

Can Japan Become “A Society Attractive for Immigrants?” Identity, Gender and Nation-States under Globalization in East Asia

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Abstract: In 2003, the total fertility rate in Japan was 1.29. According to many predictions, if the current rate continues, the labor shortage will become critical. The Economic and Fiscal Policy White Paper, edited by the Cabinet Office (Naikaku, 2003a), stated “If we attempt to fill the lack by accepting immigrants in order to maintain the population of productive workers, we will need to accept 640 000 immigrants every year until 2050. It is necessary to make our country more attractive for foreign workers”. However, it is unlikely that more than 30 million immigrants will choose to live in Japan unless efforts are made to abolish xenophobia and to make qualitative changes that will change Japanese society so that it is more open to co-existence. Moreover, Japan is not the only country that must worry about future declines in the work force and other countries will most likely start to attract foreign workers earlier than Japan (Naikaku, 2003b).

Keywords: hybrid identity, international marriages, new concept citizenship

If the Japanese government does not adopt an alternative policy to ensure equal treatment and equal rights for foreign workers, such workers will not readily choose to settle down in Japan. Many of them will leave Japan after a short while and some of them will have problems too serious to allow them to survive in Japan. A few of them might come to hate and commit crimes against the Japanese. It is necessary not only for foreigners, but also for the Japanese to help create an alternative system for co-existence because Japanese society will decline without the support of foreigners. Through their struggle to survive, both Japanese and foreign women have, perhaps unintentionally, made great qualitative changes in Japanese

society. This battle-less revolution is being brought about by individual women who are making marriage choices very different from those in the past. The more the average marriage age for Japanese women rises, and the more they choose not to marry, the more Japanese men tend to marry foreign brides. As a result, many foreigners initially gain the right to live in Japan, not only as workers but also as family members (as mothers, in particular) of Japanese citizens. At the same time, “international divorces” are also on the rise. Are they the result of the increase in international marriages? The answer is “No”. The divorce rates vary greatly according to the nationality and gender of the spouse. The divorce rates and the rates of children

born out of wedlock in Japan seem to be related to class and racism. Japan needs to create a system that fosters co-existence with foreigners, both within Japanese society and in East Asia, in order to abolish racism and solve the problem of the declining population.¹ In order to ensure a common future, we should work together toward the realization of the following objectives:

1. Accepting dual citizenship and hybrid identities that go beyond the modern “national” identity.
2. Creating a new concept of citizenship based on residence, again, going beyond the level of nation-states.
3. Sharing a multicultural system for co-existence as a new East Asian Union, and re-interpreting “our multiple-stories”, thus going beyond the notion of national “history” (Jung, 2001).

Introduction: The dropping birth rate and acceptance of immigrants

In the year 2003, the aggregate birth rate in Japan plummeted to the lowest in its history: the average national birthrate was 1.29. According to many predictions, at the current rates, the labor shortage will reach something close to ten million workers over the next two decades (Nakamura, 1999). In a report on projected vital statistics by the United Nations in January, 2000, it became evident that if Japan hopes to maintain a supply of labor in the area now rapidly shrinking (people between the ages of 15 and 64), it will need to accept more than 600 000 migrant workers into the country a year over the next fifty years. First, concerning the Japanese labor force, although there were approximately 87 million people in 1995, the number decreased to 86 million people in 2000. After that, it will rapidly decrease to 57 million people in 2050 as

estimated by the United Nations. In order to maintain the level (that Japan has known for the last) ninety-five years, it will be necessary to accept a total of 33 million immigrants by 2050. Thus, it is calculated that Japan will have to accept an average of 600 000 immigrants per year.

Concerning the entire Japanese population, there were approximately 127 million people at its peak, but this number will decrease in 2005 and continue to drop to approximately 105 million people in 2050. To maintain the level at its peak, Japan would have to accept 17 million immigrants in total by 2050. Thus, it would be necessary to accept 400 000 immigrants every year.

Furthermore, when calculations are made to include the index of aging, we see that while 4.8 persons in the labor force supported one senior person aged 65-years-old or more in 1995, in 2050 1.7 persons will support one senior person. In order to maintain the 1995 level, Japan will need to accept approximately 553 million immigrants by 2050. Thus, accepting approximately 10.1 million would be necessary every year. In a word, the biggest problem is the ageing population.

Although the United Nations (2000) suggested that “it is necessary to accept 600 000 immigrants every year”, this sounds impossible, because *the White Paper on Police* listed increased crime by foreigners visiting Japan as the primary factor in the deterioration of the crime situation (The Keishicho National Police Agency, Government of Japan, 2003). In addition, many people are afraid of more foreigners coming to Japan and resist accepting them into their communities.

Nevertheless, the Japan Business Federation (2003) has made the following suggestion: “To control the national burden such as tax and social security in the future, it will be effective to create policies that are positive toward immigrants.” The Japan Business Federation came to this idea through its trial calculations, estimating that if we accept 6.1 million guest workers in total by 2025, we can control consumption tax keeping it at

10% (if not it will go up to 18%). It also estimates with the aging population and the low birthrate, the number of employees who bear tax and social security costs will decrease to 58.5 million workers after losing 6.1 million workers by 2025. If the low birthrate remains at the present level, even though annuity payments and medical expenses would be cut by 10 trillion yen, consumption tax will increase to 18% in 2025. The national burdens such as social security and the taxes that are applied to personal income will rise to 48% from the present 38%. If we accept 2800 immigrant workers every year until 2025, by application of immigration the average of the nominal growth rate rises 0.6%. The national burden rate in 2025 will be kept at its level of 42%. (If immigration is accepted, the consumer tax rate rises by only half the expected rate. November 26, 2002. p3 *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*)

In addition, the Cabinet Office Government of Japan stated as follows:

At the end of 2001, there were 178 million foreigners registered in Japan (approximately 1.4% of entire population). During this decade, the total number has increased by approximately 1.5 times. (The average increase is 50 thousand foreigners every year). It is anticipated that in the future this figure will keep increasing. But the population in Japan will decrease rapidly. If we try to fill the gap by accepting immigrants, in order to maintain the entire population, we need to accept 340 000 immigrants. To maintain the level of the population for the most productive age groups, we would need to accept 640 000 immigrants.

If we consider the situation of foreigners in Japan, we can foresee that there would be many issues to resolve if we continuously accept immigrants in numbers ten or more times greater than at present. Not only would the social economy of this country be greatly affected by the acceptance of more foreigners and migrant workers, both in

terms of the domestic labor market and social costs, but the lives of the immigrants themselves would be greatly affected. Therefore, we must give these questions serious consideration. However, from the viewpoint of ensuring the active internationalization of the economy of our country, it is especially important to keep accepting foreign immigrant workers in technical fields so that those who have the will to work, the ability to work, the right talents in the right place, regardless of nationality, age or sex, can do so. We must create mechanisms for making this possible as well as make our country a more attractive place to work. (Naikaku (Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan), 2003a)

Although both the Japan Business Federation and the Cabinet Office have changed policies, making it easier to accept immigrants on a large scale, they have not made efforts to abolish institutional and social discrimination against foreigners. Foreigners themselves and Japanese human-rights activists have tried to advocate for the improvement of their position. However, the more diversified foreigners become, the more complicated xenophobia becomes. So we can say that it has become harder, in general, for foreigners to live in Japan.

Which Immigrants Will Come to Japan?

We might begin with the question, "Would a large number of immigrants settle down in Japan if Japan were to change her immigration policies?" It is not easy to answer, "Yes." If Japan does not make any effort to make its society attractive beyond changing immigration policy, the desired number of immigrants will not come to Japan.

Here the word "immigrants" is used in reference to permanent residents rather than migrant workers who will return to their home countries in a few years. If foreign

workers do not find Japan to be an attractive society in which to work throughout their lives, they will leave Japan for somewhere else. The most important issue is whether “Japan can become an attractive society for immigrants” rather than whether “Japan can make its immigration policy open.” It will not be easy to secure 30 million immigrants in total because neighboring countries, such as South Korea and China, will become rivals in a scramble for immigrants in the near future. The next problem is “how” and “from where” can Japan accept immigrants?

Japan is not the only country expressing anxieties about its decreasing population in the 21st Century. For example, the total fertility rate of South Korea became as low as Japan (it was 1.41 in 1999, but we hear it dropped to 1.17 in 2002, making it lower than Japan). However, the problem of its dropping population will be more serious because Korean society is ageing even more rapidly than Japanese society. So, although the immigration policy is still controversial in South Korea, the Korean Government began its contradictory immigration policy in the fall of 2003, earlier than the Japanese government, because they hope not to lose time in the scramble for immigrants.

On the other hand, China has a “one-child policy” now because of its overflowing population, but in the near future, China will also suffer from a drop in population and an ageing society because of the “one-child policy.” In the 21st century East Asian countries will have difficulties due to their declining and ageing populations, globalization and the instability of related economic systems. Will other East Asian countries become rivals with Japan in the race to get enough immigrants? Or will East Asian countries share their mutual resources and systems like the European Union in order to survive and co-exist? Which vision will we choose?

The Japanese Cabinet Office (2003a), has suggested that “Japan needs to accept more than 640 000 foreign workers a year, but they say it is important to accept immigrants who

are experts or engineers.” Do they mean that Japan will be lost unless 30 million foreign workers settle down to provide their support? From where do they think that they can accept 30 million immigrants? Who will be new members of Japanese society? Where will they come from? Are all people with Japanese ancestry expected to come from all over the world to Japan? In fact, many Japanese Brazilians and Peruvians have already settled down in Japan, but even they seem to be isolated in ghettos divided by cultural (language) barriers.

When refugees from North Korea took refuge in the Japanese Consul at Shenyang in 2002, the Japanese government and people were afraid that a huge number of refugees would rush into Japan from North Korea, but the entire population of North Korea is only 23 million. Even if all of them wanted to settle down in Japan, the number would still be considerably short of the number of immigrants required by Japan and refugees from North Korea would be apt to go to South Korea. It is unimaginable that they would rush to Japan.

The problem is xenophobia in Japan rather than the infringement upon the vested rights of the Japanese or the disruption of public order by foreigners. Thirty million immigrants will not come to settle in Japan because foreigners feel that Japan is unattractive and hostile. The Japanese government and business community have already noticed the problem. The question is, when and how can Japan become an open country that accepts them? And if Japan accepts such a huge number of foreign workers over the next 100 years, half the population of Japan will be foreigners or Japanese people might be already counted as a minority/ethnic group. Then it would be hard to maintain the national identity related to only a “Japanese” single ethnicity. Japan as a nation-state will melt into East Asia in the 22nd century; or perhaps, the Chinese might become the majority group in the 23rd century in the multicultural society of Japan.

The Attitude of Japanese Nationals

If Japanese nationals cannot share this point of view, Japan should give up not only the notion of an open policy for immigrants, but also the favorable conditions of the Japanese economy. Even if Japan emphasizes that it is eager to accept foreign workers, nobody will want to settle in Japan where it is hard for them to live. If Japan does not consider the status of foreigners seriously, it will be impossible to gather 30 million immigrants and it is also rude to them. If you are familiar with Japanese history, you can understand that it is impossible to force foreign workers to come again as was done under Japanese Imperialists before 1945. To be chosen by immigrants, a qualitative transformation should be made first. This should be followed by quantitative changes in order to make it easier to live together with immigrants in an attractive society, but the Japan Cabinet Office does not show any concrete vision that might help bring about such a qualitative transformation.

While the population of Ireland dropped from 8 million in the first half of the 19th century to 2.8 million in 1961, it has recovered dramatically with an increase in population to 4 million by December 2003. As a result of accepting immigrants, it is said that the brightness of Dublin is the fruit of taking freshness from outside into a mature society.

The UK actively accepted refugees whom Japan and India refused. Six thousand refugees have settled down in a middle-range city, Leicester. A business consultant, Mr. Mogal (68 years old) who fled from Uganda in 1972 said "I appreciate having been accepted as a refugee, but we also are proud that we can contribute to the UK." (Sato and Sugano, 2004) Both immigrants and citizens have made efforts to understand each other, overcoming discrimination. By 2011, Leicester will be the first city where more than half the population is non-white within the UK

Prime Minister Tony Blair admires the achievements of immigrants who earn 10% of the GDP and said "Accepting immigrants has, without doubt, contributed greatly to our economy." (Sato and Sugano, 2004)

If we have respect for the human rights of immigrants, they can contribute greatly to the society through their involvement. However, if we control immigrants exclusively as if they were a reserve body of criminals, they will also heighten their distrust, hatred and hostility and are apt to take a utilitarian view of things and will not contribute to Japan. The result of accepting immigrants depends on how the immigrants are treated.

In Germany Chancellor Schroder decided to initiate the green card system a few years ago in order to accept 20 thousand experts. Germans gave special visas to Indian and Russian engineers in information technology. This decision led to a major experiment for Germany because it has fewer foreigners than the UK and France, which have a lot of immigrants from ex-colonies. But only 2285 immigrants applied for this special visa last year. It has been difficult for the new immigration law, which would make immigration procedures and gaining approval easier, because conservative groups are resisting it. While Germans find it is hard for to get a job, the labor market will not be open to foreign workers. (Sato and Sugano, 2004) This German experiment also suggests many things for Japan. There was a 0.1% increase in the unemployment rate, which reached 5.0% (male 5.2%, female 4.6%) in January 2004. Even if the government insists on the necessity of accepting immigrants, it will be hard for the open immigration policy to go ahead as planned if the nationals are conservative and nationalistic.

The public relations section in the Minister's Secretariat of the Cabinet Office took a public-opinion poll about foreign workers from 3000 people over the age of twenty in all parts of Japan in November 2000 (2070 valid answers). (Naikakuhu, 2001) The findings are interesting and are summarized below.

Half of the Japanese people have no interest at all in the issue of the labor shortage predicted in the future or that of foreign workers as members of Japanese society. The majority of Japanese have the following views:

1. If the number unemployed Japanese increases, we will not accept foreign workers, but if they can be alternate workers to fill the labor shortage, we will allow foreign workers to come in.
2. It is natural to make pay differentials between Japanese and foreign workers and put restrictions on accepting them.
3. The more foreign workers come to Japan, the more crimes and troubles are likely to be caused by them. So we worry that security will be worse in Japan.
4. We hope foreign workers will not have their families come to live with them.
5. We hope foreign workers will not live in Japan permanently.
6. We think that accepting foreign workers is helping them because of their poverty; we would not be helped by their support of our society.
7. We will not agree with or oppose accepting foreign workers to care for seniors.

If foreign workers learn of the attitudes Japanese have toward them, many of them will not want to come to Japan in the future.

Will the Japanese Immigration Policy Succeed?

When the Japanese economy is reduced in size because of labor shortages, the number of foreign workers who turn toward Japan will decrease suddenly, if it is hard for them to live in Japan. Moreover, if fewer foreign workers settle in Japan in the future, the Japanese economy will shrink more rapidly. It is a vicious cycle in which economic conditions and immigration are interlinked. It is necessary to make Japanese society more attractive

for foreign workers to earn money before we fall into this vicious downward spiral.

Some have claimed that if accepted in large numbers, foreign workers would take jobs from the Japanese, but it is impossible to prove this because the unemployment rate is not calculated by nationality. On the other hand, if Japan accepts large numbers of immigrants, we can see that not only the labor force, but also the number of consumers will increase. Thus, accepting immigrants can also be a means of stimulating the economy. Nevertheless, most Japanese see only the negative side of accepting immigrants and continue to reproduce their xenophobia. This will be damaging to Japan's possibilities for mutual coexistence in Asia.

Ms. Yasuko Hayase, Chief Researcher at the Development Research Center in the Institute of Asian Economy of the Japan External Trade System, "If we accept foreign workers as caregivers, Japanese society can be supportive to both women and foreign workers," (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2003) and after she pointed out that the employment rate of Japanese women is almost 20% lower than the latent employment rate for those between 30 and 35 years old, she also suggested freeing Japanese women from their heavy domestic work-load by letting foreign workers do it for them. Thus, a higher birth rate among Japanese women could be expected and more women could be tax payers as paid workers. Her suggestion reminds me of the history of Japanese businessmen who were made to work harder outside of the home. As a result, women were forced to stay at home to do all the shadow work with no pay and Japan was able to achieve a high rate of economic growth.

Though Japanese women were not paid at home, Japanese men were made to provide for their families, but foreign workers would need to be paid to work in each home. Then who can pay enough for the foreign workers to do such domestic work? The income of women is lower than that of men and the

wages of both are decreasing under the restructuring of the Japanese economy.

Domestic work is not unskilled labor. So if foreign workers take on domestic work themselves, they should be paid a high income. Most Japanese couples and single parents cannot afford to pay them.

If foreign workers live with their Japanese employers to do their domestic work and are far away from their own families, what will happen to their transnational families? Is not it necessary to respect their right to live with their own family?

Foreign students in Japan might be listed as candidates to become foreign workers to support Japanese society in the future. Currently there are 95 550 foreign students in Japan. About 90% of them come from Asian countries, but some of them are discouraged with life in Japan because they have few friends even though they have lived in Japan for several years. Many of them suffer from loneliness. I think that not only foreign students, but also many of Japanese feel lonely because the Japanese are apt to keep their distance from others. A society that is not attractive to foreigners might also be unattractive for the Japanese themselves.

If Japan wants to be more attractive for immigrants, it should begin to articulate a policy for the families of foreign workers as follows.

1. Providing education that allows them to keep their ethnicity.
2. Permanent residence visas.
3. Multiculturalism in the public sector.
4. A system that allows dual-citizenship.
5. Mental-physical health services to support them as immigrants.

Women's Choices and Unintended Qualitative Change

A "revolution" that is dramatically transforming the contours of Japanese society is

now being launched by women. This is a "battle-less revolution" brought about by individual women who are making choices very different from those they would have made in the past, on the basis of their personal worldviews or opinions about marriage. As the marriage age for women rises, as some choose not to marry, and as the number of divorces increases, resulting in a larger number of single people in Japan, the function of the family as a "nest" where children may be born and reared is weakening. I can say that as a result of sexism, Japan needs to change drastically.

In contrast, globalization is also pushing Japan to be more open to both immigrants and emigrants/business people. The more rapidly Japan is asked to diversify its social systems, the more conspicuously nationalists will agitate in a way that incites racism. Such backlash has also arisen from the deep recession in this decade. The "North Korea bashing" seen in the past few years has been instigated by nationalists who still discriminate against Asian people. They are afraid that Asian countries will flourish and take revenge on Japan. That is why the nationalists are very dependent on the USA. They agitate for nationalism and militarism. I think that many Japanese do not agree with the right wing, but they feel themselves powerless and become conservative. However, if the Japanese people abolish their discrimination against Asia and establish a new friendly relationship with Asian people, they can be independent of the USA and feel more hopeful about their future.

Increase in International Marriages

Asian women are "pulled" into this Japanese context as brides and entertainers. International marriages now account for about 5% of marriages in Japan (2001) (Kokuritsu josei kyoiku kaikan, 2003). Foreigners make

up only 1.45% of the Japanese population; thus 5% is a relatively high proportion. If we look at the statistics for international marriages broken down by nationality, women who are recent Korean immigrants and Korean-Japanese make up the majority of foreign women married to Japanese men, while American men make up the majority of foreign men married to Japanese women. In recent years, these patterns are becoming more diverse.

In fact, it is striking that, whereas in 1965 the number of Japanese women with foreign husbands was triple the number of foreign women married to Japanese men, by 1995 this pattern had reversed itself, so that Japanese men married to foreign women are more numerous. Now the number of Japanese women working abroad is greater than the number of Japanese men working abroad. Women are more active and open-minded outside of Japan. In other words, although we may assume that the high number of Japanese women traveling/working abroad has led to an increase in the number of Japanese women married to foreign men, the increase in the number of Japanese men who do not work abroad, but marry foreign women has far exceeded this. The latter increased from one-third in 1965 to three times that number in 1995.

If we keep this rise in international marriages in perspective, it is possible that the trend toward later marriage, remaining single and divorce among Japanese women does not so much reflect a "turning away from marriage" per se as a desire to avoid marriage with Japanese men. As a result, Japanese men experiencing difficulty in finding a marriage partner must inevitably broaden their vision to include foreign women as possible marriage partners.

The increase in international marriages means that the arrival of greater numbers of foreigners to Japan is following a new pattern. To wit, foreigners are no longer coming to Japan simply as a work force, but they are coming as family members of Japanese

citizens. This means that what has heretofore been constructed as an issue that concerned "nationalism versus humanism" when the entry of foreigners to Japan was at stake, is undergoing a shift in inflection as a new problem emerges: do sovereign Japanese citizens have the right to live with foreign family members, the right to "family unity"?

Changes in women's worldviews and their views of marriage, therefore, have not only changed the structure of everyday life in Japan. As children of diverse nationalities begin to be born in Japan and as their parents advocate that they must be treated as family members regardless of their nationalities, the boundaries of national citizenship are being shaken. By arguing that the right to form a family takes precedence over the nation-state's logic of excluding foreigners based on the principle of the sovereignty of the ethnos, women are challenging nationalism head-on. Regardless of whether or not the Citizenship Law is eventually transformed so that the country of birth is not decisive, we can predict that such actions by women will continue to revise the "common sense" assumptions about who is (or should be) Japanese.

I have been studying Japanese vital statistics for several years and have discovered some tendencies in international marriages between Japanese and those of other nationalities including Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, Thai, Americans, British, Brazilian and Peruvians.

1. Japanese women tend to marry American and European men, but not Asian men.
2. Most of Filipinos and Thais tend not to marry people with the same nationality.
3. Korean, Chinese, Filipina and Thai women tend to marry Japanese men more than men with the same nationality.

I think that these tendencies in international marriages also reflect the power and control politics among countries as well as gender politics. This is because these marriages can be seen as a means for many women to survive by getting richer men to

Table 1. The numbers of marriages and divorces with/between Japanese (2002)

| Composition (bride–groom) | (a) Marriages (<i>n</i>) | (b) Divorces (<i>n</i>) | (b)/(a) × 100% |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Japanese couples | 721 452 | 274 584 | 38.1% |
| One Japanese spouse | 35 879 | 15 252 | 42.5% |
| Foreign bride—Japanese groom | 27 957 | 12 087 | 43.2% |
| Japanese bride—Foreign groom | 7 922 | 3 165 | 40.0% |
| Total | 757 331 | 289 836 | 38.3% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

Table 2. The numbers of marriages and divorces with/between Koreans (2002)

| Composition (bride–groom) | (a) Marriages (<i>n</i>) | (b) Divorces (<i>n</i>) | (b)/(a) × 100% |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Korean couples | 943 | 1 040 | 110.3% |
| One Korean spouse (Japanese spouses) | 7 904 (7 732) | 3 957 (3 912) | 50.1% (50.6%) |
| Korean—Others (Japanese grooms) | 5 440 (5 353) | 2 760 (2 745) | 50.7% (51.3%) |
| Others—Korean (Japanese brides) | 2 464 (2 379) | 1 197 (1 167) | 48.6% (49.1%) |
| Total (Japanese spouses) | 8 847 (7 732) | 4 997 (3 912) | 56.5% (50.6%) |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

Table 3. The numbers of marriages and divorces with/between Chinese (2002)

| Composition (bride–groom) | (a) Marriages (<i>n</i>) | (b) Divorces (<i>n</i>) | (b)/(a) × 100% |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Chinese couples | 251 | 352 | 140.2% |
| One Chinese spouse (Japanese spouses) | 11 720 (11 564) | 5 100 (5 076) | 43.5% (43.9%) |
| Chinese—Others (Japanese grooms) | 10 863 (10 750) | 4 646 (4 629) | 42.8% (43.1%) |
| Others—Chinese (Japanese brides) | 857 (814) | 454 (447) | 53.0% (54.9%) |
| Total (Japanese spouses) | 11 971 (11 564) | 5 452 (5 076) | 45.5% (43.9%) |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

Table 4. The numbers of marriages and divorces with/between Philipinos (2002)

| Composition (bride–groom) | (a) Marriages (<i>n</i>) | (b) Divorces (<i>n</i>) | (b)/(a) × 100% |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Philippine couples | 9 | 1 | 11.1% |
| One Philippine spouse (Japanese spouses) | 7 888 (7 734) | 3 236 (3 210) | 41.0% (41.5%) |
| Philippine—Others (Japanese grooms) | 7 780 (7 630) | 3 159 (3 133) | 40.6% (41.1%) |
| Others—Philippine (Japanese brides) | 108 (104) | 77 (77) | 71.3% (74.0%) |
| Total (Japanese spouses) | 7 897 (7 734) | 3 237 (3 210) | 41.0% (41.5%) |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

provide for them. See Tables 1–9 on international marriages in Japan.

The High Divorce Rate

Foreign women marrying Japanese men cannot be considered passive. Most of them

belong to the middle-class in their home country and are well-educated; they have power over their lives and knowledge that enables them to try changing their lives by moving to a richer country in order to escape discrimination against women in her homeland. If they marry Japanese men who were avoided as marriage partners by Japanese women, what happens? Of course, the

Table 5. The numbers of marriages and divorces with/between Thais (2002)

| Composition (bride-groom) | (a) Marriages (<i>n</i>) | (b) Divorces (<i>n</i>) | (b)/(a) × 100% |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Thai couples | 4 | 0 | 0% |
| One Thai spouse (Japanese spouses) | 1 606 (1 581) | 741 (735) | 46.1% (46.5%) |
| Thai—Others (Japanese grooms) | 1 555 (1 536) | 704 (699) | 45.3% (45.5%) |
| Others—Thai (Japanese brides) | 51 (45) | 37 (36) | 72.5% (80.0%) |
| Total (Japanese spouses) | 1 610 (1 581) | 741 (735) | 46.0% (46.5%) |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

Table 6. The numbers of marriages and divorces with/between Americans (2002)

| Composition (bride-groom) | (a) Marriages (<i>n</i>) | (b) Divorces (<i>n</i>) | (b)/(a) × 100% |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| American couples | 349 | 1 | 0.3% |
| One American spouse (Japanese spouses) | 1 847 (1 651) | 453 (440) | 24.5% (26.7%) |
| American—Others (Japanese grooms) | 185 (163) | 78 (76) | 42.2% (46.6%) |
| Others—American (Japanese brides) | 1 662 (1 488) | 375 (364) | 22.6% (24.5%) |
| Total (Japanese spouses) | 2 196 (1651) | 454 (440) | 20.7% (26.7%) |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

Table 7. The numbers of marriages and divorces with/between British (2002)

| Composition (bride-groom) | (a) Marriages (<i>n</i>) | (b) Divorces (<i>n</i>) | (b)/(a) × 100% |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| British couples | 9 | 0 | 0% |
| One British spouse (Japanese spouses) | 430 (402) | 96 (91) | 22.3% (22.6%) |
| British—Others (Japanese grooms) | 97 (85) | 36 (33) | 37.1% (38.8%) |
| Others—British (Japanese brides) | 333 (317) | 60 (58) | 18.0% (18.3%) |
| Total (Japanese spouses) | 439 (402) | 96 (91) | 21.9% (22.6%) |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

Table 8. The numbers of marriages and divorces with/between Brazilians (2002)

| Composition (bride-groom) | (a) Marriages (<i>n</i>) | (b) Divorces (<i>n</i>) | (b)/(a) × 100% |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Brazilian couples | 555 | 16 | 2.9% |
| One Brazilian spouse (Japanese spouses) | 714 (515) | 205 (169) | 28.7% (32.8%) |
| Brazilian—Others (Japanese grooms) | 379 (284) | 112 (91) | 29.6% (32.0%) |
| Others—Brazilian (Japanese brides) | 335 (231) | 93 (78) | 27.8% (33.8%) |
| Total (Japanese spouses) | 1 269 (515) | 221 (169) | 17.4% (32.8%) |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

Table 9. The numbers of marriages and divorces with/between Peruvian (2002)

| Composition (bride-groom) | (a) Marriages (<i>n</i>) | (b) Divorces (<i>n</i>) | (b)/(a) × 100% |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Peruvian couples | 131 | 7 | 5.3% |
| One Peruvian spouse (Japanese spouses) | 407 (263) | 127 (101) | 31.2% (38.4%) |
| Peruvian—Others (Japanese grooms) | 199 (126) | 53 (45) | 26.6% (35.7%) |
| Others—Peruvian (Japanese brides) | 208 (137) | 74 (56) | 35.6% (40.9%) |
| Total (Japanese spouses) | 538 (263) | 134 (101) | 24.9% (38.4%) |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

number of divorces increases among them. After divorce, the responsibility for child-rearing tends to rest with the wife and many difficulties might arise when that wife learns she cannot easily take her child and care for it in her home country, since the child has either dual citizenship, or only has Japanese citizenship. This is causing growing numbers of foreign women to stay in Japan to rear their children as single mothers, who come face to face with racism and sexism directed at them. Even for Japanese citizens, the average income of female-headed households is extremely low (about one-third of male-headed households). Since it is a difficult situation, they need to live close to one another and organize their own community where they can maintain a sense of their ethnicity and identity. This is very interesting because their lives as single mothers tend to strengthen their ethnic identity; their children keep both Japanese citizenship and their ethnic identity.

About one-fifth of Japanese children who were born in the central part of Tokyo (Shinjuku-ward, Minato-ward, Shibuya-ward and Toshima-ward) have at least one foreign parent. Thus the number of foreigners who are residing in Japan and are not spouses of Japanese citizens, but mothers of Japanese citizens, is increasing. Today, not only in the

central part of Tokyo, but also all over Japan, about 3% of babies are born of foreign parent(s). This fact will soon shake identity politics in Japan.

A look at the statistics concerning divorce rates among Korean immigrants and Korean-Japanese reveals something even more striking. In 2002, the number of marriages between Korean husbands and Korean wives was 943 and the number of divorces was 1040. Thus, the number of divorces is higher than the number of marriages. What is happening within the Korean community in Japan? Do foreign couples face twice as much difficulty as foreign and Japanese couples face? Does living as a minority in Japan cause their divorce rate to rise higher? After they divorce, women build networks in order to survive, but how do the men survive?

Examine the surprising divorce rates among Korean and Chinese compared with people of other nationalities (Tables 10–18).

I also found some tendencies from these data as follows.

1. Only Koreans and Chinese who married spouses with the same nationalities got divorced at the surprisingly high divorce rates and many of them choose Japanese spouses when they remarried.² When they marry Japanese, their divorce rates are

Table 10. The annual numbers of marriages and divorces by Japanese couples

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Marriage | 766 708 | 747 400 | 754 959 | 730 128 | 761 875 | 760 272 | 721 452 |
| Divorce | 198 860 | 213 486 | 232 877 | 239 479 | 251 879 | 272 244 | 274 584 |
| Divorce/Marriages (%) | 25.9% | 28.6% | 30.8% | 32.8% | 33.1% | 35.8% | 38.1% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbō Tokeijohobu, 2002).

Table 11. The annual numbers of marriages and divorces by Korean couples

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Marriage | 1 438 | 1 279 | 1 269 | 1 220 | 1 151 | 1 019 | 943 |
| Divorce | 968 | 938 | 1 068 | 1 094 | 1 005 | 1 067 | 1 040 |
| Divorce/Marriages (%) | 67.3% | 73.3% | 84.2% | 89.7% | 87.3% | 104.7% | 110.3% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbō Tokeijohobu, 2002, 2003).

Table 12. The annual numbers of marriages and divorces by Chinese couples

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Marriage | 201 | 220 | 215 | 244 | 193 | 267 | 251 |
| Divorce | 171 | 184 | 227 | 284 | 314 | 312 | 352 |
| Divorce/Marriages (%) | 85.1% | 83.6% | 105.6% | 116.4% | 162.7% | 116.9% | 140.2% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodosho Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002, 2003).

Table 13. The annual numbers of marriages and divorces by Philippine couples

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|------|-------|
| Marriage | 6 | 1 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 9 |
| Divorce | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Divorce/Marriages (%) | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 22.2% | 0% | 11.1% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodosho Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002, 2003).

Table 14. The annual numbers of marriages and divorces by Thai couples

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Marriage | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Divorce | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Divorce/Marriages (%) | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodosho Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002, 2003).

Table 15. The annual numbers of marriages and divorces by American couples

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Marriage | 288 | 310 | 285 | 250 | 266 | 284 | 349 |
| Divorce | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 1 |
| Divorce/Marriages (%) | 1.7% | 1.3% | 1.8% | 1.2% | 1.1% | 1.8% | 0.3% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodosho Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002, 2003).

Table 16. The annual numbers of marriages and divorces by British couples

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Marriage | 33 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 11 | 9 | 9 |
| Divorce | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Divorce/Marriages (%) | 6.1% | 6.7% | 0% | 0% | 9.1% | 0% | 0% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodosho Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002, 2003).

Table 17. The annual numbers of marriages and divorces by Brazilian couples

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Marriage | 727 | 831 | 860 | 793 | 802 | 749 | 555 |
| Divorce | 6 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 12 | 11 | 16 |
| Divorce/Marriages (%) | 0.8% | 1.1% | 1.2% | 1.1% | 1.5% | 1.5% | 2.9% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodosho Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002, 2003).

Table 18. The annual numbers of marriages and divorces by Peruvian couples

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------------------|------|------|-------|------|-------|------|------|
| Marriage | 79 | 86 | 79 | 92 | 92 | 133 | 131 |
| Divorce | 4 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 11 | 7 |
| Divorce/Marriages (%) | 5.1% | 4.7% | 10.1% | 9.8% | 13.0% | 8.3% | 5.3% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbō Tokeijohobu, 2002, 2003).

Table 19. Children who were born in Japan without Japanese nationality (2001)

| Mother's nationality | Total (a) | Legitimate children | Children born out of wedlock (b) | (b)/(a) % |
|----------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Korean | 2 751 | 2 458 | 293 | 10.7% |
| Chinese | 2 494 | 2 160 | 334 | 13.4% |
| Philippine | 924 | 235 | 689 | 74.6% |
| Thai | 245 | 38 | 207 | 84.5% |
| American | 151 | 142 | 9 | 6.0% |
| British | 65 | 63 | 2 | 3.1% |
| Brazilian | 2 926 | 2 126 | 800 | 27.3% |
| Peruvian | 714 | 517 | 197 | 27.6% |
| Others | 1 567 | 1 405 | 162 | 10.3% |
| Total | 11 837 | 9 144 | 2 693 | 22.8% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodoshō Daijinkanbō Tokeijohobu, 2001).

lower than when they marry spouses of the same nationality, but their divorce rates with Japanese spouses are still higher than the divorce rates in their home countries.

2. Filipinos, Thais, Brazilians and Peruvians who married Japanese have higher divorce rates than that in their home countries, although those who married spouses with the same nationalities have lower divorce rates.
3. Americans and British who live in Japan have much lower divorce rates than in their home countries. Those who married Japanese spouses have higher divorce rates than those who married spouses with the same nationality.³

Divorce rates seem to depend on their status and (economic) power in Japan (Go and Jung, 1999). It appears to be easy for women to get divorced when their husbands are from relatively poor counties; they tend to choose spouses from richer countries when they remarry. This clearly shows both gender politics and the North–South problems. It

also makes clear that it is harder for foreign women and foreign men from poor countries to survive in Japan.

Children born out of wedlock to foreign mothers

The number of children born out of wedlock children is also striking, as seen in Tables 19 and 20.

In more “gender-free” oriented societies, the number of children born out of wedlock is on the rise. In contrast, in societies where sexism is strong, the number of children born out of wedlock is also growing, which is in itself evidence of racism, sexism, class discrimination and power politics.

These numbers indicate many things. For example, the number of children born out of wedlock may indicate sexism, racism or a “gender-free” system. However, in Japan it seems to indicate racism and sexism against Asia and women (Go and Jung, 1999). If

Table 20. Children who were born in Japan without Japanese nationality (2002)

| Mother's nationality | Total (a) | Legitimate children | Children born out of wedlock (b) | (b)/(a) % |
|----------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Korean | 2 468 | 2 194 | 274 | 11.1% |
| Chinese | 2 656 | 2 246 | 410 | 15.4% |
| Philippine | 972 | 256 | 716 | 73.7% |
| Thai | 202 | 40 | 162 | 80.2% |
| American | 163 | 154 | 9 | 5.5% |
| British | 92 | 85 | 7 | 7.6% |
| Brazilian | 2 607 | 1 795 | 812 | 31.1% |
| Peruvian | 744 | 532 | 212 | 28.5% |
| Others | 1 707 | 1 529 | 178 | 10.4% |
| Total | 11 611 | 8 831 | 2 780 | 23.9% |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Koseirodosho Daijinkanbo Tokeijohobu, 2002).

Table 21. The each population in Japan at the end of 2002

| | Total | Male | Female | Spouses and children of Japanese |
|------------------|-------------|---------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Korea | 625 422 | 294 165 | 331 257 | 21 868 |
| China | 424 282 | 181 654 | 242 628 | 53 126 |
| Philippine | 169 359 | 27 802 | 141 557 | 45 510 |
| Thailand | 33 736 | 8 856 | 24 880 | 12 838 |
| USA | 47 970 | 30 390 | 17 580 | 9 021 |
| UK | 18 508 | 12 012 | 6 496 | 2 403 |
| Brazil | 268 332 | 147 322 | 121 010 | 90 732 |
| Peru | 51 772 | 28 209 | 23 563 | 8 923 |
| Other countries | 212 377 | 131 516 | 80 861 | 27 298 |
| Total foreigners | 1 851 758 | 861 926 | 989 832 | 271 719 |
| Total | 127 435 350 | | | ----- |

Table created by Yeong-Hae Jung from the Vital Statistics for Japan (Zaidan hojin nyukan kyokai, 2003).

The word "spouses and children of Japanese" means people who stay in Japan having the visa as "spouses and children of Japanese".

there are more children born out of wedlock ethnic children and foreign single mothers in Japan, their ethnicity will grow stronger and more apparent as a strategy to survive by building networks and working to abolish discrimination against ethnic minorities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems that it will be impossible for Japan to accept a huge number of immigrants over the next five decades. Such immigrants would become scapegoats in a situation where even the Japanese them-

selves feel uneasy and dissatisfied. The Cabinet Office and Japan Business Federation had better change their unrealistic vision to fill gaps in the labor force with immigrants. As a first step, however, their suggestion to make Japanese society attractive should be heeded and carried out. This means creating a social climate of respect for everyone's human rights. To become a leader of balance in East Asia we need to build a society that can coexist with East Asia.

Japan needs to build a society that can coexist with Asia. Both Japan and Asian countries need to establish new relationships, free from discrimination and prejudice.

In the interest of our common future, we can work together as sociologists in an Asian

Union for our survival and coexistence with the following objectives in mind:

1. Accepting dual citizenship and hybrid identities that go beyond the modern “national” identity.
2. Creating a new concept of citizenship based on residence, again going beyond the level of nation-states.
3. Sharing a multicultural system for co-existence as a new East Asian Union, and re-interpreting “our multiple-stories”, thus going beyond the notion of national “history.”

Notes

- 1 In this paper East Asia means the both areas covering both Northeast and Southeast Asia.
- 2 Actually, after moving to Japan, many Korean and Chinese women must divorce their Korean or Chinese husbands in order to re-marry Japanese men. Thus, many Korean and Chinese women change their husbands, from poor Korean and Chinese to wealthier Japanese.
- 3 But they might report only to their home country after divorce. They don't have to register the divorce to the Japanese government because they will most likely not re-marry Japanese in Japan.

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