeeping book to manage the family finances better. She had a dream: 'I want to renovate our house. I often talk about that with my husband. It's our time now. It may sound a cheap dream, but this is my dream' (Virginia 1996). The control of resources signified the establishment of her status in the family.

Although traditional ideas are being challenged, Japanese social conventions are characterised by a rigid sexual division of labour, namely a couple consisting of a provider husband and housemaker wife who may have part-time paid work as well (Eccleston 1989, Nakamatsu 1995).<sup>10</sup> Japanese men are typically described as believing it 'shameful to be caught doing household chores', and 'their primary preoccupation is with their work' (Refsing 1998: 200). My samples showed significant diversities within the conventional gender division of labour in husband – wife relationships.

While 19 women said their husbands did not help with domestic duties, 26 women had from moderate to considerable domestic support from their husbands. A small number of the women among those who primarily performed housework held the view that their domestic responsibilities were '*atarimae* (natural)' (Hye-Jin 1996), and were content with or accepted their husbands' lack of involvement in housework: 'He only cleans the bathtub, but it's okay. That's all men can do' (Tessie 1996). For others in a similar situation, arguments and quarrels took place. Many of them reported that it was difficult to persuade their husbands to participate in domestic work.

On the other hand, there were husbands who shared the duties equally (Grace 1996; Young-Joo 1996), who cooked dinner (Young-Hee 1996) and who minded children while their wives attended Japanese language classes (Fely 1996, San-Min 1995). For example, San-Min's husband usually 'changes nappies and cooks meals' (San-Min 1995). When her weekly Japanese language classes changed the lesson time and her aunt could not look after her two children, her husband agreed to take a half day off from his carpentry work to look after them. This resulted in her husband becoming more sympathetic towards her managing two children at home (San-Min 1995). Several women explained

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<sup>10</sup> The opinion surveys by the Prime Minister's Office showed that 83.8 per cent of men and 83.2 per cent of women agreed with the view that 'men work outside and women manage the home' in 1972 compared to 65.7 per cent of men and 55.6 per cent of women in 1992. This change in view is reflected slightly in men's participation in household work. Working men spent an average of 22 minutes per day on weekdays and 54 minutes per weekend on household duties in 1970, and 22 minutes and 83 minutes respectively in 1990. The 1995 figures of international comparison on the same matter indicated the significantly shorter hours Japanese men spent on household duties, which was 2.57 hours weekly compared to 13.38 hours for American and 13.76 hours for British men (Economic Planning Agency 1995: 116-118)

their husbands' domestic participation as the result of his mother's death or having lived alone before marriage, making him familiar with household work (San-Min 1995; Grace 1996, Meishu 1996).

Child-bearing and the use of contraception was also an issue as the Japanese husbands tended to want to have two or three children, whereas foreign wives wanted fewer. The prescription of contraceptive pills was illegal in Japan at the time of my field work<sup>11</sup>, and the prevailing method of the use of condoms left wives with less control over reproduction. As a consequence, some had unwanted pregnancies (San-Min 1995; Meilin 1996). One woman had an abortion despite her husband's objection because she did not want to have a child when she had still not established herself in Japan (Hye-Jin 1996). This person married the heir of the family who owned a family business in the rural area. Despite the expected reproductive role in such a family, her action modified the imposed gender role. At the time of the interview, she spoke of her intention to have a child as she had become reasonably content with her life after three years in Japan. Her choice highlights her agency in her struggle for the control over her body.

Two women disclosed that they had been trying to conceive a child unsuccessfully. Unfulfilled reproductive expectations can undermine the gender role expectations the women have of themselves as well as those held by their husbands. One of them commented that she did not mind living without a child. Yet she feels left out when she hears of the pregnancies of other women who came to Japan after her, and sorry for her husband who anticipated a marital life with children (Jung-Hee 1995). Having children remains a norm especially in the countryside, and women without children were constantly asked when they were going to have one. When asked, Jung-Hee used to say jokingly '*gambarimāsu* (I'll try my best)' and got away from the seriousness of the question, but she felt awkward after six years of marriage. More importantly, the nature of their 'instant marriage' influenced the way other people perceived childless foreign women. Some Japanese took having no children as an indication that the foreign

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11 This applies to small dosage pills. Other heavier forms of contraceptive pills had been reported to be prescribed at a clinic when considered necessary for health or other reasons

women intended to leave Japan eventually. The women regarded such comments as a severe insult.

Foreign wives also negotiated with their husbands on daily matters while at times employing the discourse of cultural difference in defence of their interests:

Japanese wives don't complain about small matters to their husbands. But the wives over there [in South Korea] regard complaining as also an expression of love. For instance, when my husband drinks alcohol and comes back late, I would scold him for being drunk and being late. Then he asks why he had to be scolded. People here think a wife should tolerate such small matters because men work [outside]. I can't get used to this idea. I ask my husband to telephone when coming back late, but he thinks that is troublesome. I say that if he can't accept that, he does not need to live with me. I would not stick to my opinion all the time, but he must cooperate because he is not married to a Japanese woman. (San-Min 1995)

San-Min who at times expressed her desire to 'be equal to a Japanese wife' showed in this instance her control over how to express her ethnicity when pursuing her interests with her husband. 'Cultural differences' were among a range of grounds that could be used to support women's standpoints. Japanese husbands do expect their wives to perform their reproductive role, and attempt to impose the sexual division of labour prevalent in Japanese society. The women accepted their reproductive role in general, and they endured adversities as many of their comments attest. But they did so while negotiating many boundaries of their gender roles with their husbands and extended families.

## 7.2 Gender Roles in the Extended Family

Living with extended family members was a confronting experience for most of the 36 foreign wives who had or currently lived in such an environment.<sup>12</sup> The presence of parents-in-law tended to complicate the process of establishing the relationship between

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<sup>12</sup> Living arrangements in extended families vary: the family members may share the ablutions and kitchen, and have meals together, they may share the same ablutions and kitchen, but have two facilities such as refrigerators and washing machines, and cook separately, or there may be two separate ablutions and kitchen for parents and a husband, wife and children, on the ground floor and the upstairs respectively.

husband and foreign wife at the beginning of the marriage. While five women achieved a satisfactory relationship with their parents-in-law, the majority were annoyed by the apparently strong bond between a son and his parents and by the extent of parental control. Il-Mi had been married for two years, and lived with her husband and mother-in-law in the Mogami region:

My husband always agrees with what his mother says. He is 42 years old. Even if this is his first marriage, he is an adult and should know [how to treat a wife]. I told him to ask his colleagues. In the beginning, he used to tell everything to his mother, like where we went and how it was. (Il-Mi 1996)

Parents-in-law could interfere with a wife's attempt to make her husband help in household chores. When one woman asked her husband to help with housework, his mother stopped her saying, 'A husband does not do such things around here' (Pingping 1996). For two women, it was excessive parental power and the husbands' weakness in supporting wives' views which eventually caused divorce or separation (Tessie 1996; Emilhe 1996).

The division of domestic roles tended to become an area for conflict in extended families. My interviewees struggled between an imposed role and control over household work. There was sometimes an assumption that wives would take over responsibilities for the household duties from their mothers-in-law: 'At first, my husband always said to his mother to have a rest. I worked outside and did all the household work. I didn't enjoy it' (Aimei 1995), 'I saw a pile of dirty dishes in the sink after coming back from work, and literally cried' (Sok-Chin 1995). Both Aimei and Sok-Chin preferred their control over the housework, but complained of a lack of help from their mothers-in-law. They felt the double burden of housework and paid work was unbearable. When negotiating this unreasonable responsibility, the women often did so through their husbands. For example, Aimei convinced her husband successfully that performing some household duties would keep his mother healthy rather than watching TV all day. Then her husband encouraged his mother to do some housework (Aimei 1995). The development of a strong husband and wife relationship was thus crucial for

the marriage migrants if they were to influence the division of household work and establish their status in an extended family.<sup>13</sup>

The reproductive work of child raising became one of the most contested issues for some foreign wives. Involvement of parents-in-law in child raising was at times felt as interference with a mother's power and autonomy, although their participation enabled those with pre-kindergarten children to participate in the labour force. Differences in child raising practices, particularly concerning methods of discipline, caused problems. Some wives believed the use of physical punishment was necessary when children were small and disobeyed parents. Their mothers-in-law interfered when the wives wanted to discipline their children:

When a child is small, one has to teach that 'no' means 'no'. When my son does not listen to what I say, I smack him. Then, my mother-in-law shouts at me that 'your people [in South Korea] use violence to bring up children'. Are all Koreans gangsters? My mother used to smack me to discipline me when I was a child, but we did not grow up as gangsters. (Youngsu 1996)

My mother-in-law never hurt my kids. That's why my children like her. She protects them so much and I hate it. Sometimes my son wants to have all the attention to himself, and does a lot of bad things when I am busy. If I say to him you are bad, she used to say 'it's you who were bad, not the child'. (Rose 1995)

Both Youngsu and Rose felt their autonomy over child raising was under threat because of the mother-in-law's strong influence on their children. Their children occasionally confronted their mothers by mimicking the attitudes of mothers-in-law to taunt them. As both women worked outside the home, they had less contact with their children than their mothers-in-law had during the day.

Negotiations over child raising happened daily for these women both indirectly through husbands and directly confronting parents-in-law. Youngsu noticed an improvement, but she was still disgusted with the situation to the point of not wanting to have a second child at the time of the interview (Youngsu 1996). Rose once threatened her

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13 One domestic responsibility which was not favoured particularly by some Filipino women was the practice of praying at a household Buddhist altar, which they felt undermined their religious beliefs. The Japanese household traditionally has such an altar where a family member offers some food to worship their ancestors. It is part of the duties for a housekeeper to offer some cooked rice and tea everyday. The women deal with this practice in various ways. Some served food, accepting this as housework, but would not worship at the altar (Gloria 1995, Connie 1995, Lisa 1996). One completely refused to do it (Melly 1996).

mother-in-law with a knife to stop her feeding her child an excessive amount of snacks in an unhygienic way. She also mentioned threatening divorcing her husband and this brought changes in her mother-in-law's attitude: 'She [mother-in-law] is no longer over-protecting my sons now, and does not come between us any more. When I say something to my sons, she just keeps quiet. That is an improvement' (Rose 1995). On this occasion, her threat of divorce worked effectively as a powerful weapon in swaying her mother-in-law. However, at the same time she felt that her husband still tended to leave matters to his mother, and she lacked responsibility over her children as if she was 'just a mother figure, a decoration or something' (Rose 1995). The division of reproductive work between a mother-in-law and a wife caused a sense of alienation for the foreign wife. Giddens (1993: 739) points out conflicts occur when 'there is a clash of interest' and when people are engaged in 'active struggle'. Foreign wives faced conflicts as they struggled to establish a maternal position through performing mother roles in the extended family.

The confrontation between *yome* (daughter-in-law) and *shūtome* (mother-in-law) is a familiar theme in Japan<sup>14</sup>. However, the conflicts surface differently for foreign wives, compounded as they are with ethnicity issues as indicated in the above statement by Youngsu. Some parents-in-law persistently regarded their daughters-in-law as if they were from a backward country. Two women said that they could 'feel' a discriminatory attitude from their parents-in-law because of their ethnicity (Comie 1995, Wha-Sook 1995). Foreign wives' ethnic identities could sometimes be used as a tool to negotiate with their husbands, but they had less effect over their parents-in-law who expected a Japanese *yome* with little appreciation of cultural differences. Foreignness becomes a tool of criticism, not defence.

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14 See for example, the description of the term *shūtome* (mothers-in-law) in Cherry (1987), that depicts common conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, and explains that 'unlike the Western model, where the wife's mother and husband clash, the classic Japanese scenario pits the husband's mother against his wife' (1987: 133)



Initiating changes in their lives with extended families was difficult but not impossible. Four women living in the rural area successfully persuaded their husbands to live separately from parents-in-law, usually after a series of major arguments. These women felt that their parents-in-law would not change, and wanted control over how they lived (Sok-Chin 1995; Hye-Jin 1996, Suk-Shin 1996, Grace 1996). Their Japanese husbands commonly delayed the decision, and the wives had to threaten divorce to force them to live separately from the parents. All the women were satisfied with their decision to move out from the parents' house, and felt that their relationships with their husbands improved. One commented that her relationship with her parents-in-law also improved as they started to respect her 'way of doing things,' evidenced, for example, when minding her children (Sok-Chin 1995).

These women were fully aware that they and their husbands challenged the 'norm' in a rural community where the extended family setting and the first-born son's patrilineal responsibilities remained strong. These couples' decisions to move out had an effect on residents in the communities, initially stirring accusation that 'wives from South Korea abandon elderly parents'. The foreign wives tried to ignore the gossip in pursuit of their 'own happiness in marriage, not for others' (Hye-Jin 1996). Two women themselves worried that living separately might work against them when applying for citizenship or permanent residency status (Sok-Chin 1995, Grace 1996).

Nonetheless the women's determination influenced other foreign wives. Sok-Chin was delighted that another Korean woman decided to follow in her steps after observing her establishing an independent household. This person did not have the 'courage' to do so before for fear of negative rumours (Sok-Chin 1995). Sok-Chin's action presented an alternative to putting up with unhappy extended family situations for other foreign wives. They clearly demonstrated agency in resisting the imposed social milieu, persuading their husbands to move, and then jointly disputing the extended family system which they felt worked to the disadvantage of a young couple, and particularly of a young foreign wife.

While living with extended family members, two Korean women who used to run their own businesses in South Korea showed their autonomy in contributing greatly to the planning of their families' farming. Both women persuaded reluctant families to diversify and value-add to their farming, such as making and selling processed food using crops from their farms. Their commitments indicate they were no longer outsiders or 'just mother figures', but insiders who were willing to participate, take responsibility, and direct the household economy. Describing changes over the last four years in her marriage, Soo-Mi commented on her active involvement:

I felt really oppressed at first, thinking why did I have to live in the countryside and help with farming. It was like hell everyday. But now I think I should be *independent* as much as possible I came to care about other family members more. I also came to think if I have to do [farming] anyway, I had better actively do it (Soo-Mi 1995, emphasis added)

She was greatly interested in the trend of consumer tastes, and the commercialisation of family farming which was the main source of the family's income. Her sensitivity to market demand proved right when the type of rice crop she insisted be doubled sold well owing to its popularity in the urban areas. Her family also joined a group of farmers who, using products from their farms, processed food such as pickles or cakes, and sold them directly to consumers at various markets. In this way, individual households were able to earn more from their raw crops by value adding. Soo-Mi makes food products with her mother-in-law, drives a van to take them to the sites and sells them with other members of her group. She hopes to venture into the restaurant business or a drive-through lunch bar which sells rice balls made from their rice. Another woman, Jung-Hee, who has been married for six years, started commercialising *kimchi* (Korean pickles). Farming became the family's main source of income when her husband lost a long distance carrier job three years ago. After that, she thought she had to do something and proposed Korean pickle making. Her family kept saying 'it's difficult' as they had never done business before, but eventually she managed to convince them to spend one million yen for her project. She then obtained a licence from a local health centre, designed packaging using her graphic design skills, and arranged to place them at a nearby grocery shop, all by herself. To her luck, someone from a food processing centre saw her products and offered to be their wholesale dealer. After the initial success, it became her family's business, and they expanded their Chinese cabbage acreage. Claiming that she has become the main decision maker

in her household, Jung-Hee ascribed her success to her forward thinking attitude: '[The best way is to] negotiate directly, with confidence' (Jung-Hee 1996)

These two women represent a significant minority whose performance sharply challenges the representations of powerless 'rural Asian brides' who are forced to be 'Japanised' and carry out demeaning work on farms. They demonstrate that becoming an essential member of a receiving family does not necessarily require complete cultural assimilation. Nor does adapting to rural farming necessarily imply acceptance of a prescribed traditional role is always a passive act. Their success challenges studies which emphasise conflicts between the 'Asian' women and Japanese families (see for example, Nakazawa 1996), and which resulted in ascribing a static 'outsider' identity to foreign wives. A Japanese husband and his parents may present a formidable front to a new foreign bride, but she can bring about changes in their attitudes and relations. Equally, young couples sometimes confront the older generation in the household, where 'us' means a foreign wife and her Japanese husband, and 'them' her parent/s-in-law. The boundaries of outsiders and insiders within a household are not fixed but shifting, reflecting dynamics of family and community relations.

### **7.3 Experiencing the Paid Work Force**

The marriage migrants' domain was not limited to the spheres of marriage and family. All the respondents except four women have or had paid work in Japan. The general environment of the gender-segregated, urban-concentrated labour force, compounded by the women's ethnicity and their level of Japanese language proficiency, largely determined the types of work they could perform and hence their wages. As is well demonstrated by Lam (1992), Eccleston (1989) and others, the Japanese labour market is strongly segmented by gender. Labour force statistics in 1993 indicated that women comprise 40.5 per cent of the total labour force, of which 31.8 per cent were part-time

workers<sup>15</sup> (Nihon Fujin Dantan Rengōkai 1994: 275). The growth in the number of part-time working women since the 1960s was largely attributed to the entry of married women into the workforce (Nakamatsu 1996). The process of 'housewifisation' of the labour force in developing countries (Mies 1987) has similarly been observed in Japan. Women are concentrated in the lower paid sectors of manufacturing, wholesale, retail, restaurant and the services industry or in menial positions in other sectors. Female full-time workers on average earned merely 58.9 per cent of the monthly salary of male workers in 1992 (Nihon Fujin Dantan Rengōkai 1994: 282). In general (including full-time and part-timers), the average female wage was 51.1 per cent of that of males due to the large number of female part-time workers widening the salary differentiation further (Sakurai 1994:76). The vast capital concentration in Tokyo and a few other urban cities further limits available jobs for married women in regional areas.

The significant inflow of foreign immigrants from other Asian countries since the 1980s added a factor of ethnicity into the Japanese labour market (see Chapter 3). Foreign workers were clustered in the labour intensive jobs and were sometimes paid less than Japanese men and women. Whereas male foreigners of Asian origin were concentrated in factory labour for medium and small size subcontracting firms in such industries as automobile and electrical appliances, construction and the services industry, females were predominantly concentrated in the entertainment and manufacturing industries. The average payment for foreign women was reported to be around 25 per cent less than for foreign men in similar job categories (Mori 1997: 173-175, 180). Gender, ethnicity and the legality of their visa status influence their positions and wages in the segmented labour market.

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15 This figure by the Management and Coordination Agency defines part-time workers as those working less than 35 hours per week. However, some other reports indicate over 25 per cent of part-time workers are scheduled to work more than 35 hours per week and if those numbers are included, around 40 per cent of the total labour force is estimated to be female part-time workers (Sakurai 1994: 70). Ōsawa (1994: 75-109) points out that 'part-time work' in Japan does not necessarily refer to working hours, as some 'part-time' workers work as many hours as full-time workers. It primarily refers to the employment status of workers, which is marked by job insecurity and lower pay. Some part-time workers are often excluded from various provisions such as bonuses and paid holidays, and from membership in mainstream unions (Kojima 1994: 90-97).

The women I interviewed usually obtained their jobs through a public employment office, often with the assistance of their husbands, their relatives in Japan, neighbours, or other migrant women. They participated in the paid work force with the intention of obtaining their own money (including, in some cases for the purpose of remittances overseas), avoiding conflicts with parents-in-law, alleviating loneliness and/or supporting the household economy. They also regarded paid work as contributing to their self-development: 'I wanted to feel [I was] doing something worthwhile' (Hye-Jin 1996); 'improving Japanese language and learning customs' (San-Min 1995). Chinese women commonly valued paid work over staying at home. Huiying, a university graduate and school teacher in China said, 'I worked more than ten years [in China] so I don't want to be just a housewife' (Huiying 1996). Similarly another university graduate accountant commented, 'It's no good to stay at home without a job because I worked all the time in China' (Zhenni 1996).

The need for remittance to their natal families was most frequently mentioned by Filipino women and those who left children by a previous marriage in their countries of origin. The degree of priority given to remittances differed among individuals, but one case demonstrated the importance of remittances in the lives of some of these women.<sup>16</sup> Gina, who has ten younger siblings and experienced economic hardship when living in the Philippines, stressed the need to support her natal family financially. Her public servant husband's salary had to cater for their Japanese family including three children and parents-in-law. When she lost her job of eight years at a car-parts factory due to recession, she decided to work in a bar in the nearby regional town in order to be able to

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16 Nine Filipino women regularly send money to their families in the Philippines. The family provides the prime financial support in the Philippines, which lacks a social welfare system (Cahill 1990: 48; del Rosario 1994: 159). One woman stopped regular remittances after she and her husband bought a car for her family in the Philippines to start a business. The attitudes towards remittance vary among the women, and the issue of family obligation frustrated some of them. One woman said that the Filipinos who work in Japan return home with their earned money and many flashy Japanese goods and that influences others' perception about all Filipinos in Japan, including married women. She continued 'That's why it is natural for our parents to ask us for money. It is no good to leave them there [with such a misapprehension]. On the other hand, they are your parents or siblings so it is hard to say "No". If you say so, they may complain about you. So there are many people feeling caught in this situation. I give you an example. Some time ago, my mother converted her deceased son's house to an apartment and asked me to pay the full cost. Just like that. We paid some of the cost. It's like two different worlds' (Cynthia 1996).

continue sending remittances. When commuting to work at night caused inconvenience she started renting an apartment alone in the city, returning home early in the morning to prepare her children for school. Her husband and children stayed at her apartment on weekends (Gina 1996). Despite her husband's objections, continuation of paid work was essential for her to maintain steady remittances.

Amongst the respondents, 31 women were in the paid labour force at the time of interview (see Table 7-2). Table 7-3 indicates current and previous jobs held by the women. The most common job category was production and process work (59%), followed by professional and clerical work (12.5%), hospitality (12.5%), farming (9%) and sales (7%). The employment status of the majority (73.6%) was part-time or casual (see Table 7-4).

**TABLE 7- 2 Main Occupation in Japan at the time of interview**

Occupation	South Korean	Chinese	Korean-Chinese	Filipino	Total	
					Frequency	Percentage
Professional/Clerical	2	1	1	2	6	19.3
Sales	2			1	3	9.7
Production/Process Worker <sup>a</sup>	5	1	1	8	15	48.4
Hospitality	1	1		1	2	9.7
Farming <sup>b</sup>	3	1			4	12.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Not in the Paid Work Force</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	

<sup>a</sup> This category includes piece workers at home.

<sup>b</sup> This category does not include those who occasionally helped with family farming but did not receive specific payment. The three South Korean women in this category were engaged in household farming as well as producing and selling processed food such as *kimchi*, generating additional income. One Chinese woman was employed as a farm hand at a mushroom farm.

**TABLE 7- 3 Current and previous occupations in Japan <sup>a</sup>**

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>South Korean</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Korean-Chinese</i>	<i>Filipino</i>	<b>Total</b>	
					Frequency	Percentage
Professional/Clerical	2	2	1	2	7	12.5
Sales	2			2	4	7.0
Production/Process Worker	12	6	1	14	33	59.0
Hospitality	2	3		2	7	12.5
Farming	4	1			5	9.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Never in the Paid Work Force	2	1	1	0	4	

<sup>a</sup> Multiple response

**TABLE 7- 4 Current and previous occupations in Japan by employment status**

<i>Employment status</i>	<i>Professional/Clerical</i>	<i>Sales</i>	<i>Production/Process Worker</i>	<i>Hospitality</i>	<i>Farming</i>	<b>Total</b>	
						Frequency	Percentage
Full-Time	4		10			14	26.4
Part-Time/ Casual	3	4	23 <sup>a</sup>	7	2 <sup>b</sup>	39	73.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> This category includes piece workers.

<sup>b</sup> The number excludes the three Korean women who are self-employed. See 'b' in Table 7-2

In the production and process work in factories, the women usually performed sewing or ironing in clothing and textiles industries, assembly operations in the electrical appliances industry or chocolate packing and sandwich making in the food processing industry. The size of the factories varied from a family-operated backyard company with a few employees to large firms with over 150 workers and a child care centre for staff. Many of their colleagues were married middle-aged Japanese women. Those engaged in part-time work earned 70,000 yen to 100,000 yen monthly (about A\$ 930 to A\$1,330) and others in full-time work typically around 150,000 yen (about A\$2,000).

Their wages were often below the average wage of Japanese women with the same working hours, industry and locality indicated in official statistics. My respondents with part-time manufacturing jobs in the rural region received around 600 yen (about

A\$8) per hour in 1995 and 1996, whereas the average rate for the same type of job shown in the official statistics was 663 yen in the same prefecture (Yamagata-ken Kikaku Chōsei-bu Seishōnen Josei-ka 1994: 42) and 750 yen according to national statistics in 1992 (Nihon Fujin Dantai Rengōkai 1994: 284). This may be because the foreign wives commonly started from the lower paid positions and held relatively shorter employment periods. One woman who used to be a dress maker in an up-market boutique in South Korea was assigned to a menial assembly line job in a textile factory despite asking for more complex sewing tasks (Yongsu 1996) and hence 'became deskilled' (Vasta 1991: 165). National patterns of urban and rural wage differences influenced the migrant women's wages accordingly. In a food-processing factory, one woman in an urban area was paid the hourly rate of 850 yen (about A\$11) for chicken meat cutting in 1994 and after a few months 1,000 yen (about A\$13) for meat slicing work with a machine involving some risk.

Six women took up manufacturing piecework at home such as soldering electronic appliance parts or loose thread cutting. Manufacturing piece work is one of the most feminised or 'housewived' and thus severely underpaid forms of work in Japan. For the last decade, more than 90 per cent of piece workers have been women. The total number of women piece workers dropped by 52 per cent between 1970 and 1991, concurrent with the expansion of female part-time employment in service and other industries. The average age of female piece workers reached 47.6 years old in 1991. The official statistics recorded that average female piece workers earned 459 yen per hour (about A\$6.1) which was 45 per cent less than that of male workers at an average of 50,000 yen per month in 1991, although other reports indicated much lower earnings than this (Kamio 1992). The earnings of the six migrant women who engaged in piece work varied from 10,000 yen to 110,000 yen per month (about A\$ 130 to A\$1,470) depending on the hours they spent, types of work, and efficiency. One woman who earned 110,000 yen in the year she migrated spent all day soldering. Her husband often left home at 5:00 am and did not return until midnight and she had nothing else to do in her apartment near Tokyo. She did it for three months (Cynthia 1996). Only one woman has continued this form of work for a prolonged duration of six years. She became



pregnant soon after her arrival eight years ago and later had to care for her mother-in-law (Virginia 1996) and so had no option but to work from home.

Professional and clerical work includes office work at marriage agencies, language teaching and assisting foreigners at public community centres or local government offices. The latter jobs offered good hourly rates, as high as 5,000 yen (about A\$67), but only short hours. Four women worked with the marriage agencies that had arranged their own marriages, performing administrative tasks and consulting clients at an average monthly salary of 200,000 yen (about A\$ 2,670) (see Chapter 8 for an exploration of this issue). A Chinese woman was the only one engaged in office work other than at marriage agencies. She performed various administrative tasks, including translations, in a small-sized trading company which deals with China. Her monthly salary did not exceed 100,000 yen (about A\$ 1,330) (Zhenni 1996).

The four women who are or have been in sales positions all worked part-time in a supermarket or at stalls. They worked shorter hours and received slightly higher starting hourly wages than their counterparts in factories. Jobs in the hospitality industry included working as a kitchen hand and serving in a restaurant or a bar. Three women in this industry at the time of interview worked at a bar in a regional city, one as a hostess and two serving at the counter, and earning more than 1,000 yen per hour (about A\$13).

Although involvement in the paid workforce offered wages and contact with the host society outside the family domain and was generally considered as better than staying at home, it did not contribute to occupational upward mobility for the migrant women.

The women engaged in factory work expressed the most dissatisfaction with the content of their work regardless of the reasons to obtain paid work. Self-development was seldom realised with mentally tedious and repetitious work they were assigned. Performing monotonous tasks among more productive and experienced Japanese workers humiliated some women and made them resign after a few months. Others

who were in factory work for a number of years dealt with my question about the level of work satisfaction, saying: 'I don't ask for enjoyment or worth [from my job]. Work is work. You work hard and receive money' (Anita 1996), 'The workplace is OK but the work is stiff. But at least I am not [working as] a strip dancer' (Rose 1995) or 'I became used to it, so it's all right now' (Grace 1996).

A few advantages that the women in the factory work pointed out included their acquisition of some human relations skills and Japanese language skills. Most colleagues in their sections in factories were married Japanese women in their 30s to 50s. A small number of the foreign women commented that their colleagues were helpful at work, and they learned recipes for Japanese cooking and enjoyed occasional outings such as *karaoke* singing with their Japanese colleagues. Another benefit pointed out was that some factories had several foreign women working at the same time which provided relief in being able to chat in their native languages during lunch time and after work.

On the other hand, when asked about dislikes associated with their workplace many complained about Japanese female workers' lack of respect for privacy, liking for gossip, backstabbing, dirty jokes and racism. For example, Lisa was annoyed about being asked about the details of her daily routine (Lisa 1996). A 26-year-old Korean woman recalled her embarrassment with Japanese women in her section often telling lewd stories (San-Min 1995). For Japanese female workers, gossip and sexual jokes may be a form of resistance to their tedious work, but these practices disturbed the foreign women to whom they appeared as dominant cultural forms. The foreign women tended to identify these Japanese workers as 'middle-aged' or 'old', 'uneducated' 'mothers' who 'gossip the same boring stories of someone's wedding and funeral' (Shuyi 1995) and 'seem not to even read newspapers' (Aimei 1996). These associations also highlighted dissatisfaction with their present jobs which did not match their expectations.

The majority of the women in factory work experienced overt or covert racism. In dealing with the hostile attitude of their Japanese colleagues, the women at times ignored such behaviour but other times resisted directly. San-Min felt that her

colleagues treated her 'like a child' asking her simple questions such as whether her husband was gentle because she 'came from another country'. She was disturbed by those questions in the beginning but did not usually argue, taking advice from her Korean aunt, who also married a Japanese and lives in the same area (San-Min 1995). When reading an English magazine, Rose was once told to read Japanese ones to improve her Japanese language. She handled the situation by saying 'but I don't know which one to read' (Rose 1995). Two women described their experience of resisting directly:

Well, those Japanese *obasantachi* (middle-aged women), they can be mean. They know we are foreigners. They don't say but they don't like us. Once one woman accused me of not washing my hands [before starting to make sandwiches]. [So I said] "Who? Me? Did you see? I bet you didn't. I'm not a child. I knew all that [about hygiene]. You stupid idiot." Then this woman said "Oh! You understand Japanese?" So I replied "Yes, I do". So you see, they are mean when we don't understand Japanese. They treat us unfairly because we are foreigners. They won't stop if you keep quiet. It's no good. (Emilie 1996)

Those *okāsantachi* (mothers) at work are also old fashioned so they sometimes say mean things about the colour of my clothes or smell of my perfume. They should say directly if they don't like the smell, but they just do like this [to cover their nose with their hand]. Well, they look down on foreigners. Those Japanese think we don't understand what they are saying so they think it's all right to say anything. I answer back. All the more I say worse things. I won't give up. (Tessie 1996)

Both women emphasised the importance of responding with courage and claimed the Japanese women they argued with changed their attitude and became kind after these incidents. As Italian migrant women workers in factory work complained about racism from their fellow Anglo-Australian women workers (Vasta 1991), the foreign women in Japan also expressed discontent with their fellow workers' attitudes. Gender and class relations in Japan confined Japanese working class 'housewives' to factory work. The same social structures assimilated married foreign women into gender- and class-based work, where their ethnic backgrounds attracted discrimination.

The foreign wives who were engaged in other than factory work generally expressed reasonable satisfaction with their work. Connie and Aimei had worked in a factory but Connie changed to a sales job and Aimei to bar work. Connie, who serves at a shop in a leisure centre, regarded working conditions of her present job as much better than her previous factory job (Connie 1996). Aimei said, 'I used to spend all day in a factory with middle aged women. My customers now include company owners or officials from a

public office. They talk about politics and economics. I have come to know Japan better [as a result]’ (Aimei 1996). Connie had no problem with her colleagues, but mentioned the racist attitudes of customers who reacted by looking at her and talking in whispers, or asking loudly whether she was Filipino. Since they were customers, it was difficult for her to complain. Foreign women can become the subject of discrimination when their work is exposed to the public because of their differences.

In contrast, the foreign women’s ethnicities can be ‘appreciated’ in bar work. After resigning from her factory work, Aimei, who needed to support her child in China, worked for three months with other Korean and Chinese women in a large up-market bar. It was situated in a regional city and was owned by a resident Korean. She then moved to a small bar in a nearby town which employed two other Japanese workers. She boasted of the increase in the number of customers owing to her arrival at the bar, where she was valued because of her ethnicity. But because bar work is not regarded as desirable for married women in Japan, Aimei pretends to be an overseas student to her customers (Aimei 1996). Aimei’s move to bar work was made easier by the entertainment industry which had already established ethnicity-based differentiation in their services. The entertainment industry has been one of the most common workplaces for women migrant workers from the neighbouring Asian countries. In her study of the Filipino wives of Japanese men in Metropolitan Tokyo, Suzuki (2000) noted some of her respondents continued or began to work as hostesses after marriage. Yet ‘Asian’ women in the hospitality industry were often stigmatised as sex workers. The legality of residential status of foreign wives of Japanese nationals does not in theory restrict the occupations they undertake; yet in reality the accessible workplaces are greatly limited. The entertainment industry offers better payment and stimulus than factory work, ‘valuing’ the foreign women’s sexuality.

Language teaching and advisory services my informants performed can also be categorised as ethnic-based work. Generally, such work was offered by a local community centre or a local government. Job satisfaction was greater with this kind of work but the limited number of work hours made it no more than secondary casual work. Aimei, whose major employment is in a bar, enjoyed teaching Chinese language

once a week to Japanese at the local community centre – a job she has held for over two years (Aimei 1996). Similarly, Soo-Mi expressed her pride in teaching Korean language to local Japanese including her husband. Her once-a-week class has been running for three years. She takes her class to a small Korean restaurant owned by her Korean friend after lessons and once she took her class on a week's tour in South Korea. However, her contentment with this job is only half realised because of short hours and small earnings (Soo-Mi 1995). Cynthia, who used to do piece work at home, offered telephone advisory services for Filipino women in an urban local government office. She also expressed great satisfaction with the content of her work, from which she learned about available support programmes and information including lawyers for migrants. She would like to have more hours but the local government offers limited hours of service for each designated ethnic group. She is also fully occupied as an active member of a Filipino women's group (Cynthia 1996). Full-time jobs available to these migrant women are largely limited to manual labour in factories. When they seek worthwhile paid work, available jobs are rigidly restricted to those which are ethnicity-related and often are limited in available working hours.<sup>17</sup>

Involvement in the paid work force did not promote self-development for many women but offered wages and contact with the host society and so brought some changes in the women's relations with their husbands or parents-in-law in the private domain. Earning wages contributed to an increased sense of independence at home. As we have seen, wives' wages created new conflicts when the women lived with parents-in-law, yet at the same time such conflicts made some women refuse to accept the conventional practice of one 'wallet' in a household. The division of household work generally became clearer between wives and mothers-in-law when women took paid work, although the mother-in-law's child-minding responsibility in the daytime often conflicted with the mother's control over her children. Working outside also offered a place to go out of the household and helped to ease tensions between the wives and

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<sup>17</sup> The women who have never had paid work after migrating to Japan also expressed the limitation of jobs they would consider taking. One woman commented that for a married woman to take up an available paid job such as a factory work was a working class practice (Son-Fwa 1996)

parents-in-law. With respect to the division of domestic duties, some husbands started to take more responsibility after wives joined the labour force, while others did not change their contribution. Participation in the labour force also provided the foreign women with reference points beyond their family members. They could judge some matters independently from the views of their family members by asking or observing other Japanese people at work.

On the other hand, paid work increased some women's appreciation of their families. Some women consulted with their husbands or parents-in-law to solve problems which happened at work. For example, Huiying asks her 'wise' father-in-law for advice on her work-related matters when she does not know how to handle them (Huiying 1996). Others noted that minding children after working outside provided them with a sense of relief and joy. Thus, when the family domain became oppressive, outside work offered an escape. The paid work, though tedious, gave the women their own earnings, a sense of independence and a position of strength when handling domestic matters. When their work environment troubled the women, the family could serve as a source of strength and offered a place to return. Neither the family nor paid work was essentially a site of oppression or a source of strength. The meaning of these sites could change according to the situations the women faced.

Vasta (1991) in her study of Italian migrant women in Australia notes that, for many migrant women, the family is the site of female oppression but also operates as a source of resistance to outside racism, and it is this ambiguity and contradiction which makes struggle and resistance possible. For the women of cross-cultural marriage migration, the 'family' can be a site of female and racial oppression as can the outside world. Yet many of these women demonstrated their resistance inside and outside the family domain. When asked what they thought was their source of strength at the time of difficulties in Japan, the majority simply answered, 'myself'. Unlike Vasta's (1991) subjects, for these women it was not the ambiguity and contradiction of the family which made resistance possible, but their determination to be satisfied in marriage and migration. The marriage migrants at times reproduced and at other times attempted to

transform social values and practices imposed on them. Both ways can be defined as their 'resistance', to fulfil their purpose – marriage and migration. Intersections of family, paid work and other social activities sometimes caused pain and stress to the migrant women but at the same time widened their points of reference, and their struggles were ultimately beneficial to establishing their lives in Japan.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

The experience of marriage migration for my informants was primarily defined by their wife/mother role. Gender relations in Japanese families and their reflection in labour markets influenced their post-migration experiences. The women faced Japanese social structures which defined the position of a wife within a family and the types of paid work a married woman would be able to obtain. Conventional structures however did not totally overpower these foreign women's agency in establishing their own marriage and family. The women did not perform reproductive and household work in a manner that was simply imposed on, or expected of them, but instead negotiated many daily matters with their husbands and parents-in-law. Some faced parents-in-law and their 'old ways' together with their husbands. They suffered because of their foreignness, while on other occasions their ethnic identities worked in their favour in negotiations with their husbands. In the paid workforce, their foreignness (including their Japanese language skills) compounded gender limitations, further restricting the range of jobs they could perform. Their ascribed female 'Asian' traits directed them to particular types of jobs. The upward social mobility in career that some of the women hoped to achieve was not realised. Their duties in paid work were largely felt to be oppressive, but participation in the labour force itself and the associated independent income was appreciated. Some faced discrimination at work, but managed to work out how to deal with those problems in various different ways. Their experience in paid work influenced how they dealt with domestic matters and their perceptions of the private sphere. Equally important was the issue of the nature of their introduction marriages. It inevitably surfaced in the way they viewed their marriage and how it was perceived by others. The question of love disturbed many of the women whose notion of ideal

marriage involved love. The women struggled in the experience of marriage migration to re-establish their multiple identities. As one woman commented, those struggles were to be able to live like '*futsū no fūfu* (any other married couple)' (Yongsu 1996), not as a deviant couple.



## 8

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### The Complexity of Power Relations and Identity Construction

This chapter focuses on the tensions that my informants experienced in their relationships with marriage agents, local government bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the State. Such conflict helps to clarify the operations of power and the women's negotiation strategies, and in turn furthers understanding of how the women's experiences of living in contemporary Japan shaped their identities. Somers and Gibson (1994) state that 'social identities are constituted by the intricate interweaving of history, narrativity, social knowledge, and relationality, as well as institutional and cultural practices' (1994:80). This chapter demonstrates how the hegemonic power operating in contemporary Japan influences the marriage migrant's construction of her identity, as she makes decisions in various circumstances.

The first section looks at the relationships between marriage agents and the marriage migrants. The second section views the migrant women's understanding of support programmes offered by some local governments and NGOs. It delineates the tensions between the women and these organisations over control of the programmes, and the related conflicts among the members of the ethnic women's groups.<sup>1</sup> The last section examines the question of legal citizenship, and identifies the factors which influenced the women's preferences on residential status and naturalisation.

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<sup>1</sup> The women's groups concerned here are the rural-based ones. The urban-oriented Filipino women in my sample were also active participants of a Filipino women's group or various church-based activities. For the activities of Filipino wives' groups in Metropolitan Tokyo, see Suzuki (2000)

## 8.1 Marriage Agents and the Marriage Migrants

The relationships between marriage agents and the women are multi-faceted. A woman is regarded as a commodity by an agent, who capitalises on her sexuality, socio-economic vulnerability, and aspiration for a prosperous marriage in a foreign country. She is also a client, and often an active participant in the introduction-marriage procedure. This agent-commodity/client relationship was complicated further when, for example, some of the women knew the agents personally, and others worked for them in their countries of origin before using the service themselves. The agent-client relationship did not always end at the completion of a client's initial marriage, but was occasionally developed, as some women became employees, collaborators, or competitors in the marriage business after their migration to Japan. Once in Japan, some women started to work at marriage agencies, while others introduced their female acquaintances to agents or performed marriage introductions themselves.

A woman's autonomy is evident when she herself becomes a marriage agent, but in this case the exercise of her own agency can be oppressive to her female clients (and fellow migrants), as she in turn commodifies them. The relationships of women and marriage agents show the complexity of gendered power relations, and multiple systems of power that affect migrant women.

One aspect of this complexity is demonstrated by Emillie's arrangement with her marriage agent. Emillie, a 28 year old former factory worker from the Philippines, made a special arrangement with the urban-based agent after separating from her Japanese husband because of his excessive dependency on his mother with whom they lived. Her religious beliefs and active practice as a Born Again Christian also created conflicts with his family although the family had been informed of her religious orientation beforehand. After much hesitation, her husband finally agreed to a divorce and contacted the agent to advise of their intentions, but provided a false account of her behaviour. The agent, a woman whose son was also married to a Filipino person,

uncovered the client's misrepresentation and negotiated successfully with Emillie's husband to maintain their legal relationship so that Emillie could keep her spouse visa until she found another person to marry

The marriage agent benefited from Emillie's renewed status as a commodity, and possibly from introducing another foreign woman to her husband. At the same time, the agent was instrumental in helping Emillie to stay in Japan. Emillie was keen to maintain contact with the agent. There was scope for her to negotiate:

I met seven [male candidates] last month at Mrs Uchida's agency. She asked me to choose [one] soon, but I think I can take time to decide. [Among the candidates I met] one guy, 34 [years old], was good. But he is a first born son, and lives with his parents. He said he would live separately from his parents after marriage, but I refused him because in future we may have to look after them, and they may spoil my children. But he was a nice guy. I still feel regret. He is a cook. A person I am seeing now is a 40 year old carpenter. Mrs Uchida suggested I stay with him for a 'trial marriage'. I can't do things like that. But I stayed with him for a week. He now visits me on Sundays and returns [his home] on Mondays. This person lives alone. (Emillie 1996)

Emillie was very careful in examining the male candidates, and clearly conscious of her worth to the agent, as male candidates were conveniently able to meet her in Japan.

In the meantime, she was working at a sandwich factory near Tokyo, a job her marriage agency helped her to gain, with an income of 150,000 yen to 220,000 yen per month (approximately A\$2,000 to A\$2,900). She managed to send, on average, 100,000 yen monthly to her parents in the Philippines, which enabled them to purchase a residential property. Yet, money was not the main concern for her. She hoped to achieve in the future, 'a happy family with a husband and a child, and to stay in Japan' (Emillie 1996). Her cooperation with the agent in 'defrauding' immigration laws unfavourable to foreign spouses at divorce was necessary in order to achieve this goal. On the other hand, the difficulties she felt in the first marriage convinced her not to encourage other women to take part in this 'instant marriage'. She added, 'If you are weak, well ..., but if you are a strong one, then it's okay. You can satisfy yourself. It's like a gamble. If you win, you got it. But if you lose, *shōganaine* (that's too bad)' (Emillie 1996). She was attempting her second 'gamble', but this time, with the experience of her first marriage, she was more prepared and able to negotiate with the agent, exercising her bargaining power as a valuable client. Her comments also reveal structural constraints she felt as

well as possibilities for change which individuals can create. The relationship between Emily and her marriage agent remained that of client and agent, but power relations were negotiated within that boundary.

I interviewed four women, who worked with the marriage agencies in Japan which had arranged their own marriages (Hye-Sook 1995, Pingping 1996, Remy 1996, Sok-Chin 1995). Some other women arranged marriage introductions for fees after their migration to Japan. The presence of these women demonstrates the problems of dichotomising marriage agents (i.e. exploiters, power holders, males) versus brides (i.e. exploited, victim, and females). The narratives of three women, Remy, Hye-Sook and Sok-Chin, illustrate the complexity of power relations that operate between clients and agents.

Remy had worked as a clerk in a Manila branch office of the Tokyo-based marriage agency owned by Mr. Kitano. She had no intention of marrying a foreigner while working in the office, but her boss's Filipino wife persuaded her to accept a marriage offer from a Japanese client who was attracted to her: 'I couldn't decide, but the talk somehow progressed....' (Remy 1996). From one perspective, the agency used Remy as an employee and later as a commodity in order not to lose a business opportunity. From another, Remy benefited from office work at the agency which she preferred to her previous exhausting teaching job at a primary school, and also from the marriage agent's services, which she accepted with hesitation. After coming to Japan, she initially did factory work such as meat packing, and was working in Mr. Kitano's head office in Tokyo at the time of the interview.

By employing former clients, marriage agencies benefit from their bilingual and other administrative skills, and their knowledge of the marriage system. Agencies can also advertise them as good successful examples of wives to the eyes of potential male clients. The women also gain. Remy's main duties were to answer inquiries from Japanese males and to correspond with overseas contacts in English. She was happy with both her employer and the kind of office work she was now doing compared to her previous work in factories. It was also better than staying at home, which irritated her.

She felt that this opportunity would help her to understand Japanese social conventions more and improve her communication skills. She was also enjoying attending a computer course to which her employer sent her, and hoped to expand the range of duties she could perform in the office. Lack of job opportunities for the foreign wives in Japan limited Remy's choice of work, but working in a marriage agency was an area where she had some experience from her country of origin. Remy's experience is an example of a dependent-collaborative relationship between herself and her Japanese and Filipino employers.

Some brides started arranging marriages in Japan themselves. This could be interpreted as part of the process of empowerment for these women, while disempowering others. Hye-Sook from Korea also worked at the agency which introduced her marriage in Japan. She resigned after a short while, and started to arrange marriages by herself between Korean women and Japanese men, charging fees for male clients. The agent she used to work for commented critically on her having learned her expertise in the introductions business from him, and promoted her business by undercutting his management fees (Yamada 1995). Migrant women can earn a relatively good sum of money through one marriage introduction.

One of the brides whose marriage was arranged by Hye-Sook and her associate in Korea commented that she received some misleading information from them about prospective life in Japan. At the introduction, Hye-Sook promised this woman assistance for the first year in Japan. But, she found that Hye-Sook was indifferent to her problems after arrival and the two do not have any contact despite living relatively close (Young-Hee 1996). Some couples whom Hye-Sook introduced had already divorced and this created tension for her with some of the Korean wives who did not appreciate her side-business. Hye-Sook herself did not expand on the subject when asked about her paid work in the interview, partly because this was a side-line, and she had other jobs to mention.

Hye-Sook described herself as 'enterprising' and 'hating to lose' to the extent that she 'studied Japanese language without sleeping' in the beginning (Hye-Sook 1995). The story

of her involvement in a local women's folklore group appeared in a female oriented magazine (Katō 2000). The article included an account of her revelation of the fraudulent conduct of her marriage agent to other foreign brides and their Japanese families. The article glorified her struggle against the victim image of 'bought brides', inserting her statement that 'we, brides, are not poor, but are fighting' (2000: 82). She appears silent about her own conduct of marriage introductions in the article, and apparently prefers to present herself as a woman of autonomy. If her silence on the issue was a conscious choice, she was attempting to control her social identity. If it was an editorial decision to suppress her marriage introduction activities, then her effort to construct her social identity became caught up in the hegemonic discursive power that pleases Japanese audiences of the year 2000, who are now ready to accept 'beautiful' stories of 'empowered Asian wives'.

However, Hye-Sook's involvement in international marriage introduction can be read as part of an effort to find a successful career in her early years in Japan, one step in the process of establishing herself in a foreign country. At the same time, her conduct was criticised by her female clients who are now also wives of Japanese. This case illustrates the intricate and shifting relationships between agents and brides, and among brides themselves.

These relationships reveal another layer of ambiguity when a migrant woman, as a foreign employee of a marriage agency, deals directly with other brides after their migration. Sok-Chin was also employed by her marriage agency. Her main duty was to assist newlyweds and their newly formed families, which often included parents-in-law. She visited them at home, accompanied women to hospital if asked, and answered calls for help from brides and their families, which ranged from questions about citizenship to whether or not to empty water in a bath tub. Sok-Chin's work is much more involved with individual family matters than Remy's office work, which mainly deals with Japanese male clients. Her employee status is also different from that of Hye-Sook who arranges marriages independently. At the time, the marriage agency Sok-Chin worked for was mostly introducing ethnic Korean women from China. This also places

Sok-Chin, who is from Seoul, in a different position from Hye-Sook whose female clients are from the same country as herself.

Sok-Chin was quite critical of these Korean-Chinese brides, describing them as 'selfish', 'liars', 'money-motivated', 'ignorant of social systems' and 'lacking common sense': 'They don't know what is health insurance, tax, nor a foreign registration card.' 'Because they had hardships [in China], they want to live easy lives here. They want to help their parents and families back home.' 'They had only two meals a day in China, so that they are happy enough if they can eat three meals a day' (Sok-Chin 1995). Her remarks echo a rhetoric common in the media representation of 'Asian brides' and the promotion of these women by Japanese marriage agents in which 'Asia' is represented as 'less developed' and 'the past': 'Filipino women can feel like being in heaven even with a lower level of life in Japan' (Kuraishi brochure n.d.).

When talking about her own experience, Sok-Chin expressed resentment about the assumption by Japanese people that her background was from a poor, developing country. Yet, she made the same assumptions about Korean brides from China. She distanced herself from these women on the grounds of regional differences. This position might be necessary for her to perform her role as an employee of an agent, and the difference in the countries of origin may have offered her a convenient rationalisation. Sok-Chin's pride in having attained fluency in the Japanese language, obtaining office work, and earning twice as much as other migrant women working in factories, facilitated active collaboration with the marriage agent, and her manner appeared oppressive to newly arrived brides: 'If I treat brides kindly, they become selfish. But if I tell them to get their luggage and go home, they listen to me' (Sok-Chin 1995). One of her Korean-Chinese clients certainly felt Sok-Chin was harsh and took the side of the Japanese family (Lanlan 1996). Conflict between Sok-Chin and other brides tended to be aggravated by the ambiguity of their relationships. Sok-Chin needed to face her female clients as a marriage agent, but her advisory work required her to act as a 'senior' bride. Her clients primarily regarded her as a marriage agent, but not in the same way as they regarded the Japanese owner of the company.

Sok-Chin herself was conscious of her ambiguous position in working for a marriage agent and being a foreign bride herself, and felt increasingly resentful of representing the agency and mediating between Japanese families and foreign brides. She commented:

International marriage [I deal with] is different from what I expected. It is *kurai* (depressing). 99.9 percent of Japanese males are those who could not marry Japanese women [because of their inadequacies]. Some have 'handicapped mind'. After coming back from work, all they do is eat and sleep. Is a woman a machine only to produce babies and work? (Sok-Chin 1995)

She criticised her employer's reluctance to pre-select male candidates or to be involved in the problems of brides and their families, and his affiliation with unreliable agents in China. In the end, after one year with the agency, she decided to resign, partly because after-hours consultative work affected her private life, but also because of her disapproval of the agent's conduct.<sup>2</sup>

Like Remy and Hye-Sook, Sok-Chin's work at a marriage agency was part of her attempt at finding a worthwhile career in Japan. Her Japanese agency benefited from employing her, especially assigning her a liaison role between the agency, the brides and their Japanese families. Yet in her collaboration with the agency she was unsupportive of other marriage migrants' struggles as she sometimes took the position of the Japanese family. Unlike Hye-Sook, who started arranging marriages, Sok-Chin did not choose to do so. She stopped building up her career in the international marriage introduction business and remains critical of the marriage system. Her withdrawal from the industry shows her disappointment with and disapproval of the system. Sok-Chin's narrative again reveals the complexity of power relations operating in the industry as well as a different set of personal strategies in the process of establishing her identity in Japan.

The stories of these three women illustrate the interrelations between marriage agents and women who used the introduction system. The diversity of relationships demonstrates a considerable degree of agency among these marriage migrants in the international marriage business system, as well as the multiple points at which power

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2 This marriage agent then employed a Chinese-Korean person, whose duties were similar to those of Sok-Chin (Pingping 1996)



operates. A static understanding of marriage agencies as power holders and brides as victims therefore has serious limitations. In all these cases, the women's relationships with marriage agencies contributed to the construction of how they live in Japan.

## **8.2 Local Governments, Support Groups and the Migrant Women**

The marriage migrants interacted with local governments and non-government organisations (NGOs) in their support programs for foreign residents. While the women generally appreciated the support, tensions occurred when the interests of the women, which were varied, diverged from those of the organisations. Some women gained opportunities to develop themselves in close association with the organisations, whereas others came to view the conduct of the established organisations as self-interested. I will focus on three women who were active in the women's groups: Soo-Mi, who had experience with a local government-sponsored group, and Rose and Imelda, who held opposing perceptions of one NGO group. Soo-Mi and Rose came to question the organisations for jeopardising women's autonomy, and Imelda maintained ongoing collaboration with the organisation because she found it supportive and beneficial.

The local towns and villages in the rural sample of my study invited foreign wives at social gatherings to perform cultural dances, to give cooking demonstrations from their countries of origin, and to make speeches about their experiences of living in Japan. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, these events in effect promoted and hence 'fixed' the 'difference' of foreign brides. While the initial recognition was appreciated, the repeated staging of these stereotyped events made some foreign women feel they were being used to promote the towns. Rose pointed out her name on a program for one of these events, and said, 'My [foreign sounding] name is also an attraction' (Rose 1995). Soo-Mi, who was a leader of a Korean wives' group, similarly complained: 'I asked for some suggestions about the assistance we needed [at a meeting] two years ago. But there was no follow-up of this.... I talked about the lack of job opportunities for us and

other things, but they just said, "You are impressive!" and that's all. Nothing has changed.... I think we are just used for their symposiums' (Soo-Mi 1995).

In such circumstance, Soo-Mi's group has started to try to have more control over their activities and the representations of themselves. Her group was established at the suggestion of the agricultural committee in the town which was in charge of farming heir issues. The section offered Japanese language courses for foreign wives and organised other activities including 'Korean food tasting' for people in the community. For the first two years the agricultural committee coordinated and funded this event in which Korean wives took the limited role of food preparation and serving. But in the third year, there was no community funding available and the women decided to organise the event by themselves, which involved planning, selling tickets, cooking, decorations, entertaining at the event, and cleaning. The event successfully attracted about 100 people and they managed to make some profit which was divided among the participating members. Soo-Mi stated that organising the event by themselves was felt to be better than passively participating in the events organised by the town. She said in her public speech at a local government symposium that their self-reliance was a reason for their achievements (October 27, 1995).

Their attempt to shape their own image in the community was evident when a town official came to take photos of them preparing meals for the Korean food tasting event. The women firmly refused, saying that their photos for publicity should be of the event when they were better dressed, not with their aprons and no make-up. On a previous occasion, a local government official came to take a video at their Japanese language class without their permission. Suspicious of the official's real intention in using the video, they confronted him. He claimed that it was to show their parents in Korea. Doubting this explanation, the women stopped him videoing further saying it was unnecessary as most of them visited Korea regularly. The members in this group as well as in other foreign wives' groups in this area were all very concerned with the prevailing portrayal of them as pitiable or despicable, and made efforts to confront such representations when possible.

Despite their more active role, Soo-Mi felt her Korean group's independence was only half realised. She was concerned that her group was appreciated only as an ethnic group and not as a citizen's group by the local government and in the community:

Well, if the officials at the local government help us, it's easier [to perform our activities]. They did so in the beginning. If they do, we feel that we take part in [events] as townspeople. But when they ask us to organise by ourselves without much support, we feel isolated that they may not recognise us as townspeople. . . . When the town has some festivals or events, it contacts groups in the community to get involved. But they usually do not call us. We get information from somewhere and contact the shire if we want to do something. By the time we contact the town, all the arrangements are already made, and we always, sort of, come afterwards. So we have come to feel that we are not acknowledged as townspeople. We pay local taxes like others, but I feel we are somehow treated differently. (Soo-Mi 1995)

Her group received patronage in the events related to internationalisation in which foreign women were the main 'attraction', but was not given the same attention in other annual community events.

Soo-Mi appreciated her group's autonomy which was achieved partly through open confrontation with the town, but at the same time felt they were forced to act independently. Ang (1996) argues that there is a recent tendency among some authors to overstate the power of ambivalence as a source of strength where the minority can become an unsettling agent. She reminds us that the ambivalent position is an imposed one, and thus it is 'not only a source of power but also a trap, a predicament' (1996: 46). Likewise, Soo-Mi's group stands in an ambivalent position, and she is aware that it is a forced situation. In an era of internationalisation, the foreign women are included '*because of*' (emphasis original) (Ang 1996: 37) their differences (see also Chapter 5). Nevertheless her group continuously attempts to affect the content or terms of difference. She wants the group to maintain its independence and also to belong to the community in its own right, not in the limited way the town or others defined. The group of women demonstrate possibilities of resistance in ambivalence through active efforts to define themselves as full members in a community on their own terms.

When the group uses its collective resources to identify and resist the elements of a 'trap', their ambivalent position in the community can be transformed into a source of power. This process involves active conflicts with people in the community and sometimes within the women's group itself. For example, Soo-Mi found that some

Japanese people who were kind to her initially became less so after she started appearing in a public bulletin and newspapers. I often encountered Japanese participants in 'cultural' events involving foreign wives making comments reinforcing the image of 'poor Asian brides from backward countries'. Soo-Mi's achievements threatened some Japanese who refuse to see her as an articulate and determined person. The foreign women had to learn an effective way to deal with each situation in order to gain strength from this

The women's groups also are not free from conflicts, and do not automatically become a source of power to all the participants. Leadership of Soo-Mi's group was initially assigned to the oldest woman, reflecting common age-hierarchy among social groups in Korean culture. But the members decided to use voting in the following year and Soo-Mi was elected as a leader. The older women who came to Japan before her then stopped participating in the group as they were offended. The Korean women's group, which is clearly a source of power for Soo-Mi, did not serve the same purpose for these women: the empowerment of some members disempowered others. Another example also shows common ethnicity cannot automatically be assumed a basis of solidarity. A Japanese born resident Korean from Osaka attended their Korean food tasting event after having been moved by the newspaper article on the event. The Korean women in Soo-Mi's group did not share this person's passionate sense of ethnic solidarity and joked that she might even be a spy from North Korea. Sharing the same ethnic origin does not necessarily transcend other differences such as locality of residence and circumstances of migration, and cannot be automatically assumed to become a common ground for mutual support and collective resistance.

Soo-Mi's experience with a Korean women's group illustrated the possibility of negotiating with authority. Her story showed diverse conflicts at various levels, both within and without the ethnic women's groups. Further, the narrative highlighted the women's active struggles in having some control over their activities and representation in order to establish themselves on their own terms.

The relationship between migrant women and NGOs can also be contradictory. NGOs aim to assist the recipients of their services but there is a possibility that their work is perceived as an imposition to the recipients' autonomy. The example in this section deals with one prefectural-based, Japanese NGO and its relationship with two Filipino women in the region through the establishment of a Filipino wives' group. These two women have different views on the involvement of the NGO in the wives' group.

This particular NGO was established in 1991 for the purpose of assisting foreign residents and offered various forms of support including Japanese language acquisition, health and mental care, and emergency assistance (Kuwayama 1995). It also offered medical interpreter services and a training course for prospective interpreters. The organization was involved in assisting with the setting up of a Filipino women's group in 1993. Imelda, the first leader of the Filipino group, stated that she and some others wanted to have a place to meet other Filipino women in the region and decided to start the group (Imelda 1995). This view is shared by an NGO representative (Kuwayama 1995: 179-182). On the other hand, Rose had the impression that the NGO influenced the inauguration and appointment of committee members of the women's group (Rose 1995). Other incidents also made her think that the NGO was over-involved in the Filipino group's activities. The group visited the prefectural governor soon after it began. The NGO representative stated that the suggestion for the meeting with the Governor came from the committee members of the Filipino group, and was achieved through the assistance of his NGO which informed the major media in the region (Kuwayama 1995: 185). Rose however believes that the meeting was not at the initiative of the women's group:

He [the person from the NGO] was so eager to go to the Governor's office. We were not sure about our motives but were already in the office, asking for help. We met on Sunday and the next day we were already going there because they had already arranged the meeting. We are not just kids. (Rose 1995)

Further, this member of the NGO indicated that the meeting with the Governor aimed to obtain assurance from the Governor because some Japanese families of Filipino women disliked the women's involvement in the group and prevented them from attending. With such support, they hoped, the group could run smoothly without interference (Kuwayama 1995: 185). His comment suggests the outright objection of some Japanese

husbands to their wives' involvement in the group, and gives the impression that his NGO was defending the women against their husbands and communities. When Rose referred to the women who had stopped coming to the women's group, she said:

Many Filipino women didn't know how to drive [at that time] So if there was a meeting, we had to bring our husbands along. During the meeting, husbands felt too weird listening to a language they didn't understand while waiting inside. They felt neglected. So they said you had better stop this. So to harmonise everything, the wives stopped attending, even though they enjoyed being in the group. (Rose 1995)

If the initial problem that some women had was transportation, the NGO's approach to the Governor was misdirected, and is unlikely to boost the number of the participants in the women's group that the NGO hopes to attain. Rose was also dissatisfied with the group's first gathering party, in which she had expected to meet other Filipino women and their family members. Instead, she found the party was 'jammed with [Japanese] people from local government, the health clinic and NGOs' (Rose 1995). The NGO's apparent over-involvement in assisting the Filipino group led her to state that 'he [the person from the NGO] has taken advantage of our weakness' (Rose 1995). While she understands the intentions of the NGO in seeking publicity and the Governor's support, which was meant to strengthen the position of the migrant women, she disliked the NGO's apparent initiative without fully consulting with the women participants.

Rose stressed that a self-help group should primarily focus on the welfare of the foreign wives and their families. The individual from the NGO also emphasised the importance of a self-help group for the migrants, but his image of an ideal self-help group is of one which organises events and relies on NGO mediation with Japanese society to develop a migrant's confidence and sense of worth to the host country (Kuwayama 1995: 185). Rose eventually became the leader of the Filipino group, and felt that support from the NGO was not so encouraging as with the first leader.

On the other hand, Imelda, the first leader of the group, continued to collaborate with this NGO. Her accounts on the activities of the Filipino women's group mostly agree with that of the NGO representative. She went to Manila with him, and organised a charity group in 1994 affiliated with the same NGO which sent clothes, stationery, and a mobile library to Manila. Her activities attracted good media coverage in Japan (for

example *Yamagata Shimbun* 24 December 1994). Imelda evaluated the work of this NGO very positively. She said that during the course of her association with the NGO she took part in many valuable activities and met a large number of inspiring people (Imelda 1995). Her cooperation with the NGO provided her with indispensable experience and it shaped her migration experience in Japan.

Rose and Imelda perceived the assistance of the same NGO differently and acted accordingly. My concern here is not to judge whose view better reflects 'the truth', but to recognise heterogeneous relationships between foreign women and a non-government support group. Rose's account of the NGO resembles Soo-Mi's ambiguous relations with the local government in her town. Both women liked the idea of having a self-help group and organising events, and valued support from the outside, but they were not happy when they thought other organisations imposed certain roles upon them. They felt that both government and non-government organisations assisted and at times utilised foreign women. The support for migrant women was thus ambiguously liberating or oppressive to the recipients. Their experiences in running ethnic-based groups understandably reflected differing perceptions of these interventions. While participating in an ethnic women's group was generally an empowering experience to the participants, it is problematic to assume that such a group always renders empowerment to migrant women in the same way.

### **8.3 The State and the Migrant Women: Residential Status**

The relationship between the state and the foreign women married to Japanese can be interpreted using the concepts of citizenship. While Marshall (cited in Giddens 1993: 312) distinguished three stages in the expansion of notions of citizenship – civil rights, political rights, and social rights – his approach has been criticized for presupposing the socio-political unity (of Great Britain) and not taking into account class, race and gender differences that influence one's full membership in society (Piper 1998). In the context of immigration and ethnic minorities, as Piper (1998) suggests, a conception of

citizenship that includes both legal and substantive (or practical) aspects of citizenship is necessary. The former involves legal access to citizenship, and civil and political rights in relation to the state; and the latter refers to overall social membership and participation in civil society that articulates a cultural dimension including the aspect of national identity (1998: 79-80). Migrants should have the liberty to fully participate in civic society on the ground of residence regardless of whether or not they acquire nationality in the host country. However, legal and practical aspects of citizenship often intersect and influence the lives of migrants in any country (Piper 1998). This is particularly the case in Japan where the notion of citizenship governing social and legal rights intricately overlaps with the concept of nationality with its racial connotations. Piper (1998), in the European context, pointed out that this mingling of the concepts of citizenship and nationality is rooted in a symbolic relationship of racism and nationalism. Neither the Japanese legal system nor society at large has a concept of citizenship independent of nationality and race, and this gives rise to racism and nationalism. As Ackermann (1996: 131) argues, the state 'must manipulate heterogeneity to construct a single nation to represent' through such means as immigration policies and high court decisions. So, how the state regulates 'foreign' women and how the women perceive their residential status pose important questions in examining these women's lives in Japan.

As suggested elsewhere, the legality of the residential status of non-Japanese is regulated by immigration and nationality laws (Sellek 1997), which set out policies. As these may change over time, they significantly influence migrants' social identities and experience in the host country. Japan employs *jus sanguinis* (the parental system of nationality), and the government does not, in principle, recognise dual citizenship. Article 5(5) of the 1985 Nationality Law specifies that a foreign applicant has no nationality, or would lose his or her former nationality upon taking Japanese



nationality.<sup>3</sup> The government also requires those who receive dual citizenship by birth to 'select' either Japanese or foreign nationality by a certain age (Kokusai Kekkon o Kangaeru Kai 1991: 70-79).<sup>4</sup>

When my respondents were deciding whether to apply for naturalisation or permanent residency, the social implication of the *koseki* (family registration) system which applies exclusively to Japanese nationals had considerable impact on their decision. The Japanese state registers its residents in two categories: Japanese nationals or non-Japanese nationals. The Family Registration Act (*koseki hō*) and the Residents Registration Act (*jūmin tōroku hō*) controls the former, and the Foreigner Registration

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3 The Ministry of Justice may grant naturalisation when an applicant is unable to relinquish his or her former citizenship even when they wish it. Other conditions are that an applicant

1. is twenty years of age or more and a person of full capacity under the law of his or her native country;
2. is of good character,
3. is able to secure a livelihood by the applicant's own property or ability or those of the applicant's spouse or other relatives with whom the applicant shares common living expenses; and
4. has never planned or taken part in insurgency against the Japanese state (Nationality Law, 1984 Article 5).

The 1950 Nationality Law was revised in 1984 due in part to the need to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by 1985 (Taylor 1995). Prior to the revision, a child was unable to acquire Japanese nationality from its Japanese mother, and foreign spouses of Japanese women were unable to apply for naturalisation without having lived in Japan. In 1990, 6,794 people were granted naturalisation (Kokusai Kekkon o Kangaeru Kai 1994: 83-110).

4 The 1984 revision of the Nationality Law established a nationality selection system. The Nationality Law, Article 14, states that selection is the duty of the holders of dual nationality. Under this provision, a person receiving dual nationality before the age of 20 must select either Japanese or foreign nationality before the age of 22. For a person receiving dual nationality after the age of 20, he or she must select within two years of receiving dual nationality. This system gives an impression that in order to retain his or her Japanese nationality, the applicant must declare to 'choose' Japanese nationality *as well as* renounce his or her foreign nationality. However, the declaration of choice by a dual nationality holder should concern only the Japanese government, and whether or not the applicant's foreign nationality is forfeited is determined by the legal system of the foreign country. Thus in practice, retaining dual nationality is possible by declaring to 'choose' Japanese nationality to the Japanese government but not renouncing foreign nationality to the foreign country. The Japanese government actively discourages the dissemination of this information (Kokusai Kekkon o Kangaeru Kai 1991: 70-73; 216-217).

Act (*gaikokujin tōroku hō*) the latter.<sup>5</sup> A cross-cultural family whose members consist of Japanese and non-Japanese nationals is divided in separate registrations.<sup>6</sup> This may result in missing out on or having great difficulty in receiving some social services offered by a local government (Yamada 1993: 39). However, more than such practical inconveniences, my informants were disturbed that their families were not registered as a unit. The women felt that the Japanese government and hence society was reluctant to recognise their position in the family.

Residential status of a Japanese national's spouse is initially permitted under the category of 'Spouse or child of a Japanese National' in the Immigration Law. A visa is usually issued for six months and then extended from one year to three years.<sup>7</sup> A foreign spouse may lose this residential status in the event of divorce or if the Japanese spouse dies. He or she can then apply for *teiyūken* (long term resident status) with the custody of children and the existence of a guarantor strongly influencing successful approval.<sup>8</sup> Since July 1996, foreign nationals who held custody of their children were in principle able to receive *teiyūken* on application. While this is a significant improvement in recognising foreign nationals' care of 'Japanese' children as the reason

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5 Some foreign nationals are exempted from foreigner registration. Some examples of these people include certain long term Korean residents, holders of 'diplomat' resident status, or members and civilian employees of the armed forces of the United States (Japan Immigration Association 1991: 195-196).

6 In *koseki*, the marriage of a Japanese national to a foreign spouse is written in a column reserved for remarks. *Koseki* does not include the Japanese Emperor and the Imperial family as the system originated from the register of the peoples governed by the Emperor (Sakakibara 1992: 168)

7 The one year period may be repeated more than once

8 Long term residence status usually grants one or three years of stay, and can be extended without much difficulty

for residential status, it discriminates against others without children.<sup>9</sup>

*Eiyūken* (permanent residency) or *kika* (naturalisation) promises more secure residential status, but its acquisition demands extensive criteria, and applicants often have to wait one or two years for the outcome. The immigration guideline on permanent residency itself stresses the rigidity of the criteria:

The criteria for permitting the permanent residence in Japan, which has not been a country of immigration, are generally strict. Permanent residence is permitted only when a foreign national has established a permanent base of livelihood and it is deemed that his [sic] permanent residence will be in accord with the interests of Japan. (Japan Immigration Association 1991: 156)

The criteria for permanent residency do not specify the required residence history but indicate that five year's consecutive residence history is the standard. They indicate fewer years for certain people, including spouses of Japanese nationals (Japan Immigration Association 1991: 156).<sup>10</sup>

Naturalisation is open to anyone who has lived in Japan for five or more years consecutively. A spouse of a Japanese national is eligible to obtain naturalisation when

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9 For example, in 1996 a Filipino woman's application for long term residency status was refused. She had lost her husband to leukaemia after two years of their marriage. She lost her case in spite of the fact that her mother-in-law and brother-in-law who lived with her provided assurance (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 3 July 1996). Her Japanese language teacher formed a support group to help her reapplication. The teacher said that when they approached the district immigration office, the officer pointed out her short-term residential history (two years) and the wide age difference between her and her late husband (18 years) as possible evidence of marriage fraud. The officer commented that it would be no problem if she married her brother-in-law. The officer also mentioned the possibility of granting long-term status if the applicant could obtain stable employment. This has been difficult for a person nursing a sick partner (personal interview with the Japanese teacher 23 October 1996). The problems lie in unclear criteria. Although the Minister of Justice authorises the decisions, in effect district officers judge individual cases which may cause discrepancies in decisions.

10 Other conditions for permanent residence are that the person:

- 1 has sufficient assets or ability to make an independent living (not required for spouses and children of Japanese nationals or those who have permanent residence status, and those who have been recognised as refugees),
- 2 is of good conduct (not required for spouses and children of Japanese nationals or those who have permanent residence status) and,
- 3 is in good health.

Applying for permanent residency requires a health certificate, and documents showing: sufficient assets or ability to make an independent living; good behaviour and conduct, and family relations (Japan Immigration Association 1991: 157-159). The Study Group on International Marriage believes that permanent residency has become easier to obtain than before, but there are still many unsuccessful cases which apparently meet the criteria (*Kokusai Kekkon o Kangaeru Kai* 1994: 130). The 1993 Immigration statistics show that 631,812 people live in Japan with permanent residency, and 44.2% are so-called special permanent residents, the majority of whom are long term Korean and Chinese residents (Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice 1994: 40).

he or she has lived in Japan for three or more years consecutively, or has married for three or more years then lived continuously one or more years in Japan (Nationality Law, 1984 Article 7). When applying for naturalisation an applicant must have a statement written in Japanese stating the reason for the naturalisation application. Also required is a summary of the applicant's means of living, such as a bank statement showing the account balance. Other documents include sketch maps of the applicant's residential area and workplace, educational qualifications, documents providing the applicant's identification, such as a birth certificate, and other such documents (Kokusai Kekkō o Kangaeru Kai 1994: 106).<sup>11</sup>

Essentially the legal status of a permanent resident remains as a foreigner, 'a quasi-citizen'. Permanent residency permits the subject's indefinite stay in Japan, but it still requires him or her to register in *gaikokujin tōroku* (foreigner registration) along with other foreign residents. The exclusion of permanent residents from the family register and resident register promotes their foreignness. The aspect of practical social rights for foreign residents such as applying for public service positions has improved since the late 1980s (Kokusai Kekkō o Kangaeru Kai 1994: 167-215).<sup>12</sup> While such improvement has a positive effect on permanent residents, it does not alter their legal status as 'foreigners'. These constraints provide incentives to taking up Japanese citizenship for marriage migrants who are establishing family life with a Japanese national.

When first married, almost all the women including their husbands hardly knew the difference between spouse status, permanent residency, and naturalisation. Many women thought they would automatically receive permanent residency or Japanese

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11 Other documents include curriculum vitae, affidavit, document summarising the applicant's family relations, certificate concerning the applicant's employment, including salary and income tax payment, documents on the applicant's present nationality; the applicant's certificate of foreign registration; and a copy of Japanese spouse's family registration (Kokusai Kekkō o Kangaeru Kai 1994: 106)

12 Foreign nationals are eligible for example in national health insurance, national pension, and child care allowance. The National Assistance Act that provides the poor entitled with financial help, in principle, applies to non-Japanese nationals, but in practice its application to the foreign nationals is limited (Kokusai Kekkō o Kangaeru Kai 1994: 167-215). In terms of political rights, permanent residents do not have the right to participate in elections of the state and the vast majority of local governments

citizenship after a period of time<sup>13</sup> The women also complained about the inconvenience of the frequent requirement to renew spouse visas, and unpleasant experiences when dealing with the officials at Immigration Bureaus or Legal Affairs Bureaus. For example, I accompanied one of the Korean women to the district Legal Affairs Bureau to gather information about naturalisation. The officer told her that he would not explain the procedures if she was still unsure of applying. He then asked whether she could read Japanese and instructed her to read aloud the application form (at Yamagata Legal Affairs Bureau, November 1996). This appeared to have more to do with asserting his authority than judging the applicant's level of Japanese language accurately. The officer then started to explain what documents she needed if she were to apply, including her mother's birth or marriage certificate. He initially insisted that the applicant should obtain from North Korea the documents certifying her mother's first marriage.<sup>14</sup> On her second visit, the same officer made a hurtful comment about Korea. These incidents almost made her lose the courage to continue preparing documents for the application. Fortunately, the officer who dealt with her on her third visit was more approachable, and she managed to carry on with the application (Sok-Chun 1996).

Among the 45 respondents, 11 women decided on naturalisation, including two whose applications were in progress at the time of interview. Two had submitted applications for permanent residency. Of the remaining 32 women with spouse status, four mentioned their preference for naturalisation, 12 for permanent residency, and 16 were unsure. Among these 32 women, 14 had less than three years of residential history in Japan and were not eligible to apply for permanent residency and naturalisation.

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13 A judicial scribe in Yamagata surveyed 50 foreign wives in 1993 to ascertain their understanding of residential status. The findings were that most of those who had less than five years residential history did not know that they needed to apply for permanent residency and naturalisation. Most thought Japanese nationality would be automatically granted after a period of time (personal interview, 20 November 1995)

14 The applicant's mother was born in North Korea, and married there before later marrying the applicant's father in South Korea. After she stressed the impossibility of obtaining such evidence, the officer mentioned that the evidence of an attempt to obtain the document, such as a copy of the letter to the town office in North Korea, would be sufficient (Sok-Chun 1996)

Those who opted for naturalisation gave practical benefits for their reasons. Eleven women included their wish to ensure their current family life and standard of living. Concerns for the welfare of their children were also raised. These women thought naturalisation would secure their relationship with their children and enhance their children's status in Japanese society. Virginia, who has lived in Japan for seven years, said, 'First, for the sake of my children. And for myself. I am going to stay here, so I need it [Japanese nationality]' (Virginia 1996). Young-Joo thought it would be better for all the family members to have the same nationality (Young-Joo 1996). Two 42-year-old Korean women who do not have children with their Japanese husbands were also among 11 naturalised women. One wanted to secure her residential status in Japan because she did not have a child and thought she might be disadvantaged in case of her husband's death or divorce. She would have preferred permanent residency but was advised by a local government official that it would be more difficult to obtain (Hye-Sook 1995). The other woman mentioned the convenience of having a Japanese passport when travelling to other countries (Hoo-Jung 1995). Naturalisation was thought to secure their status in Japan, providing practical benefits.

Juxtaposed with these social advantages, a sense of unfairness that the *koseki* (family registration) system does not recognise foreign spouses also strongly affected the women's decision to prefer naturalisation. Permanent residency is meaningless in this regard: 'I was deeply shocked to discover my name was not in my [Japanese] family's *koseki* (family register)' (Sok-Chm 1995). San-Min, who was waiting for an outcome said:

*It makes me feel sad that koseki does not record my name. What's more, my husband cannot understand my feeling of loneliness because of this.... I am like a cohabitant. I want to be [regarded as] a real wife on the koseki as well. My children are Japanese nationals and accordingly registered, but I am [treated as] a foreigner. I want to show that they are my children, and were born with a proper mother (San-Min 1995, emphasis added)*

*Koseki* divides a family by nationality, and imposes outsider identity on a non-Japanese spouse. In other words, the state denies a foreign national a place in the family in terms of *koseki*. Thus, for many respondents the reason for applying for naturalisation

was to have their status 'properly' recognised, and the action of applying was to 'make me feel stronger' (Gloria 1995) in the country which otherwise would differentiate them.

The *koseki* system itself has attracted criticism from feminists and human rights activists.<sup>15</sup> *Koseki* registers the family as a unit under the head of a family, usually the husband, and in effect puts the family ahead of the individual, and the head of a family above other family members.<sup>16</sup> *Koseki* also records children's birth order in the entry for their relationship to the family head, and differentiates an adopted or illegitimate child using different terms for them. Feminist lawyer Sakakibara (1992) advocates the abolition of *koseki* and urges people to refrain from registering an offspring in an attempt to disorder the system. She states that one's rights as a citizen should be assured without being registered in *koseki* or *jūmin tōroku* (resident registration) if one is obviously a Japanese national living in Japan (1992: 177). The abolition of the *koseki* system would benefit foreign spouses of Japanese nationals in the long term. However, their immediate concern is to be registered with their Japanese spouses and children as one family, and their struggle regarding the *koseki* system is different from that of Japanese whose legal and social identity is not at issue.

Opting for naturalisation brought 'half happiness and half sadness' (Ji-Hye 1996). Seeing their names in the family's *koseki* and residential registration after taking out Japanese nationality delighted all the women, but losing their original nationality brought to some a feeling of sadness. At the same time, many stressed that having been naturalised had little to do with their sense of ethnic identity. Virginia, who had taken

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15 Although it is beyond the scope of my work, the *koseki* system has other problems. One of the well-known problems is that its entry of residential history serves to perpetuate discrimination against *burakumin* (see Eccleston 1989: 199-204). *Burakumin* are descended from outcast groups who until 1887 were placed at the bottom of the feudal hierarchy and lived in segregated communities. The groups were outcast because of their association with animal trades (Eccleston 1989: 198). Many had no choice other than continuing to live in the same areas despite the abolition of the feudal system. Discrimination against those who live in or are from such formerly segregated communities still persists in Japan. The entry of residential history shows the extent of the states' control over the individuals' personal information, and the autonomy of local governments. For example, I have lived in three different cities in Japan outside of my hometown, and accordingly registered myself as a resident at each municipality. Then each city office communicates the resident registration (*jūmin tōroku*) to the town office where my *koseki* belongs (at my birth place, as is most common). All the details of my former addresses are thus recorded on my *koseki*. This conflicts with the protection of one's privacy as *koseki* is in principle open to the public if a certain procedure is followed.

16 The family register records up to two generations in the same register (Sakakibara 1992: 131).

out Japanese nationality one year earlier, stressed that 'I am still Filipino' (Virginia 1996). She added she 'may be like half Japanese' not because of her new nationality but as a result of her acculturation after eight years living in Japan (Virginia 1996). Wha-Sook made a similar comment. She took up naturalisation five years ago soon after becoming eligible to apply: 'I am still Korean. Only on documents am I Japanese. I did not change' (Wha-Sook 1995). Wha-Sook was annoyed by the different understandings of naturalisation between herself and her Japanese acquaintances: 'When I got naturalised, I really felt odd to hear a Japanese acquaintance congratulate me, saying "You truly have become Japanese now"' (Wha-Sook 1995). The ethnocentric connotation in the comment upset her because it undermined her Korean ethnic identities. Wha-Sook did not choose to abandon her ethnic (and Korean national) identities; she just took up Japanese citizenship. The women's emphasis on the lack of impact of naturalisation on their sense of ethnic identity reveals their determination not to be overpowered by the ethnocentric connotation of 'naturalisation' attached in the wider society.

Sellek (1997: 201), observing the Japanese government's preference for *Nikkeijin* (descendants of Japanese living overseas) as foreign workers, noted that the primary determinant of 'Japaneseness' was regarded as lineage or 'race'. If 'being Japanese' depends upon 'Japanese race', and the idea that acquiring Japanese nationality means to become 'Japanese', then nationality carries ethnocentric overtones of becoming 'pseudo-Japanese'. Ijichi (1994: 96) notes that resident Koreans tend to conceal the fact of their naturalisation, and others who maintained Korean nationality may regard such action as a form of betrayal. She argues that the Japanese government tends to treat a naturalised person as a subject of Japan, for example through pressuring an



applicant to adopt and register a Japanese-sounding name as his or her official name.<sup>17</sup> This treatment contributes to the myth of citizenship tied to nationality and ethnicity in the wider Japanese society generally, ignoring the heterogeneous and hybrid perceptions of racial and cultural identities demonstrated by my informants.

Although 11 women who decided on naturalisation stressed that their naturalisation did not weaken or influence their sense of ethnic identity, it apparently had other effects on their daily lives. For example, Gina now lives separately from her family because of her work at night in a regional city. Her decision to live by herself would have been less likely if her residential status had been determined by her position as the spouse of a Japanese national. Naturalisation may also cause different attitudes in dealing with others outside the family. Gina recalled with pride that when a classmate of her eight-year-old son teasingly said to him, 'your mother is a foreigner', her son shouted back, 'That's not true. She became Japanese. She is Japanese and Filipino' (Gina 1996). 'Becoming Japanese' on documents placed her and her son in a better position to deal with racism in daily life, even if it does not address the fundamental problem of discrimination against difference in Japan. Young-Joo who lives near Tokyo described the pressure to act like a Japanese after being naturalised and having decided not to disclose her ethnic background to some people. When her child entered a primary school she thought it was not necessary to mention her Korean background to other parents as she has been contentedly naturalised and revealing it might lead to bullying of her child by other students: 'So, whenever I am asked to say something at parents'

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<sup>17</sup> Until 1986 applicants were often required to change their names at naturalisation to something more Japanese-sounding. In her study of long term Korean residents in Japan, Ijichi (1994: 91-96) noted that the applicant was still 'encouraged' to have a Japanese name, and pointed out the difficulty of rejecting the suggestion for resident Koreans who have been discriminated against. One Filipino woman who obtained naturalisation following her *teijūken* (long term resident status) after her Japanese husband's death said that she agreed to have a Japanese name when the officer at a district Legal Affairs Bureau asked her to do so to demonstrate her seriousness. This person is not among my 45 informants as her marriage was not by introduction. I interviewed her because she was the first person to obtain long term resident status after a husband's death in her prefecture in 1994. She then applied for naturalisation successfully on the grounds of caring for her two Japanese national children. After naturalisation, she had to apply to register her children into her family registration as theirs were in her late husband's family registration, in which she was not registered. She said obtaining naturalisation made a great difference in her mental state. She used to feel uneasy seeing the police and was always nervous at an Immigration or a Legal Affairs Bureau, but 'Now, I have nothing to do with them. I sometimes see the [immigration] officer in town. I turn my face the other way from him. Well, I am now an ordinary Japanese.' She works at construction sites to support her two children (personal interview, 6 October 1996).

gatherings, I feel horrible thinking that I must speak like a Japanese and make no mistakes. Then I get nervous and it makes it more difficult to speak' (Young-Joo 1996). She had been open about her ethnicity at the kindergarten which her child attended, and thus more relaxed about talking to other parents about various matters, including Korean customs. Naturalisation may not have affected her own sense of being Korean, which she claimed 'had not been that strong [before naturalisation]', but it added one more reason for her to act like a Japanese in the dominant society.

All the respondents who opted for permanent residency showed hesitation on the consequences of acquiring Japanese nationality. They raised issues of future possibilities of returning to their countries of origin if they became disaffected with Japan, and antipathy towards 'becoming naturalised Japanese'. Melly, who resides in the countryside, decided to apply after seven years of living in Japan because she eventually felt she had established her home base in Japan: 'I got used to the culture and customs in Japan. Besides, my husband is kind and so are my neighbours'. Asked why she preferred permanent residency to naturalisation, she replied, 'because I don't know what will happen in the future' (Melly 1996). Permanent residency appears to leave the option of returning to a 'home country' more open. Another person, who has two children and lived in an urban area for eight years, was collecting the necessary documents to apply for permanent residency. She described her reasons as:

I don't want to live in Japan when I get old. It seems lonely. If I take up naturalisation, I become Japanese, and I will be a foreigner in my own country when I would return. I prefer being Filipino whenever I return there (Fely 1996)

Two other women expressed the same reasons for their preference for permanent residency. Naturalisation appears to limit their options of going back to their countries of origin, even though they may never do so. Some others expressed a sense of detachment towards Japan: 'Even though I live here, I don't want to renounce being Korean... I am satisfied with my husband, but I cannot become attached to this place' (Myung-Ja 1996). Anita who had lived in Japan for eight years and brought her daughter from her previous marriage to Japan said, 'No matter how happy others are with living in Japan, I don't like it here. So I cannot live here for good' (Anita 1996). For these

women who preferred permanent residency, becoming naturalised would be a measure of their sense of belonging to Japan.

Naturalisation – a form of legal citizenship – makes these women feel uneasy as it threatens their personal identity because of its racial connotation and strong tie with (Japanese) nationalism. Rose who was an active member of a Filipino women's group said, 'I am not ready to become Japanese. I don't want to be Japanese just on documents and for convincing others' (Rose 1995). One other woman firmly said: 'I have compromised many things, but not my nationality. I can't do that' (Suk-Shin 1996). Maintaining one's own nationality was meaningful to retaining a sense of oneself. Despite her strong commitment to maintaining her marriage, Eun-Kyung also expressed hesitancy about being naturalised: 'I want to avoid changing nationality. Some people do it for the sake of their children. But even though you change your nationality, others know that you are Korean. You cannot become Japanese' (Eun-Kyung 1996). Eun-Kyung reveals the pervasive conflation of nationality and race in daily living. Acquiring Japanese nationality does not seem to her to provide a practical protection to herself and her child.

Of the 32 women with spouse status at the time of interview, 12 women preferred permanent residency to naturalisation, and all except one were technically eligible to apply. The majority of women appeared to be postponing any action. If naturalisation is not their option, remaining in spouse status has a similar effect on their daily lives as permanent residency, as long as current living circumstances are maintained. Because permanent residency in Japan does not offer full citizenship, particularly in its relation to the Family Register and Residential Registration, the insecurity of spouse status tends to be overlooked. As one interviewee stated, it is 'anyway troublesome' (Jung-Hee 1995) to prepare for the application when their lives were busy with child minding, household duties, and paid work. Hearsay accounts of the difficulty of obtaining permanent residency, and of less practical benefits compared to naturalisation, influenced women to remain in spouse status despite its apparent insecurity.

Institutional practices construct the social identities of these women but the diversity in their views indicate that they too construct their identities relative to their personal situations and perceptions. If acquiring Japanese nationality can be practical resistance in a society which disadvantages foreign nationals, preference for permanent residency or opposition to naturalisation may represent a practical protest against the state which does not recognise ethnic heterogeneity. What was commonly expressed by the women was resentment of Japan's 'cold' (Hye-Jin 1996) treatment of a foreign spouse, complicated by immigration, nationality and family registration policies. Japan favours foreign spouses of Japanese nationals compared to other foreigners when it comes to residential status. Yet the women whom I interviewed felt that the state appeared to obstruct their 'rightful' place in the family and in Japanese society. One woman angrily said, 'Why are they so strict even though we are wives of Japanese' (Hye-Jin 1996). Another woman shared her anger about a Filipino woman whose application for long term residency after her husband's death was rejected: 'Then, that's it. What are we? We are like fools. Living here for six years, and still getting rejected. Even if she does not have a child, if she had not done anything wrong, why can't she stay here?' (Rose 1996). The state regulates foreign spouses, and this very regulation provokes the women to defend heterogeneity in their daily practice and/or in legal status.

#### **8.4 Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates the complex ways in which power relations are interwoven in the construction of the migrant women's social identities. Relationships between marriage agents and the foreign women were neither singular nor static. The power relations in the client/commodity-agent relationship may shift when a woman, in using the same agent repeatedly as a client, increases her commodity value. In other examples, the client may become a collaborator, a competitor and/or a critic in relation to marriage agents. As a collaborator she may find job satisfaction and a sense of empowerment in her new country where worthwhile jobs are hard to obtain. Yet her work is possibly oppressive to other women clients. Dichotomising marriage agents

exploiters and exploited obscures the diversity of the women's experiences and changes in their individual social identities and relationships

The complexity of power relations was also observed in the women's relationship with local governments and NGOs. The foreign women appreciated the assistance of these organisations, but they resisted their public identity as powerless 'receivers' of help. As the women's active involvement in public affairs progressed, these forms of assistance became an arena of conflict. Internal tension also occurred among the women regarding the preference for interdependence or autonomy, and over the leadership of their groups. These women's groups show that resistance to an imposed public role is possible, and that resistance has diverse forms, which confirm women's individual agency.

Concerning their residential status, the state controls foreign spouses through immigration and nationality laws, as well as through the marginalisation of foreign nationals within the family and residential registration systems. The lack of a concept of citizenship independent of nationality, ethnicity and race prevails in state policies and Japanese society in general. These legal and discursive structures constrain the women's decisions on residential status. Some chose to acquire Japanese nationality for practical benefits and legal recognition of their position in the family register. For others, the legal and social reality of 'naturalisation' swayed them to opt for permanent residency, or resulted in prolonging the period of their stay with an insecure spouse status. The state discourages diversity in nationality in a family, but that has not stopped the women's struggle to defend and construct their ethnic and personal identities

Power relations are intricate. The relations of accommodation between the power holders and subaltern actors are not static across time and space. Power is constitutive of resistance. Structural determinants do not affect all individuals evenly, nor do all individuals act in the same way under similar structural conditions. The diversities of experiences and views displayed by the women in my study illustrate the extent and

limitations of women's agency in the ongoing process of constructing and defining identities as individuals in another country.

## 9

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# Conclusion

This study has dealt with the international marriage business system in Japan and the experiences of women from China, South Korea and the Philippines who married and migrated through this system and currently live in Japan.

Throughout the study, I have argued for an acknowledgement of the way in which the international marriage business served the purposes of marriage and migration for women in male dominated economically stratified societies in Asia, without downplaying the fact that the same system and its ideology oppresses women. I argue that to understand these women as active participants of international marriage who take responsibility for their own lives, and as marriage migrants with their own aspirations, these women deserve treatment as autonomous subjects. I challenge existing narrow political economic interpretations treating these women merely as victims – of poverty in their countries of origin and of exploitation of their female sexuality in Japan; nor may they be viewed as (disguised) labourers who marry for the sole purpose of employment, or as deviants. Viewing the women as active marriage-migrants to Japan, not passive brides, makes it possible to capture the process of transformation in their identities and their establishment as social actors.

Following the practice of feminist enquiry which places the emphasis on experience, I applied a qualitative approach and placed importance on the women's interpretations of their experiences and perceptions of marriage migration. Detailed ethnographic work was needed in order to do justice to the complexity and diversity of these marriage migrants' experiences. Through this approach, I have highlighted the importance of the intricate sites of marriage – including affection, family life, and material affluence – and migration to the female participants. For them, participation in international marriage by introduction is about both marriage and migration. Happiness in marriage is of importance to these women and is therefore part of 'success' in migration. The migrant

women I interviewed tried hard to be content and successful in this context, negotiating the sites of marriage, family and love in their own terms. Moreover, their contestations did not end in the family domain. The women participated in paid work, women's groups, community activities and various individual networks, refusing to be overpowered by the constraints that they faced.

I have demonstrated the ways in which marriage agencies and rural local governments conducted international marriage introduction to their benefit, and identified the underlying patriarchal definition of marriage that disadvantages the women participants (as it does women in general). At the same time, I have challenged a simplistic and static view of power relations among the actors of international introduction marriage. Assigning any party a fixed identity as exploiter or exploited ignores other relationships in which these actors are embedded. Understanding the relationships between groups in these terms overlooks the possibility of change in these relationships. Marriage agents exploit their male and female clients in their business, but the careers of some agents revealed they too were in relatively marginalised positions in the Japanese labour market. Middle-aged women are active as both domestic and international marriage agents partly because of their limited job opportunities elsewhere. Similarly, male clients do not always have the same interests as the marriage agents and rural towns and villages involved in international marriage introduction.

I have also identified multiple relationships between the foreign women and marriage agents. A marriage agent regards a potential bride as a commodity, but she is also a client of the agent. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 8, this agent-commodity/client relationship may progress to that of employer-employee, collaborators, and competitors in the marriage business after the woman's migration to Japan. Further, working in marriage agencies in Japan empowers the migrant women who undertake such a job because of the limited work available for them. Yet, a marriage migrant agent's job can become oppressive to other women clients and obstruct their interests. The relationship between marriage agents and the women participants is complex, and understanding them merely as exploiters and exploited does not assist us to articulate changes in their relationship. Nor can this view express changing power relations among the women participants of marriage business.



The detailed investigation into foreign women's relationships with their husbands in the extended family demonstrates the possibility of change in these relationships. The interests and views of a foreign wife often conflict with those of her Japanese husband and/or parents-in-law. However, as the relationship between the foreign wife and the husband develops, young couples sometimes cooperate and oppose the older generation as shown by the example of couples who establish independent households from the parents. Statically dichotomising relationships in the extended family as 'Japanese family versus a foreign wife' does not reflect the range of personal and family dynamics which characterised so many of the cases in this study.

I have also identified points of conflict and accommodation between migrant women, rural local government officials and NGOs, and in ethnic-based women's groups. Understanding the women's relationships with these organisations deterministically as protectors and protected is contested by the women themselves. Some rural municipalities and NGOs provide support for migrant women, and while these supports are generally appreciated by the women, at times some of the marriage migrants are concerned that they, or more precisely their ethnic difference, is being used for others' advantage. Similarly, ethnic women's groups, which are often associated with the collective strategies and solidarity in activist circles, do not automatically serve as a source of resistance for all the participants. This finding does not mean that the women do not value the ethnicity-based women's groups, but indicates that these groups have internal conflicts. Dismissing these is to romanticise collective resistance and ignore the differences among the women involved.

Part I of this study examined the macro factors which gave rise to the international marriage business in Japan involving women from other Asian countries, and the operation of discursive power in representations of international marriage by introduction and 'Asian brides'. Economic, social and political aspects influenced the emergence of this type of international marriage business.

The business appeared in the late 1970s and expanded in the mid-1980s. The growth of the international marriage business involving women from other Asian countries is a

by-product of the process of globalisation in the Asian region. The business of the marriage agents reveals the extent of Japanese economic expansion, the accelerated movement of people and social integration between Japan and other countries in the region in the 1980s as well as their historical connections. Economic, political and social integration at various levels between Japan and other countries in the region also contributed to make international marriage accessible and imaginable to potential clients.

The growth of the international business has also been influenced by changes in the domestic marriage market in the late 1980s in Japan. The market was widely perceived as 'men cannot marry and women do not marry' partly because of demographic imbalances between the sexes and women's socio-economic advancement. The discourse of 'marriage difficulty for men' was promoted by the media and government as a significant social problem at the time. The makeover of Japanese industries generated more 'female-type' jobs in the 1980s. While the growth in women's participation in the labour market was largely owing to the increase in the number of married women in part-time employment, single women attained relative economic confidence and the option of marrying late. Yet, marriage and its significance as an institution in the lives of women (and men) in Japanese patriarchal society were barely challenged. The pattern of mate selection shifted to love matches in the 1980s, while the same era saw the booming of large-scale marriage information companies. Love and marriage were restructured as a profitable commodity in capitalist Japan of the 1980s.

The development of the international marriage business in the late 1980s was a result of its connection with the politics of some towns and villages which had been suffering from depopulation. Assisting the search for a marriage partner for agricultural heirs in these places became an important element of the political agenda for some rural policy makers, whose views often reflected those of the male elders in the community. The collaboration of these rural policy makers with the private business sector offered them an 'international solution' to the problem. The ideology of their resolution worked to capitalise on foreign women's fertility in order to resuscitate their ailing villages and political power bases.

A transnational marriage agency business dealing with women from other Asian countries grew in these economic, political and social circumstances in Japan. International marriage agencies utilised the pattern and connections of the existing domestic matchmaking industry, and in many cases acted as suppliers of foreign brides to other domestic agencies. These agencies applied the existing pattern of *miai* (arranged introduction) matchmaking, and the familiar travel scenario of group tours, to their transnational business, familiarising international marriage to Japanese clients.

The chapters in Part I interrogate the operation of discursive power in the representations of international marriage introduction and 'Asian brides' by marriage agencies, by rural towns and villages, and in the media. Media discourse highlights rural cases and the racial origin of the brides as 'Asian', translating racial and gendered power relations between Japanese men and 'Asian' women into the urban-rural class relations of Japan. The media constructed images of marriages between 'poverty-stricken' 'primitive' 'Asian' women and socially disadvantaged 'abandoned' rural farmers. Urban-oriented Japanese women tended to be blamed for the 'misery' of rural farmers and the foreign brides, reflecting an urban male-centred viewpoint in the mass media. Apparently influenced by the media's discursive productions, academic representations of the issue of international marriage by introduction in Japan and the West largely centred on rural cases and the oppression of the foreign women.

While the public discourse on 'Asian' brides largely 'othered' them, marriage agencies stressed the foreign women's marriageability. This marriageability was defined as non-threatening to gender hierarchy in marriage. Generally race relations were subsumed under gender relations, and the racial markers of the brides were either understated or overstated to maximise their marriageability. When promoting marriages with Western men to Japanese women, marriage agents stressed (symbolic and material) upward social mobility that women could accomplish through such marriages. Both constructions of selling international marriages conform to the dominant conception of marriage as patriarchal contract. The rhetoric utilised by some rural municipalities reveals their intention is to gain acceptance of international marriage in rural communities. The marriageability of the foreign women was formed around their

adaptability, stressing their racial and cultural similarities with Japanese and their 'middle-class' backgrounds. The use of the rhetoric of internationalisation of local communities – supported by state policy – in promoting international marriage further stressed its advantage to the concerned villages and towns. The media, marriage agents and rural policy makers all portrayed the marriage migrants as 'Asian brides'. Yet all described the traits of 'Asian brides' differently, reflecting the differing identities and interests of themselves and their audiences.

Part II looked at the marriage migrants' experiences of the decision to marry, the process of establishing married life and of living in Japan. I have identified conflicts that the women faced and the strategies that they employed in their on-going attempt to transform from participants of international marriage to women marriage migrants, and to full members of Japanese society. I have demonstrated the importance of the combined site of marriage and migration to these women.

A social profile of the women reveals the diversities in their socio-economic backgrounds, and dispels the assumption that poverty was the prime reason for using international marriage business. While financial support for the family was important for some women, their own fulfilment was equally vital. The women in my study were not 'traded' in the international marriage business, but made autonomous decisions to participate in international marriage. The women's decisions to take up marriage migration were often influenced by personal setbacks and many of the constraints they experienced were gender related. However juxtaposed against a sense of tiredness they experienced in their societies, all of them viewed their own marriages and migration with a sense of 'adventure'. The expectation of financial and emotional comfort in marriage was significant in their decisions to involve themselves in marriage migration. These women participated in international marriage by introduction not primarily as victims of household systems or economic oppression, but rather as agents of their own destiny. Their actions were in some cases their challenge to unfavoured situations imposed on them in their countries of origin

Research into the lives of the marriage migrants in Japan illustrates that they are not helpless victims of gender, ethnic, and class relations in Japan either. Their narratives

demonstrated the extent and limitations of the women's resistance. The conflicts they experienced constantly showed the operation of hegemonic power over foreign women in Japan. For most of the women, life in Japan offered many challenges. Communication gaps and unfamiliar living environments at first intensified the lack of trust between them and their husbands leading to conflicts particularly in terms of financial matters. Not being able to develop love in their marital relationships also confronted many of the women. The extended family setting complicated the migrant women's position as wives and mothers and challenged their status in the family. Each woman adopted different strategies in her daily life – crying, throwing things, refusing to talk/do, arguing persistently, persuading and/or discussing negotiations. Some women used the threat of divorce to deal with confrontational situations with their husbands and parents-in-law. Their 'ethnic difference' was also used to defend their position when facing their husbands. These strategies were not effective all the time and at once, but each confrontation had some effect on the women's relationship with their husbands and/or parents-in-law. Some husbands began to share household duties; some of the women came to manage all the household finances, some were actively involved in the family business; and others took initiative in establishing independent households from their parents-in-law. In many cases, the foreign women displayed their determination to establish their own 'happy' marriage and family and have control over their own lives in Japan.

The lives of the marriage migrants were not limited to the domains of marriage and family. Most of them engaged themselves in productive work and the majority of women participated in ethnic women's groups, various community activities and/or church-based groups. In the paid workforce, their gender, ethnicity, lack of Japanese language proficiency and residential locations restricted the range of jobs available to them in the gender-segregated Japanese labour market. Career development that some of the women had hoped to achieve was generally unattainable, and many felt deskilled. Most full-time jobs available to these foreign women were limited to manual labour in factories. Other available jobs were restricted to ethnicity-related ones or had limited working hours. Some of those who worked in factories experienced and felt offended by overt or covert racism on the part of their Japanese female colleagues. Ignoring, parrying with, and/or directly confronting the Japanese women, those marriage migrants

who experienced racism at work attempted to deal with the situation. Involvement in the paid workforce brought some changes in the women's relations with their husbands and/or parents-in-law in the private domain. When the family domain became oppressive, outside work offered an escape. When their work environment troubled the women, the family served as a source of strength. Neither the family nor work was essentially a site of oppression or a source of strength to the migrant women of international marriage. Both were sites women had to negotiate sometimes independently, sometimes in relation to one another.

The investigation into the question of legal citizenship was essential in examining the women's lives, as nationality is specified in other laws in Japan and therefore involves social consequences. In particular, for the marriage migrants, the ways in which the nationality issue is tied with the family registration system and a sense of Japanese-ness had considerable implications for their decision regarding residential status and naturalisation. I have pointed out that the exclusiveness of the family registration system that applies only to Japanese nationals worked to deny the foreign wives' position and ethnic heterogeneity in the family. Some women prolonged their insecure spouse status as a result of the legal and social consequences of naturalisation, including the racial connotations attached to nationality in the wider society, and the limitations of permanent residency.

I have identified the points of conflict that the marriage migrants faced and their strategies in dealing with unfavourable aspects of their situations in Japan. The nature of their marriage, gender, ethnicity, nationality and/or class made these women vulnerable in their lives in Japan. Yet, the marriage migrants in my study demonstrated their autonomy and heterogeneity in establishing their marriages, working lives and social identities in Japan. Their struggles exposed the operations of power over women in marriage and work in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s. As the same time, in their accommodations and resistances they contributed to the on-going construction of their own identities, social structures were confronted and frequently they were able to effect changes in the situations they faced.

Overall, the capitalistic system and patriarchal ideology underpinning the international marriage business work to oppress women, but the same system serves the purpose of marriage and migration for some women in male dominant and economically stratified societies in Asia. For my informants, their marriage and migration experiences were different from what they expected, but the system of international marriage business did not totally overpower their aspirations to be successful in marriage and migration according to their own definitions. Their experiences were far more diverse and complex than a deterministic structural viewpoint would lead us to expect. Their narratives demonstrate the importance of articulating structurally embedded yet active intentional female agency in the interpretation and analysis of international marriage migration.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX I

#### Tables: Social Background of Japanese Husbands and Comparison with Foreign Wives

**Table 1**

##### Age of Japanese husbands at the time of meeting prospective foreign spouses

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Below 34	5	11.1
35 to 39	24	53.4
40 to 44	15	33.3
45 and above	1	2.2
Total	45	100.0

**Table 2**

##### Age comparisons of the Japanese husband and foreign wife couples at the time of interview

<i>Age of Husbands</i>	<i>Age of Wives</i> <sup>a</sup>				
	Below 25	25 to 29	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 and above
Below 34					
35 to 39	1 (2.0)	3 (6.7)			
40 to 44		7 (15.6)	10 (22.2)	9 (20.0)	
45 and above		4 (8.9)	3 (6.7)	3 (6.7)	5 (11.1)

<sup>a</sup> Figures in brackets show percentage out of a total of 45 couples.



**Table 3**  
**Educational background of Japanese husbands**

<i>Education</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Completed Primary	1	2.3
Completed Junior High School	7	16.3
Completed Senior High School	28	65.1
Completed Vocational Training / College	4	9.3
Completed University	3	7.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Question was not asked	2	

**Table 4**  
**Comparisons of educational backgrounds of the Japanese husband and foreign wife couples**

<i>Education of Husbands</i>	<i>Education of Wives<sup>a</sup></i>			
	<i>Some or Completed Primary</i>	<i>Completed Secondary</i>	<i>Completed Vocational Training or College</i>	<i>Completed University</i>
Completed Primary	1 (2.3)			
Completed Junior High School	1 (2.3)	4 (9.3)		2 (4.7)
Completed Senior High School	1 (2.3)	15 (34.9)	7 (16.3)	5 (11.6)
Completed Vocational Training / College		3 (7.0)		1 (2.3)
Completed University		2 (4.7)		1 (2.3)

<sup>a</sup> Figures in brackets show percentage out of a total of 43 couples.

**Table 5****Main occupation of Japanese husbands at the time of interview**

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Professional/Administrative Clerical	13	28.9
Construction / Factory Workers	11	24.4
Skilled workers in Trades	9	20.0
Small Business Owner	1	2.2
Transportation	4	8.9
Farmers <sup>a</sup>	7	15.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> The category excludes those whose households own farm land but the main source of income is not farming.

**Table 6****Gross monthly income of Japanese husbands**

<i>Income per month</i> <sup>a</sup>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Less than ¥300,000 (approx. A\$4,000)	14	42.4
¥300,000 to ¥490,000 (A\$ 4,000) (A\$ 6,500)	13	39.4
¥500,000 to ¥690,000 (A\$6,600) (A\$9,200)	4	12.1
¥700,000 and above (A\$ 9,300)	2	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Don't know/difficult to answer	6	
Question was not asked	6	

<sup>a</sup> Exchange rate calculations are based on the exchange rate of 75 yen to one Australian dollar according to the average rate at the time of interview.

## APPENDIX II

## Lists of Interviewees: Marriage Migrants and Marriage Agents

Table 1 Some biographical profiles of marriage migrants

Name (Pseudo- nym)	Ethnicity	Prior to meeting a Japanese spouse			Year of migration	Age at migration	Age at the time of interview	Place of residence at the time of interview
		Educational background	Occupational background <sup>a</sup>	Marital status				
Eun-Kyung	South Korean	secondary (high school)	clothing shop owner	never married	1989	31	38	regional village/town
Hoo-Jung	South Korean	secondary (high school)	food store owner	divorced/ separated	1990	35	40	regional village/town
Hye-Jin	South Korean	secondary (high school)	various casual jobs	never married	1993	29	32	regional city
Hye-Sook	South Korean	secondary (high school)	clothing shop owner	divorced/ separated	1989	36	42	regional village/town
Il-Mi	South Korean	some primary	production factory worker	never married	1993	30	32	regional village/town
Ji-Hye	South Korean	secondary (high school)	building company clerk	never married	1990	26	33	regional village/town
Jung-Hee	South Korean	tertiary (university)	graphic designer, then school and motel owner	never married	1990	30	36	regional city
Kyung- Sook	South Korean	tertiary (college)	clothing shop owner	never married	1991	39	43	greater Tokyo metropolitan regional city
Myung-Ja	South Korean	secondary (high school)	industrial designer	never married	1991	27	22	
San-Min	South Korean	secondary (high school)	Education industry sales	never married	1991	22	26	regional village/town
Sok-Chin	South Korean	secondary (high school)	trading firm clerk	never married	1991	28	32	regional village/town

<sup>a</sup> Main jobs. Not necessarily the occupation held at the time of meeting a prospective Japanese husband.<sup>b</sup> Proceeded to a university but did not complete.<sup>c</sup> Proceeded to the postgraduate level but did not complete.<sup>d</sup> At the time of meeting their first Japanese husbands, but subsequently divorced or separated.

Table 1 (Continued)

Name (Pseudo- nym)	Ethnicity	Prior to meeting a Japanese spouse			Year of migration	Age at migration	Age at the time of interview	Place of residence at the time of interview
		Educational background	Occupational background <sup>a</sup>	Marital status				
Son-Fwa	South Korean	secondary (high school)	not in the labour force	never married	1993	30	33	regional village/town
Soo-Mi	South Korean	tertiary (college)	clothing shop owner	never married	1991	31	36	regional village/town
Suk-Shin	South Korean	secondary (high school)	assisting family business	never married	1990	33	39	regional village/town
Wha-Sook	South Korean	secondary (high school)	clothing shop owner, then music industry sales	married	1985	33	42	greater Tokyo metropolitan
Yongsu	South Korean	primary	clothing shop dressmaker	divorced/ separated	1989	33	40	regional village/town
Young-Hee	South Korean	secondary (high school)	clothing shop, then restaurant owner	never married	1994	31	33	regional village/town
Young-Joo	South Korean	tertiary (college)	textile designer	never married	1987	30	38	greater Tokyo metropolitan
Aimee	Chinese	tertiary (college)	electric appliance firm clerk	divorced/ separated	1993	32	35	regional village/town
Huiying	Chinese	tertiary (university)	school teacher	never married	1994	35	37	regional city
Meilin	Chinese	secondary (high school)	accountant	never married	1993	26	29	greater Tokyo metropolitan
Meshu	Chinese	secondary (high school)	hotel room attendant	never married	1995	25	26	regional village/town
Muling	Chinese	tertiary (college)	medical technician	never married	1995	30	31	regional village/town
Shuyi	Chinese	tertiary (university)	laboratory technician	never married	1993	33	36	regional village/town
Wenyan	Chinese	tertiary (university)	accountant	never married <sup>d</sup>	1994	24	26	greater Tokyo metropolitan
Yimei	Chinese	tertiary (university)	architecture	never married	1994	29	31	greater Tokyo metropolitan

Table 1 (Continued)

Name (Pseudo- nym)	Ethnicity	Prior to meeting a Japanese spouse			Year of migration	Age at migration	Age at the time of interview	Place of residence at the time of interview
		Educational background	Occupational background <sup>a</sup>	Marital status				
Zheni	Chinese	tertiary (university)	accountant	never married	1993	34	37	regional village/town
Lanlan	Korean-Chinese	secondary (middle school)	factory worker, then assisting family business	never married	1995	23	24	regional village/town
Pingping	Korean-Chinese	secondary (middle school)	factory worker, then shoes company sales and admin	never married	1996	25	25	regional village/town
Yuping	Korean-Chinese	secondary (high school)	computer equipments leasing business owner	divorced/ separated	1994	30	32	regional village/town
Anita	Filipino	secondary (high school)	hotel clerk, then marriage agency clerk	widowed	1989	28	34	regional village/town
Connie	Filipino	tertiary (college)	department store sales	never married	1989	26	32	regional village/town
Cynthia	Filipino	secondary (high school) <sup>b</sup>	not in the labour force (uni. student)	never married	1989	20	28	greater Tokyo metropolitan
Emilie	Filipino	tertiary (college)	food processing industry factory worker	never married <sup>d</sup>	1994	28	26	greater Tokyo metropolitan
Fely	Filipino	secondary (high school)	assisting family business	never married	1988	19	27	greater Tokyo metropolitan
Gina	Filipino	secondary (high school)	department store sales	never married	1986	23	33	regional city
Gloria	Filipino	secondary (high school)	casual baby sittings	never married	1988	19	26	regional village/town
Grace	Filipino	secondary (high school)	department store sales and tour guide	divorced/ separated	1991	33	38	regional village/town
Imelda	Filipino	secondary (high school) <sup>b</sup>	not in the labour force (uni. student)	never married	1985	21	31	regional village/town
Lisa	Filipino	primary	textile industry factory worker	never married	1994	24	26	regional village/town

Table 1 (Continued)

Name (Pseudo- nym)	Ethnicity	Prior to meeting a Japanese spouse		Marital status	Year of migration	Age at migration	Age at the time of interview	Place of residence at the time of interview
		Educational background	Occupational background <sup>a</sup>					
Melly	Filipino	tertiary (university)	accountant.	never married	1989	29	36	regional village/town
Virginia	Filipino	secondary (middle school)	worked in Saudi Arabia casual baby sittings	never married	1988	20	27	regional village/town
Remy	Filipino	tertiary (university) <sup>c</sup>	school teacher, then marriage agency clerk	divorced/ separated	1992	24	28	greater Tokyo metropolitan
Rose	Filipino	tertiary (university)	medical technician	never married	1988	27	35	regional village/town
Tessie	Filipino	tertiary (college)	bookshop sales	never married <sup>d</sup>	1990	19	26	regional city

Table 2 Some business profiles of marriage agents

Name of agent (Pseudonym)	Place of agency	Year of establishment	Ethnicity of main female clients	Previous or other businesses	Other notes
Fukuda	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1988	Chinese	publishing company	
Hanada	regional city	1992	Chinese	Japanese language school	Taiwanese spouse
Hayashi	regional city	1992	Korean	domestic marriage agency	
Hoshikawa	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1986	Korean, Chinese	domestic marriage agency	
Ishino	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1982	Filipino	Trading	
Kameda	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1983	Chinese	domestic marriage agency since 1977	
Katō	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1976	Chinese	domestic marriage agency	
Kawai	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1995	Taiwanese, Russian, Chinese students in Japan	trading	German-based agency's branch office
Kiamoto	greater Tokyo metropolitan	1996	Korean	[previously not in the labour force]	Taiwanese, divorced from Japanese husband
Kilano	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1978	Filipino	domestic marriage agency	Korean spouse
Matsuda	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	[not answered]	Korean	[not answered]	
Mimami	regional city	1992	Chinese	[not answered]	
Miura	regional village	1992	Sri Lankan	[not answered]	
Murayama	regional village	1991	Chinese	convenience store owner	
Nishi	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1985	Chinese, Filipino, Korean	trading	

Table 2 (Continued)

Name of agent (Pseudonym)	Place of agency	Year of establishment	Ethnicity of main female clients	Previous or other businesses	Other notes
Nakagawa	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1995	Chinese students in Japan	domestic marriage agency since 1988	
Okano	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1995	Chinese	printing and translation company	
Shimizu	regional city	1990	Chinese	trading	
Suginoto	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1995	Filipino	business consultant, sports club	
Takahashi	regional city	1988	Korean	advertising	Korean spouse
Takeda	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1989	Russian, Filipino	beauty salon owner, then domestic marriage agency	
Tanaka	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1990	Russian	business consultant	
Uchida	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1986	Filipino, Chinese	[previously not in the labour force]	
Ueno	regional city	1992	Filipino, Chinese	trading	
Wada	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1996	Chinese students in Japan	domestic marriage agency	
Yanada	regional city	1988	Korean, then Chinese-Korean	bridal furniture sales	
Yamanaka	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1994	Korean	trading	Korean spouse
Yokoyama	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1993	Russian, Polish	[not answered]	mainly introducing Western men for Japanese women
Aoki	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1991	Japanese	[not answered]	mainly introducing Western men for Japanese women
Goto	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1992	Russian, Japanese	domestic marriage agency	
Shibuya	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1974	[not applicable]	[not applicable]	marriage association
Fujikawa	Greater Tokyo metropolitan	1994	Korean residents	[not applicable]	association, marriage introduction between resident Koreans in Japan



**APPENDIX III**

**Interview Questions for Marriage Migrants**

**HOUSEHOLD DATA**

a.1. In this interview, I will mainly be asking you about your migration experience in Japan. First, however, I need some background information about the people who live with you in Japan. How many people including yourself live in this household?

	Principal	Spouse	Person 03	P04	P05	P06
GENDER	Female	Male				
RELATIONSHIP	X	Spouse				
AGE						
COUNTRY OF BIRTH		Japan				
EDUCATION						
OCCUPATION						

**RELATIVES LIVING IN JAPAN AND OVERSEAS**

a.2. Had any family, relatives or friends from your country lived in Japan before you migrated to Japan? Yes (ask relationship & state of residence) / No

a.3. Do you have any family, relatives or friends from your country who live in Japan at the moment? Yes (as above) / No

a.4. Do you have any family members from your country who live overseas other than in Japan?

a.5. How many sisters/brothers/children do you have? Ask birth order of herself.

a.6. Please tell me which of the following relatives live in (Korea) ?  
 Father/Mother/Sisters/Brothers/ Children by previous marriage

(Show this sheet and ask to choose the number at the end of the interview.)

a.7. What is your present monthly income from all sources ?  
 1. 1 - 100,000 yen      2. 100,001 - 200,000      3. 200,001 - 300,000      4. More than 300,000

a.8. What is your husband's monthly income from all sources ?  
 1. 1 - 300,000 yen      2. 300,001 - 500,000      3. 500,001 - 700,000      4. More than 700,000

a.9. How much would be your household spending in an average month? (inc. loan payment)  
 1. 1 - 100,000 yen      2. 100,001 - 200,000      3. 200,001 - 300,000      4. More than 300,000

**A. PRIOR TO MIGRATION**

A1. What level of education did you reach in your country?

A2. Do you have other qualifications?

A3. After graduating (high school), did you do any paid work ? What kind?

- A4. How many years did you work in your own country before migrating to Japan?
- A5. What was your occupation in the last job you did in your former country?
- A6. Was it full-time, or casual work?
- A7. Did you use some of your income to support your family?
- A8. If so, how much of your income went towards helping your family?
- A9. What did you do in the year before you left your former country?  
a wage earner, own business (employing others), helping in family business, self-employed, home duties, student, unemployed.
- A10. If unemployed, were you looking for work? How long were you unemployed?
- A11. Where did you live at that time?
- A12. What type of dwelling was it? Ask about housing arrangements in this dwelling?
- A13. How many people lived in the house at that time?
- A14. What was your parents' occupation at the time you migrated to Japan?
- A15. You mentioned you have (sisters/brothers). What is his/her level of education?
- A16. Have you been previously married in your former country?
- A17. What would you say about your level of satisfaction with life in (Korea)?  
very satisfied / satisfied / neither satisfied nor dissatisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied
- A18. Did you visit any other country prior to immigration to Japan? How long? purpose?
- A19. Did you visit Japan prior to immigration? How long? purpose?
- A20. Did you attempt to visit Japan unsuccessfully prior to immigration?
- A21. Could you tell me what was your image of Japan before coming to Japan?
- A22. Where did you get the image from?
- A23. What images did you have towards marrying foreigners?
- A24. How about marrying Japanese?
- A25. How important is it to be married for women in your former country?
- A26. Did you feel any pressure because of not being married at that time? / or being divorced?

#### **B. IMMIGRATION PROCESS**

- B1. Could you tell me when, where and how you came to meet your husband?
- B2. How did you come to know about the agency / the meeting / the person introduced?
- B3. Could you describe the steps undertaken in arranging your marriage?
- B4. Was any cost involved in arranging your marriage?

- B5. What type of visa did you have when you arrived?
- B6. Was there any particular reason why you preferred a Japanese as a marriage- partner?
- B7. Who made the decision to marry?
- B8. Did anybody influence your decision to marry?
- B9. Did anybody object against this marriage?
- B10. Looking back now, what factors do you think influenced your decision to participate in this type of marriage?
- B11. How much information did you have about Japan and how did you obtain this regarding customs / job prospects / visa / foreigners registration ?
- B12. How about the area you live in now?
- B13. How much were you informed about your husband and his family before you arrived?
- B14. How much knowledge of Japanese language did you have?

#### **POST MIGRATION EXPERIENCE**

##### **C. INITIAL SETTLEMENT**

- C1. Where did you live when you first arrived in Japan?
- C2. Could you tell me about the housing arrangement upon your arrival in Japan?
- C3. If you have moved since, what were the main reasons?
- C4. Have you felt any gap between your expectations and the reality of living in Japan? In what aspects?
- C5. What things did you enjoy about living in Japan at first?
- C6. What difficulties did you have at first?
- C7. How did you overcome those?
- C8. Did you discuss your problems with someone? Who were they?  
family and relatives back home/ friends back home / friends in Japan / husband / social workers / in-laws / local governmental officials / other

##### **D. ALIAS**

(If the applicant has a Japanese name, ask)

- D1. What was your reaction when you were first informed of your Japanese name?
- D2. Who chose your Japanese name?
- D3. What do you think of this practice at the moment ? positive / negative aspects
- D4. Do you use your Japanese name with your (Korean) friends in Japan?

(If the applicant is not using a Japanese name, ask)

- D5. Were you given a Japanese name? Why are you not using it at the moment?

D6. What do you think of those who use a Japanese name?

### **E. RESIDENTIAL STATUS**

E1. What is your present residential status?

E2. Where did you get information about Japanese visas / the difference between *Kika* (naturalization) or *Eijū ken* (permanent residency) ?

(those with a spouse visa)

E3. Do you intend to apply for naturalization or permanent residency ?

E4. Why do you prefer (naturalization) to (permanent residency)?

E5. What is your husband's opinion on this matter? How about in-laws?

(those have been naturalized or hold permanent residency)

E6. When did you get naturalized / permanent residency?

E7. What were the reasons for your decision to get naturalized / permanent residency?

E8. Did anybody influence your decision to get naturalized / permanent residency?

E9. Did anybody object against this?

E10. (naturalization) Are there any benefits if you hold a Japanese passport in your country?

### **F. JAPANESE LANGUAGE**

F1. What is the main way you learned Japanese in Japan?

Japanese language classes (public / by support group), private classes, TV, self-taught, from family

F2. Have you attended any language course?

F3. If not, what were the reasons why you didn't attend?

i.e. no time / no transportation / no support from your family / did not know about it

F4. If so, how did you find out about the course ? How long did you attend ? Did you pay any fees?

F5. Apart from improving your Japanese, what other benefits did you gain by attending the course?

F6. (if meeting friends is mentioned ) Is this a main occasion to meet them?

F7. Any negative aspects?

F8. If you have stopped going to classes, what were the reasons?

### **G. FAMILY / PRIVATE SPHERE**

(over all)

G.1 What aspects of your family life in Japan were unexpected at first?

G.2 Which household duties are mainly your responsibility?

cooking / cleaning / washing/ financial management / child minding / child education / shopping / gardening / family farming / community gatherings

- G.3 Which household duties are done by your husband? by your mother/father-in-law ?
- G.4 Who mainly makes decisions on how to share these duties ?
- G.5 Who mainly makes decisions on the following;  
 spending on daily items / spending on bigger items such as furniture or car / family holidays / trip to (Korea) / children's schooling / children's education / husband's social activities / wife's social activities
- G.6 What do you do to relax at home?
- G.7 On what occasions do you feel satisfied in the family?
- G.8 On what occasions do you feel unsatisfied in the family?
- G.9 Have you felt isolated in the family? If so, on what occasions?  
 often / sometimes / occasionally / never
- G.10 What kinds of conflicts or problems have you experienced in the family?  
 lack of communication / in-laws / husband / children / budgeting / not having a say in household matters/ religious practices / sexual problems /
- G.11 How would you normally react or solve these when they happen? Do you consult with someone?
- G-h. (husband)** skip questions if answered above
- G-h1. What do you normally do with your husband at free time? (i.e. watching TV, going out..)
- G-h2. How satisfied are you with your communication with your husband ?  
 very satisfied / satisfied / neither satisfied nor dissatisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied
- G-h3. Could you give me some examples?
- G-h4. On what occasions do the conflicts with your husband occur?
- G-h5. How would you solve these when they happen? Do you consult with someone?
- G-h6. How satisfied are you with your husband's understanding towards your culture?  
 needs more understanding / enough understanding / do not care
- G-h7. What attitude does your husband have with you associating with other (Korean) women?
- G-h8. Do you think your relationship with your husband has changed over the years? how?  
 i.e. more support / more understanding / more communication / less communication  
 he listens to your opinion more /
- G-h9. How satisfied are you at the moment with your relationship with your husband?  
 very satisfied / satisfied / neither satisfied nor dissatisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied
- G-i. (in-laws)**
- G-i1. How satisfied are you with the relationship with your in-laws ?  
 very satisfied / satisfied / neither satisfied nor dissatisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied
- G-i2. Could you give me some examples why you feel [satisfied]?
- G-i3. On what occasions do the conflicts with your in-laws occur?
- G-i3. Do you think your relationship with your in-laws has changed over the years? How?

**G-c. (children)**

[no child]

G-c1. Do you intend to have a child?

G-c2. Do you feel any pressures because of not having a child?

G-c3. Does this pressure come from your husband or in-laws ?

G-c4. Do you use any contraception?

[child by previous marriage, not living together] You mentioned you have children living in (Korea).

G-c5. Who do they live with at the moment?

G-c6. How do you keep contact with your child ?  
i.e. sending letters/gifts/money, telephone, meet at return visit

G-c7. Do you intend to bring them to live with you in Japan?

G-c8. What is your husband's opinion about this ?

[with child/ren]

G-c9. Did you always want to have children

G-c10. Did you plan your pregnancy ?

G-c11. How many children do you want to have ? What is your husband's opinion?

G-c12. Do you think that having a child has changed your relationship with your husband/family?

G-c13. What are your main concerns regarding your child ?

G-c14. Could you describe how you teach your language and culture to your children, if this is the case?

G-c15. Do you feel closer to your children than to your husband?

[child by previous marriage, living together]

G-c16. Whose decision was it to bring him/her to Japan? Did anyone object against the plan?

G-c17. How satisfied are you with the relationship between your child and your husband/other members  
of the family?  
very satisfied / satisfied / neither satisfied nor dissatisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied**G-d. (divorced)**

G-d1. What were the main reasons for the divorce?

G-d2. Did you seek any help before and after divorce? What support did you receive?

G-d3. Could you indicate what things you feel you have gained or lost from divorce?

G-d4. What advice would you give for those who are considering divorce?

**H. FARMING/ FAMILY BUSINESS****H-f. Farming**

H-f1. Does your family own farming land ?

H-f2. What size is the farming land? (if livestock are mentioned, ask the number)

H-f3. Is income from farming the main financial resource in your family?

H-f4. Do you help in farm work ?

H-f5. If so, could you describe your main tasks ?

How many hours per week do you spend in farming on average?

Who else performs farming duties in your family?

Do you get paid for this work?

Do you have a say in decision making in the farming?

H-f6. If not , do you have any reason not to participate in farming?

**H-b Family Business (non-farming)**

H-b1. Who do you work with ?

H-b2. How many hours per week do you work in the business on average?

H-b3. Do you get paid from this work?

H-b4. If so, what is your monthly average income from this?

Are you satisfied with this amount?

very satisfied / satisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied

H-b5. Do you have a say in decision making in the business ?

H-b6. How satisfied are you with your present working conditions?

very satisfied / satisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied

**I. PAID WORK / NON-FAMILY BUSINESS**

**I-p Paid Work**

I-p1. Do you currently work in a paid job outside of home?

(No)

I-p2. What are the main reasons you do not have a paid job?

I-p3. Are you looking for a job at the moment?

I-p4. Have you had any jobs in Japan ? ( If yes, go to ' Previous Jobs ' )

(Yes)

I-p5. Did you always want to work outside? What are the main reasons?

I-p6. When did you start your present job?

I-p7. How did you find out about this job?

I-p8. Who made a decision to work outside ? What was your family's reaction to the decision?

I-p9. Are you a full -time, part-time or casual worker?

I-p10. How many hours do you usually work per week in the job?

Any over time work ?

I-p11. Could you describe the main tasks you perform in the job?

I-p12. What things do you like about your work?

I-p13. What things do you dislike ?

I-p14. How many employees in your company?  
1-30 / 31- 99/ 100 -999 / more than 1000

I-p15. Could you describe who your colleagues are? gender / age

I-p16. How satisfied are you with the relationships with your colleagues ?  
very satisfied / satisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied

I-p17. Have you had a bad experience in the job?

I-p18. How did you react when they happened?

I-p20. Do any other migrant women work in the same company? Where are they from?

I-p21. Do you perform other activities together with your colleagues (Japanese and non-Japanese) ?  
i.e. eating lunch / going out after work /

I-p22. How satisfied are you with your present working conditions?  
very satisfied / satisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied

I-p23. Is your income from this job crucial to maintain the household budget?

I-p24. Have you *gained benefits other than income from this job*?  
i.e. personal attainment / social skills / Jap language / friends

I-p25. What effect does your participation in the workforce have on your family?  
i.e. receiving help with household duties, having a say in household matters, amount of communication with other family members: increased / remains unchanged / decreased

I-p26. What do you normally spend your earnings for?

I-p27. (with in-laws) Do you pass your earning to your mother-in-law?

**(Previous Jobs)**

I-p28. Have you had any other jobs in Japan before?

I-p29. How long did you work in that job?

I-p30. What were the main tasks you performed in that job?

I-p31. What were the main reasons you stopped working?

I-p32. What effect did your resignation from the workforce have on your family?

**I-b Own Business**

I-b1. When did you start this business?

I-b2. Have you received financial support from other people when you started this business?

I-b3. What was your family's reaction when you decided to start this business?

I-b4. What are the main tasks you perform in this business?

I-b5. How many hours a week do you normally spend for this business?



- I-b6. How satisfied are you with your present business and why ?  
very satisfied / satisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied
- I-b7. Have you had any bad experiences in the job?
- I-b8. How did you react when they happened?
- I-b9. What effect does your participation in the workforce have on your family?  
i.e. receiving help with household duties, having a say in household matters, amount of communication with other family members: increased / remains unchanged / decreased
- I-b10. How important is it for you to hold a job and why?  
very important / important / not so important / not important at all
- I-b11. (with in-laws) Do you pass your earnings to your mother-in-law ?

## **J. SUPPORT SERVICE**

- J1. Whom do you normally consult with when you have some difficulties in (the following)
- Matters: husband related matters / in-laws related / children / work related / residential status / health / other daily matters / other  
Persons: husband / family members / friends (Japanese) / friends ('Korean' women) / acquaintance / family back home/ social workers / other
- J2. Have you received any help or assistance from (name the following) after arriving in Japan?
- Non-Government: religious organization / ethnic association / voluntary welfare group / other  
Government: Embassy / town office / employment office / health care centre / other
- J3. How did you find out about this group?
- J4. What kind of assistance did you receive?
- J5. Was the help received satisfactory? If not, why?

## **K. CONTACT WITH OTHERS**

- (Over all)
- K1. Who do you usually associate with (ethnicity, relationship) ?
- (contact with other women from the same country)
- K2. Do you currently have regular contact with other (Korean) women ?
- K3. If not, what are the main reasons? Did you have any contact in the past?
- K4. If yes, how did you come to know each other?
- K5. Could you describe how would you associate with them?  
mode of communication / how often / location / kind of activities /
- K6. Have you received any assistance or support from them? What kind?
- K7. Have you given any assistance or support from them? What kind?
- K8. How important is it for you to communicate with women from the same country?  
very important / important / not so important / not important at all

K9. What kind of conflict tends to occur among (Korean) women, if this is a case?

K10. Do you have a migrant women's group in your area ?

K11. Do you belong to this group?

K12. If so, are you an active member of the group?

K13. Could you tell me about the group? activities, its members etc.

K14. Could you tell me the advantages of participating in this group?

K15. Do you have any disadvantage?

K16. If not, what are the main reasons you don't join the group?

#### **L. RELIGIOUS PRACTICE**

L1. What is your religion? How about your family's religion?

L2. (with child) Do your children belong to the same religion as yours ?  
Whose idea was this decision? How do you feel about it?

L3. How do you practice it ?  
at home / at church (temple), which days of the week / has a religious icon at home?  
wear some religious items on the body?

L4. How supportive is your husband / in-laws of your religious practice?  
very supportive / supportive / not so / not at all

L5. How do you celebrate various religious events (such as Christmas and Easter) ?

#### **(If attending church)**

L6. If yes, how important is it for you to be able to attend at church/temple in Japan?  
very important / important / not so

L7. How did you find out about this church/temple ?

L8. Do you consider attending church/temple is a good opportunity to enable you to meet other people /  
people of your ethnicity?

L9. If not, what are the reasons for not attending? Do you want to attend church if possible?

#### **N. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

N1. Have you been participating in (name the following) in Japan ?  
PTA / Fujin kai (regional women's group) / volunteer group / political group /  
sports club /hobby / other

N2. Who made a decision to join in the group? Did someone influence your decision?

N3. Are there any other (Korean) people in the group?

N4. Are you an active member of this group?

N5. What are the main activities or duties you perform with this group ?

N6. How do you find it? (enjoyment / burden)

N7. If you have already left the group, were there any particular reasons for that?

**M. CONTACT WITH THE FAMILY IN THE FORMER COUNTRY**

M1. How do you maintain contact with your family back home? How often?

M2. Have you visited your country after your migration? How many times ?

M3. Have you received negative or positive comments on your marriage to Japanese on your return home visit?

M4. Has any member of your family visited you in Japan? On what occasions?

M5. Have you received any support, mentally and physically, from your family back home after arriving in Japan?

M6. If so, how important for you to receive support from your family back home?  
very important / important / not so / not at all

M7. Have you ever given any support to your family in (Korea) ? How about financially ?

M8. If so, do you send money regularly? Are you satisfied with the amount?  
Have you had any problem with your family in Japan regarding remittance?

**O. INVOLVEMENT IN INTRODUCTION**

O1. Have you ever helped to introduce other women in your country to Japanese men ?

O2. Have you had any inquiry about the marriage with a Japanese from your relatives or friends in your former country? How about from Japanese men?

O3. Do you encourage others to participate in international marriage by introduction?

O4. Why so?

O5. What advice would you give to someone who may want to marry Japanese men through introduction?

**P. OVER ALL**

P1. Have you recently been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?  
more so than usual / about the same as / less than usual / much less than usual

P2. What would you say about your level of satisfaction with life in Japan, all things considered?  
very satisfied / satisfied / dissatisfied / very dissatisfied

P3. How much do you think you have achieved the things you wanted to achieve in your marriage in Japan,  
all things considered?  
more than expected / same / less / much less

P5. What do you think was your source of strength at the time of difficulties in Japan ?

P6. What is your current main concern ?

P7. Do you have anything you want to do in future?

**NOW GO BACK TO a7.**

## APPENDIX IV

## Glossary of Important Japanese Terms

Note: Japanese nouns generally have no distinction between singular and plural forms.

<i>ajia</i>	Asia
<i>batsuichi</i>	Literally, one cross. Relatively new colloquial expression to indicate a (female and male) divorcee, originating from the way a divorce is registered crossing out one's name in the family register. A general term for divorce is <i>rikon</i> .
<i>dansei</i>	The male sex; men; mankind; masculinity.
<i>demodori</i>	Returnees. The term applies to a female divorcee and implies going back to her parent's place.
<i>eijū</i>	Permanent residence. <i>Eijū ken</i> refers to the right to stay permanently.
<i>fūfu</i>	A husband and wife; a married couple.
<i>gaikokujin</i>	Foreigners. <i>Gaikoku</i> means foreign countries and the suffix- <i>jīn</i> indicates a person or people.
<i>gaikokujin tōroku</i>	Foreigner registration.
<i>hanayome</i>	Brides. The term usually refers to one's future bride or a bride at the wedding.
<i>ie</i>	A house; a family; a household. <i>Ie seido</i> refers to the household system that upholds the patriarchal hierarchy among members of the family.
<i>japayuki(san)</i>	Literally, Japan-bound women. The term which became popularised in the mid-1980s is usually applied to foreign women workers from the Asian region working in the entertainment industry in Japan. The suffix <i>-san</i> indicates Mr., Mrs., or Miss.
<i>jijitsu-kon</i>	De facto relationship. A relatively newer term than the more conventional term <i>dōsei</i> , or cohabitation.
<i>josei</i>	The female sex; women; womanhood; femininity.
<i>jūgun ianfu</i>	Literally, war comfort women. <i>Ianfu</i> (comfort women) were utilised to provide soldiers with sex services. The system of <i>jūgun ianfu</i> that took place during the late 1930s and the early 1940s has been criticized as military controlled sex slavery.
<i>jūmin tōroku</i>	Resident registration. <i>Jūmin</i> refers to residents, dwellers, or the population.
<i>kaso</i>	Depopulation.
<i>kazoku</i>	A family.
<i>kekkon</i>	Marriages.
<i>kekkon sōdanjo</i>	Marriage agencies.
<i>kika</i>	Naturalisation.
<i>kokusaika</i>	Internationalisation. <i>Kokusai</i> means international.
<i>kokusai kekkon</i>	International marriage.
<i>kokusai kōryū</i>	International (cultural) exchange.
<i>koseki</i>	A family (household) register, or registration. <i>Koseki seido</i> refers to the family registration system.

<i>miai</i>	A meeting with a view to marriage. <i>Miai kekkon</i> refers to a marriage that eventuates after such meeting, or marriage by introduction.
<i>mura</i>	Rural communities; villages.
<i>nakōdo</i>	Go-betweens; matchmakers; matchmaking.
<i>nikkei(jin)</i>	Japanese descendants. The term refers to Japanese emigrants or their descendants.
<i>nōson</i>	Rural communities; farming communities.
<i>onna</i>	Women; females.
<i>otoko</i>	Men; males.
<i>renai</i>	Romantic love; affection. <i>Renai kekkon</i> refers to a romantic love marriage, or marrying for love.
<i>ryūgakusei</i>	Overseas students; students studying abroad. In terms of the status of residence in the immigration system, the term is defined as foreign students who study at colleges or equivalent educational institutions.
<i>sensō hanayome</i>	War brides. The term refers to the Japanese women who married foreign service men in the immediate post WWII period and emigrated to the husband's country.
<i>shashin-kon</i>	Picture marriages. <i>Shashin</i> means photographs and <i>kon</i> refers to marriages. The term indicates a form of introduction marriage that is conducted without meeting prospective partners except through their photos. The term is often applied to the women, known as 'picture brides', who married emigrant Japanese men in such countries as North America or Canada in the early twentieth century.
<i>shūgakusei</i>	The status of residence that refers to pre-college students who study at high schools, vocational schools, or equivalent. Literally, <i>shūgaku</i> means attending school.
<i>shūtome</i>	Mothers-in-law. A father-in-law is called <i>shūto</i> . The terms are usually applied to the husband's parents.
<i>tairiku no hanayome</i>	Brides for the continent. The term primarily refers to the women who married Japanese farm settlers in colonised Manchuria between the late 1930s and 1945.
<i>teijū</i>	Domiciliation; settled habitation. In the vocabulary of the residential status <i>teijū</i> refers to long term resident status.
<i>tokai</i>	A city; urban areas.
<i>yome</i>	Daughters-in-law; brides.
<i>uchi</i>	A house; one's home.

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