

論文要旨

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論文要旨 (別様に記載すること。)

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Sociology of Cross-National Marriage:

A Case of Russian-speaking Wives in Japan

Varvara Mukhina

Summary

INTRODUCTION

Except for two well-known cases, the term “cross-national marriage” has not been commonly used by researchers thus far. Ann Baker Cottrell (1990) was the first to use the term in her study: “Cross-National Marriages: A Review of the Literature.” In this review of 367 papers on different types of intergroup marriages, she considered cross-national marriage as a separate topic. Baker Cottrell points out that subsuming cross-national marriage in other categories is inaccurate, because an individual cross-national marriage may involve all three kinds of exogamy (meaning interfaith, interracial or interethnic marriages) or none of them. She assumes that while different cultures are usually involved, to equate cross-national marriage with cross-cultural marriage is overly simplistic (Baker Cottrell, 1990, p. 152). Baker Cottrell's idea was unfortunately not supported by many researchers, and for decades cross-national marriage has been confused with cross-cultural marriage.

In Japan, little research has viewed cross-national marriage as a single integral phenomenon. Most researchers oppose comparing different groups of immigrants; instead they focus on the specific cultural features, types of immigration, and places of settlement. For instance, “Asian” immigrants are opposed to “Westerners”, which does

not provide sufficient space for the description of other patterns of cross-national marriage migration, for instance the case of Russian-speaking wives in Japan. Coming from Eastern Europe, most Russian-speaking partners, following this logic, should be placed in the category of “Westerners.” However, the ways of migration and settlement they employ are much closer to so-called “Asian wives”.

Saihanjuna (2011) indicates that researchers apply different approaches to different categories of immigrants. Cross-national marriages with European wives have been studied within the framework of family sociology, social psychology, and cultural anthropology. Finally, the studies on “Asian wives” of Japanese husbands approached the issue with perspective on rural sociology, sociology of local community, psychology, and historical family sociology. Consequently, the comparison of different groups becomes problematic.

Also, little research has attempted to bring together different types of marital immigration. Most scholars focus either on well-educated middle-class foreign spouses (Diggs, 2001), or so-called “rural brides” (Nakamura, 1989; Sukuya, 1988; Saihanjuna, 2011; Takeda, 2011) or the former Overseas Performing Artists (OPA) women (Suzuki, 2009; Faier, 2007). In general, most research concerning cross-national marriage in Japan focuses on specific features of different groups of immigrants. This produces a very partial and incomplete understanding of cross-national marriage as a distinct phenomenon.

MIGRATION STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

Despite the fact that cross-national marriage is the result of marital migration of the foreign partner, it has been excluded from immigration studies. Researchers focused on

the issues of cultural adjustment and social integration of foreign spouses in the local communities.

Piper (2003) first placed cross-national marriage in Japan in the broad context of immigration studies. She mentions it is important to “explore the connections between cross-border migration, work and international marriage”, arguing that the latter is often the result of women migrants wanting to break the cycle of repeat migration or in order to break out of limited job categories available to them (as reflected by their visa status) (Piper, 2003, p.457). Migration studies perspectives provide the theoretical framework for the integral conceptualization of different forms of marital immigration, despite cultural, ethnic, and regional differences.

In this dissertation I argue for theoretical conceptualization of cross-national marriage as a distinct phenomenon. The objectives of this dissertation are: 1) to investigate the phenomenon of cross-national marriage in Japan applying the migration studies perspective; 2) to explore the under-studied Russian-speaking community in Japan and to place it in the broader context of cross-national marriage in Japan; 3) to define “cross-national marriage” as a distinct theoretical concept, to investigate the dimensions of cross-national marriage, and to distinguish it from cross-cultural or transnational marriages.

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to accomplish the objectives of the study, several techniques for collecting data were employed such as: researching national statistics, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and Internet surveys.

National Statistics: To investigate the meaning of cross-national marriage from the macro-level perspective, national statistics from The Ministry of Justice of Japan, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan (2010) and data from National Census of the Russian Federation (2010), and National Census of Ukraine (2001) were used.

Participant Observation: An investigation on the meaning of cross-national marriage from the micro-level perspective. Fieldwork studies were conducted among women in Russian-speaking communities over a 5-year period. In addition, research was gathered over three years through active participation in weekly gatherings in one of the Kyushu communities, with short-term trips to other parts of Japan (Kanto and Kansai) for personal interviews with cross-national families. In order to have longer contact with these women and more time to discuss marital issues, baby-sitting and translation services were offered by the researcher, as well as interpretation consultations for divorce proceedings. In one case in Kumamoto City, there was a situation where a husband was being violent towards his wife and she needed to find shelter.

In-depth Interviews: For research purposes, 21 Russian-speaking women (19 Russian and 2 Ukrainian wives living in Japan) were questioned using the technique of an in-depth open-ended interview with analysis based on fieldwork experiences. Some interviews were repeated two to three times. The interviews were conducted between the months of May 2008 and June 2010. The interviews were conducted in Russian (then transcribed and translated into English), and each interview lasted from 45 minutes to three hours depending on the participant. Primary questions were based on relations between the wives and their husbands, how they met, what attracted them to their husband and how they envisioned their future. With a secondary approach, their

inner expectations and satisfaction were also examined. Questions about the women's relations with their husbands, their in-laws, ethnic and local communities, and citizen status were discussed during the conversations.

Internet Survey: Observations have also been conducted through participation in the Internet Community of Russian-Speaking Wives in Japan (further – Internet Community). I became a member of the forum in October 2009 and then a moderator in September 2012.

The Internet Community contains 703 registered users (as of October 2012). To participate in discussions and surveys the Internet Community requires formal registration, while unregistered users are stated as “guest.” Guests can neither comment, nor participate in the surveys; they are passive users, which means they can only read events. Registered users are supposed to make two comments within two weeks; failing to do so within the stipulated time frame will result in their account being deleted.

CHAPTER DESCRIPTION

Chapter 1 takes a closer look at the meaning of cross-national marriage in Japan at the national level from a macro-level perspective, starting with a historical review of the interaction of the ethnic Korean community and the Nikkei community with the Japanese authorities. It examines the meaning of cross-national marriage as a strategy of immigration and settlement in Japan. Chapter 1 concludes that cross-national marriage is one of few legal paths to a permanent resident status in Japan; and it is especially attractive to low-skilled workers and female immigrants.

Chapter 2 focuses on the meaning of cross-national marriage on a community level and compares the demographic characteristics of Russian-speaking immigrant

community with other immigrant communities in Japan. Despite the traditionally recognized cultural differences of so-called “Asian wives”, the demographics show that there are many similarities in the characteristics of Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Thai, and Filipino immigrants. These groups of immigrants demonstrate the highest proportions of female immigrants, and the highest proportion of marital immigrants. The chapter concludes that these groups of immigrants should be considered the “typical” marital immigrants in Japan.

Chapter 3 examines the meaning of cross-national marriage for individual immigrants. Cases of Russian-speaking immigrants in Japan are considered, focusing on the women’s perspectives of their decision-making process concerning marital immigration. The spectrum of functions of cross-national marriage in the life strategies of Russian-speaking immigrant women is also identified. Chapter 3 concludes that the present scope of cross-national marriage in Japan is influenced by immigration policies, demographic characteristics, gender ideologies, economic disparities and immigrants’ individual agencies.

Chapter 4 focuses on the dimensions of cross-national marriage. Based on extensive field work and in-depth interviews, the study found three dimensions that migrant women considered to be important for their marriages: relations with the husband, relations with the local community, and relations with the state. Although cross-cultural marriages also include relations with spouses and local communities, they do not include the latter dimension – relations with the state. Thus, chapter 4 concludes that cross-national marriages should be distinguished from cross-cultural ones.

Chapter 5 elaborates on the distinctions between cross-national and transnational marriages. First, how transnationalism has been conceptualized through the recent

literature is examined. Then the case of the Russian-speaking community in Japan is investigated. The results of the analysis showed that although the Russian-speaking community in Japan performs some transnational practices, it does not form diaspora, and should be conceptualized as an ethnic community. Finally, the differences between transnational and cross-national marriages, which are related to the types of social networks, gender ideology and the national policies are investigated. The chapter concludes that cross-national marriages should be distinguished from transnational ones.

Chapter 6 focuses on the issues of social incorporation of marital immigrants in Japan and the nature of the present policies of “non-intervention” and naturalization regime are investigated. It concludes that the present regime of “non-intervention” has a negative effect on the marital immigration, which means that in practice it restricts the routes of successful settlement and incorporation of marital immigrants in Japan.

FINDINGS

CROSS-NATIONAL MARRIAGE IN JAPAN: MIGRATION STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

The immigration policies in Japan that were investigated throughout this dissertation were formed through the negotiation process with four generations of the ethnic Korean community, who have the status of foreign nationals but deserved local citizenship rights by the principle of jus domicile. This formed the “hard on the outside, soft on the inside” nature of the present immigration regime. The state implicates strict policies to prevent the growth of the permanent resident population; however, those who were granted permanent residence enjoy many social rights available only to nationals

in other countries. In this context, cross-national marriage in Japan has a particular meaning; being the exceptional legal path to permanent residency and citizenship.

The immigration regime of the 1990s designed several legal routes for immigration to Japan: skilled professional immigration, working immigration of Nikkeijin, temporary worker immigration (which is covered by official categories of students, trainees, and technical interns), and marital immigration. It formed a number of communities, the largest of which is composed of marital immigrants. These are Filipinos (81.8%), Romanians (74.5%), Ukrainians (71.3%), Thai (66.3%), and Russians (55.9%). These communities present incredible degrees of feminization (Romania – 83%; Ukraine – 81%; Philippine – 78%; Thailand – 75%; Russia – 69%).

National statistics show that the majority of foreign spouses are foreign wives and most foreign wives are from developing countries. Using the case of Russian-speaking wives in Japan, the motives of foreign wives to marry Japanese men and settle in Japan was examined. The results of this examination indicated that cross-national marriage enables women to get legal status and unrestricted work permission in Japan; to find a marital partner (a husband and a parent for children) in situations with a shortage of marital candidates; to exercise female gender behaviour; and to get better living conditions for the family. What we can learn from the case of Russian-speaking wives in Japan is that the present pattern or “scope” of cross-national marriage is sustained by the present policies, economics, demography and gender ideology of the two countries involved. The results of this research are also relevant to other female marital immigrants from developing countries, in particular, Romania, Thailand and the Philippines.

Cross-national marriage has become an important route for settlement in Japan. However, the New Immigration Management System enacted in July 2012, which aims to centralize the control and management of foreigners residing in Japan, imposed larger control on the possibilities to utilize marriage as a path to settlement. The New Immigration system contemplates revocation of the spousal visa, if the spouses are not engaged in “spousal activities” for more than six months. Cross-national couples may be investigated to see whether they reside together, have a particular degree of contact, and if they share household expenses – which are defined as “spousal relations.” The New Immigration System also obliges marital immigrants to make mandatory notifications in case of divorce, bereavement, or separation from the Japanese spouse. On the other hand, the New Immigration System has allowed the registration of foreign spouses on residential certificates together with the other members of the household.

Japanese authorities have not declared their intentions regarding marital immigrants in Japan clearly, presenting a policy of “non-intervention”. However, restrictions on the number of visas purchased for Overseas Performing Artists without establishing an alternative route for female working migration, the assimilation-based naturalization regime, and the absence of the integration programs – altogether resemble veiled restriction of marital immigration.

THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY IN JAPAN

The Russian-speaking community in Japan is a minority group in comparison to other immigrant minority groups. It comprises 7,814 Russians, 1,507 Ukrainians, and 285 Belarusians, with the total number of 9,606 (as of 2010). The small size of the community is the main reason it has been under-studied up to the present time. Most

researchers have focused on larger immigrant communities, such as Chinese, Koreans, Brazilians, Filipinos, Americans and British. This focus on particular and limited categories of immigrants resulted in the theoretical opposition of “Western” and “Asian” immigrants, and “Western” and “Asian” marital partners. Such opposition is grounded in the confusion of cultural characteristics and immigration history; it does not provide sufficient space for the categorization of other migrant groups. For instance, it is not clear, whether the Russian-speaking wives in Japan should be placed in category of “Westerners”, or “Asians.”

Consideration of the Russian-speaking community in Japan from an immigrant studies perspective has challenged the opposition of “Western” and “Asian” immigrants. Analysis of national statistics (Ministry of Justice of Japan, 2010) shows that there are many similarities in the immigration and settlement patterns of female immigrants from developing countries.

Like the Filipino, Thai, and Romanian communities, the Russian-speaking immigrant community in Japan reveals a high proportion of female marital immigrants. Ukrainian immigrants comprise 28.40% of spouses of Japanese nationals, 35.57% of permanent residents, and 7.30% of long-term residents. Considering that most Ukrainians came to Japan as “entertainers,” permanent residence may be gained only through marriage to a Japanese national. Long-term residence is granted after divorce only in cases when the foreign spouse gets custody of any common children. Thus, these numbers may be combined to show that 71.30% of the total number of Ukrainians in Japan are likely to be married to (or divorced from) Japanese nationals. Russian immigrants comprise 28.69% of permanent residents, 20.04% of spouses of Japanese

nationals, and 7.17% of long-term residents. Together they total 55.90% of the whole number of Russian immigrants in Japan.

Ukrainians and Russians are also much feminized categories of immigrants. Women of 25-29 years, 30-34 years, and 35-39 years comprise 63.37% of the total number of Ukrainian and 46.00% of the total number of Russian immigrants in Japan. In this respect, Russian-speaking immigrants in Japan could be considered the “typical” marital immigrants, on par with Romanians, Filipinos, and Thais.

The results of this field work and Internet survey research indicated that most Russian-speaking wives initially came to Japan as Overseas Performing Artists also called “entertainers,” or contracted their marriage through a broker agency. Most wives are much younger than their Japanese husbands. Many Japanese men are in their second marriage. Most wives marry middle or upper-middle class men, and most reside in urban settings. Most wives have professional school or university level education.

Examination of the motives of Russian-speaking women for marriage migration indicated that the decision to marry a Japanese husband was motivated by the recent immigration regime of Japan, the demographic characteristics of the two societies, and personal motives, which Kohn (1998) called “the seduction of exotic.” Unskilled female immigrants from developing countries are placed in a very unsecure position in Japan. They utilize cross-national marriage to Japanese nationals as a path for the legalization and acquisition of secure working status. The demographic characteristics of the three countries demonstrate the bride shortage in Japan and the groom shortage in Russia and Ukraine, which makes Russian-speaking women and Japanese men search for foreign partners.

The women's decision to move to Japan was motivated by the gender ideologies present in Japan, Russia and Ukraine, and the economic disparities of the two societies. The gender ideology in Russia and Ukraine (which assigns the role of breadwinner of the family to the man), and the principle of patrilocality in Japan (which binds elder sons to their family homes making them not eager to move) form the “natural” direction of marital immigrant flow from Russia and Ukraine to Japan. The economic disparities of the two countries make this ideologically determined decision also economically beneficial.

The case of the Russian-speaking immigrant community in Japan is an example of immigration from countries with transitional economies. The disintegration of the Soviet Union caused economic difficulties and social destabilization in all former Soviet republics, which triggered a wave of migration to different countries. Women utilised marriage as one of the immigration strategies to enter the US, and other European countries. Most marriages were brokered through Internet matching agencies, and were described as a “mail-order brides” phenomenon. Russian-speaking wives in Japan utilized the strategy of initial working migration in the entertainment sector, and subsequent settling in Japan through marriage to Japanese men.

However, as the economics of transitional societies have become more stable, we can see economic growth and social stabilization in Russia and Ukraine. Thus women from Russia and Ukraine have become less motivated for immigration for economic reasons. Moreover, recently there has been an increasing number of TV programs (at least, in Russia) that openly declare patriotic ideals, and discourage marriage to a foreigner or immigration.

The reduction of Overseas Performing Artists since 2004 also had a negative effect on the number of cross-national marriages with Russian-speaking partners. The statistics of the Ministry of Justice of Japan do not show a considerable increase in Russian-speaking immigrants during the time period from 2006 to 2011. The total number of Russian immigrants increased from 7,279 in 2006 to 7,814 in 2009-2010, but then decreased to 7,566 in 2011.

However, further investigation indicates the quantitative changes of the Russian speaking immigrant community; the decrease in the number of spouses of Japanese nationals and the increase in the number of permanent residents. The number of Russian spouses of Japanese nationals decreased from 2,040 in 2006 to 1,445 in 2011 (a decrease of 29%). The number of Ukrainian spouses of Japanese nationals decreased from 587 in 2006 to 387 in 2011 (a decrease of 34%). On the other hand, the number of Russian permanent residents increased from 937 in 2006 to 2,549 in 2011 (an increase of 172%). The number of Ukrainian permanent residents increased from 179 in 2006 to 542 in 2011 (an increase of 202%). These results indicate the following tendency: the previous marital immigrants settled down in Japan and received denizen status, whereas the number of “new-comers” decreases annually.

The tendencies mentioned above question the future of the Russian-speaking community and Russian-Japanese marriages. It may signify that marriages with Russian-speaking partners may only be a temporary phenomenon, aroused by particular socio-economic circumstances. It is unlikely that the number of cross-national marriages with Russian-speaking partners will rise in the near future, at least, not given the present situation.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CROSS-NATIONAL MARRIAGE

The term “cross-national marriage” has not been used by researchers of intermarriage thus far. However, investigation into the case of the Russian-speaking community in Japan from an immigration studies perspective indicates that the term “cross-national marriage” is an important, though missing part of the theoretical framework on intermarriages.

Results of the extensive field work and in-depth interviews indicated three dimensions of cross-national marriage: relations with the spouse, relations with the local community, and relations with the host society. Relations with the spouse included such aspects as love and sexual relations, emotional gratification, effective communication, and gender role consensus. Relations with the local community included such aspects as relations with extended family, community embeddedness, community openness and community support. Relations with the host society included aspects of the values of the host society, legal status, socio-economic status, and security. Although the first two dimensions are related to cross-cultural marriages, the third dimension – relations with the host society – was relevant only for cross-national marriages.

This dissertation argues for conceptualization of cross-national marriage as a distinct phenomenon. Cross-national marriage: 1) entails immigration of one of the spouses; 2) is contracted between spouses with different cultural backgrounds and citizenship status; 3) is settled between the spouses, who do not belong to one transnational community. Cross-national marriage should be distinguished from cross-cultural and transnational marriages. Cross-cultural marriage is contracted between members of different ethnic communities within one state; it does not entail immigration of one of the spouses. Transnational marriage is contracted between

members of a transnational community; both partners have a common ethnic background and experience immigration.

Cross-cultural marriage, as a phenomenon, arises in multi-cultural societies, such as the US, Russia, China, Nepal, and Singapore. Transnational marriages take place in countries with established policies of working migration, family reunification, and asylum-seeker protection. Examples of transnational marriages may be found in the US, Canada, India, Germany and the UK. In the countries with restricted working migration, where the alternatives of acquisition of long-term and permanent resident status are very limited, cross-national marriage becomes a valuable alternative to the acquisition of permanent residency. These limitations gave the rise to cross-national marriages in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Transnational marriages are usually initiated by immigrant men, who came and settled as low-skilled immigrant workers or refugees whereas cross-national marriage is more often contracted between local men and immigrant women.

The term “cross-border marriage” broadly used in recent research combines the two types of marriage. If the differences between cross-cultural, transnational, and cross-national marriages can be clearly distinguished, it will open the possibility for further investigation of the relation of policies and gender ideology to the forms of cross-border marriage and enable comparison of the marriage patterns in different countries.