

[書評]

Takeshi Hamano
Marriage Migrants of Japanese Women in Australia:
Remoulding Gendered Selves in Suburban Community

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Takeshi Hamano's monograph, *Marriage Migrants of Japanese Women in Australia*, gives us a sociological and gender-based analysis of the migrant experiences of Japanese women married to local men in Australia. For his doctoral research, Hamano conducted fieldwork primarily in Western Sydney from 2007 to 2009, consisting of participant observation of a Japanese ethnic community group and qualitative interviews with 28 Japanese women. Some archival research was also conducted about the history of local Japanese ethnic associations. The book consists of eight chapters, as well as a postscript that reflects on his positionality as an unmarried and male Japanese researcher in his early 30s, in relation to his married and female Japanese respondents, the majority of who were in their 30s and 40s. Rather than including detailed introductions of his respondents in the text, basic information is tabulated in the appendix, including their permanent residency status, spouse's nationality, and whether or not they have children or are employed.

In Chapters 1 and 2, Hamano draws our attention to the changing context of cross-border marriages and marriage migration of Japanese women. He points out that while early, or prewar, Japanese international migration in general was a production-orientated practice, contemporary migration has become a consumption-orientated one; that an economically-motivated and somewhat state-sponsored practice has become a lifestyle-focused, commodified, and individualized project. While the characterization of contemporary Japanese migrants to Australia as lifestyle migrants is now well established, Hamano seeks to consider the gendered aspects of this phenomenon. This is especially pertinent, given the considerable gender imbalance in Australia's Japan-born community, where women are the overwhelming majority.

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Chapter 3 covers the history of Japanese immigration to Australia from the late 19th century. Particular attention is given to the cohort of war brides married to Australian servicemen and who arrived during the 1950s. Here, Hamano hints that the ways in which those women situated themselves in postwar White Australia, by referring to, reconsidering, and utilizing Japanese gender roles and identities, remain relatable to contemporary marriage migrants in multicultural Australia today. In the second half of this chapter, Hamano uses statistics about Australia's Japan-born population to show that, while its largest concentration in Sydney remains clustered in its central and northern suburbs, there are small yet notable increases in Japanese residents living in the western suburbs and beyond. This is attributed to how the residential choices of women marriage migrants are influenced more by factors such as where their spouse was already living or working, as well as cheaper rental properties and real estate, than by proximity to places with an established Japanese community and better access to Japanese goods, services, and employment opportunities.

In Chapter 4, Hamano changes tack and investigates the history of the Japan Club of Australia (JCA), a national Japanese ethnic association which was formed in the 1990s to unite and represent the interests of Japanese-Australians. This is an interesting account of an organization which, despite some initial success in lobbying the Japanese government regarding the voting rights of Japanese citizens overseas, failed to establish a role for itself and ultimately disbanded, but its relevance to a discussion of Japanese women marriage migrants is unclear. In light of Hamano's later discussion of a Japanese ethnic association that was essentially formed by and for Japanese women marriage migrants, it would appear that the purpose of this chapter may be to illustrate how Japanese ethnicity alone is insufficient to attract Japanese residents and migrants to join and contribute to Japan clubs and associations, and how lifestyle migrants in particular are hesitant to join such groups which they see as representing aspects of Japan which they have committed to escaping from. If so, then perhaps this could have been achieved more succinctly without committing an entire chapter to the JCA and taking the reader's attention away from the main subject for too long.

Chapter 5 considers the motivations of Japanese women for leaving Japan and coming to Australia, as well as their positionality as such women in a Western, Anglophone society.

This chapter draws upon existing ideas of how Japanese women may pursue overseas tourism, study abroad, and migration as a means of accumulating cultural capital and escaping oppressive Japanese social structures while in pursuit of a longing, or *akogare*, for the West. It also shows the reader how Hamano's respondents perceived Japanese women as more flexible and adaptable, relative to Japanese men, yet remain quite sensitive to traditional notions of Japanese femininity and the role of women as wives and mothers. These are illustrated in the form of extended quotes from several of the respondents.

In Chapter 6, Hamano shows his respondents' processes of becoming local women through ethnic community participation, employment, and motherhood. The women tend to hold negative perceptions of the Japanese ethnic community organizations which are based in Sydney's northern and central suburbs, misperceiving these as homogenous groups of wealthy expatriates with whom they could not relate. When looking for work, those with limited English language skills, qualifications, and work experience find it difficult to do so, being unable to take advantage of their Japanese cultural capital in the immediate job market. As a result, there is a strong tendency for them to focus on their place within the domestic sphere and their role as a mother. Being a mother, and in particular a Japanese mother, Hamano identifies, is a strategy the women use to represent and recreate themselves in their lives in Australia. What is ironic about this is that, as Japanese women who chose to pursue life courses which deviate from the norm, they end up drawing upon conservative and traditional Japanese norms, albeit ambivalently, in their lives abroad.

Chapter 7 explores how the women make homes away from home through an ongoing process of negotiation between household members, home and host cultures, and the women's own initial motivations for venturing overseas. In particular, the role of Japanese food and its acceptance within the household is considered. This chapter also examines the emergence of a local Japanese ethnic association formed by and for Japanese women marriage migrants, and how it "is a site where members build a collective, local and gendered identity" (p. 144) whilst also differentiating them from Japanese residents elsewhere. Here too, the women's ambivalence to their ethnicity is considered: Japaneseness is both a reference and rallying point that provides comfort and connections, yet an obstacle to realizing an Australian lifestyle.

Chapter 8 concludes the book with Hamano identifying the need for attention to be given to the problems faced by Japanese marriage migrants, which are of concern to the study of marriage migration in general: marriage failure; post-divorce parenting; and social welfare for single mothers. In the final postscript, he briefly discusses the interesting relationship dynamic which formed between him and his respondents by drawing upon the concept of fictive kin. Hamano found that, regardless of the relatively small age difference between them, the women he interviewed assumed a mother-like role, treating him as a son. This further highlights how his respondents made reference to Japanese gender roles in their negotiation of their lives in Australia.

Overall, Hamano's monograph contains several interesting insights into Japanese women marriage migrants in Australia society: that their limited cultural capital and social skills within that society lead them to embrace aspects of conventional Japanese femininity, something they had previously viewed quite negatively; that they re-make themselves and their identity as minority migrant women through drawing upon this femininity; and that they exist in an ambivalent and tense position between their local ethnic community, their multicultural households, and the wider Australian society. In this way, his work has contributed a new perspective to the study of gender and international migration.

Unfortunately, the train of thought behind some conceptual aspects is unclear. For example, Hamano's categorization of women marriage migrants seems to deviate from more common understandings of marriage migration (Lee, 2013; Schrover, 2013). He identifies two types: those "who accompany husbands from their own society or country of origin"; and "those who marry a local partner" (p. 13). Within the context of this book, Japanese wives of corporate expatriates on temporary overseas assignments (see Kurotani, 2005) belong to the first type, and the subjects of Hamano's research to the second. The former would not usually be recognized as marriage migrants, nor would it be likely for such women to self-identify in this way, for they have not crossed borders for the purpose of ethnically-endogamous marriage, such as a so-called "picture bride" might. On the other hand, the second type, as ethnically-exogamous and transnational marriages, aligns with both lay and specialist understandings of marriage migrants. Given Hamano's examination of migrant women in relation to gendered selves, domestic spaces, and local communities in host societies, it makes sense to draw upon the broader existing research into the experiences

of women migrants who are married, such as Kurotani's, but to seemingly categorize any *married* migrant as a *marriage* migrant seems an unnecessary conflation of the category.

Also, the phrasing in the book's title is unusual. "Marriage migrants of Japanese women" causes a moment's confusion: Is this about the women or their spouses? Since this particular phrasing appears in the text itself only several times, it is surprising that the more frequently used "Japanese women marriage migrants" was not chosen instead. Finally, the text would have greatly benefited from a careful proofreading. There are occasional spelling errors, including some which should have been identified with a standard spell checker, such as "many scholars aruge the valunerability" (p. 13). More generally, there are minor but frequent grammatical errors which can distract and frustrate the reader, regrettably detracting from the otherwise interesting content.

Hamano's work makes a small yet important contribution to the study of Japanese migrants and communities in Australia, as well as the study of women migrants in general. Prospective readers who are stretched for time might prefer to start from Chapter 5, especially those who enjoy reading what the respondents had to say, in their own words. Those less familiar with the history of Japanese immigration to Australia would certainly benefit from the summary provided in Chapter 3.

References

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