

Student Forum 2011: Current Asian Anthropology

“Negotiation of Love and Marriage between Turkish - Japanese Couples”

DANE Muge
Waseda University
Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies

Introduction

The increasing impact of globalization has led to a high level of interaction between transnational communities while blurring boundaries borders. This in return has resulted in the facilitation of people’s transnational movement which led to the rise of new conflicts as well as new opportunities. One of the important outcomes of this process has been the increase in the rate of transnational marriages as well as increased complexity they entail compared to marriages among couples of same nationality, religion and culture (Suzuki, 2003 & 2006; Constable, 2005; Piper, 1997 & 2003; Nitta, 1990). Some of the problems these couples face are; language barrier in communication, socio-economic, cultural and religious differences and their reflection on married life preferences, social, legal rights and visa issues of foreign spouses, bicultural child rearing and positioning of the couple as a transnational couple in their respective societies.

This research elaborates on transnational marriages in Japan with emphasis on Muslim immigrants and presents an ethnography of Turkish – Japanese couples. The aim is to shed light on how these couples negotiate and balance their cultural differences in their everyday life, to what extent external actors such as in-laws and host society at large influences their relationship and whether or not they feel as they have made concessions on their cultural identity as a result of their transnational marriage.

Marriage

Marriage is a universal institution that exists all around the world in various forms, however its definition does differ from society to society and there is a practical

need to elaborate on a general definition of marriage and its characteristics for the framework of this paper. Haviland (1994; 447) explains the universality of marriage by the need to control sexual relations within societies, as well as the right to have offspring and to control the distribution of property. The definition of marriage that this research utilizes is the following;

“An institution that prototypically involves a man and a woman, transforms the status of the participants, carries implications about sexual access, gives offspring a position in society, and establishes connections between the kin of the husband and the kin of the wife” (Shultz and Lavenda, 2004; 257).

The emergence of the family is considered to be the outcome of historical and social circumstances that should be evaluated through people’s experiences in terms of; time, places, and social situations (Haviland, 1994; 476). In western industrialized countries, especially in North America and Europe, marriage is most often treated as the ratification of an emotional bond between two people with a legal contract under state authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that what marriage entails legally, emotionally or physically varies from country to country and person to person. In some cases it might entail affectionate emotions such as love and willingness to share a living space with another person and/or to have legally recognized offspring. On the other hand in some cases, it might just be treated as a practical process, a means to escape from solitude or even a means to secure a visa to live in a foreign country. Whatever motives one has for marriage depends on particular circumstances and one’s life choices. Marriages become more complex when people’s tendencies, motives and patterns are carried on to the transnational level where economic and social factors are underlined as opportunities of upward mobility for both women (Piper, 1997; 331) and men (Kudo, 2007). This is especially visible in the case of Japan where low skilled labor migrants are not welcomed legally although they are necessary for the sustainability of the economy (Brody, 2000). Within this context, transnational marriages have become a means for acquiring a visa to live in Japan for both men and women who fall under this category. Under this topic of marriage migration, especially Filipina and Chinese female migrants as well as Muslim male migrants have been covered to a large extend in both the academic literature and the media (Suzuki, 2003, 2006; Piper, 1997 & 2003 Constaple, 2005; Komai, 2001; Oishi, 2005; Faier 2007; Sellek, 2004; Kudo, 2007).

This paper aims to portray the rich diversity within these categories while focusing on Muslim spouse choices of Japanese through the case study of Turkish – Japanese couples. The delicate equation of marriage is rendered complicated when carried on to the transnational level with the incorporation of distant cultural and

religious differences, the challenge of a language barrier and the need to blend two different legal systems. This paper focuses what these marriages entail when carried beyond Turkish and Japanese national boundaries with a transnational character.

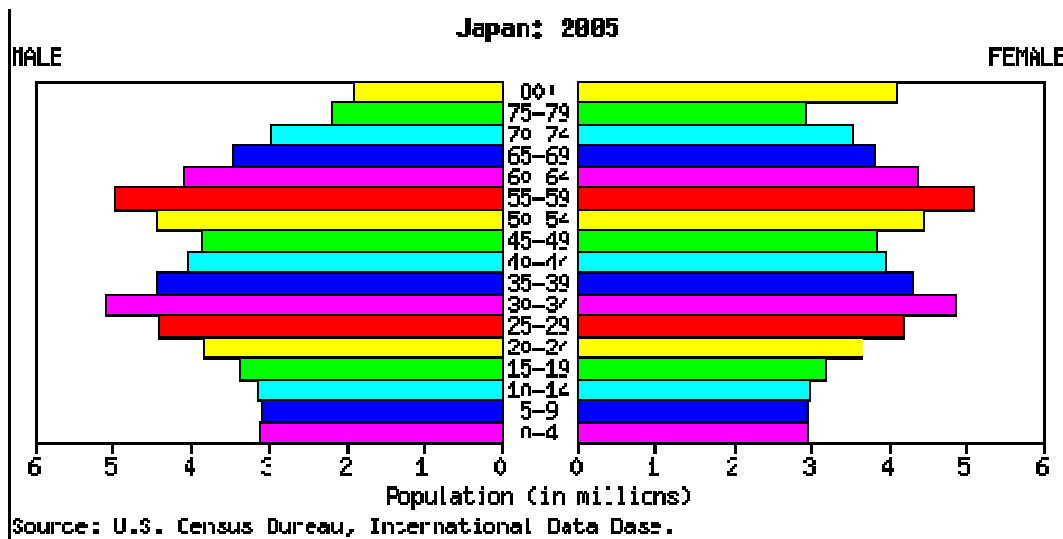
Turkey and Japan

Historically, Turkey and Japan have long had good political and economic relations and these have been extended to the cultural sphere with an attempt to increase cultural interaction of these two societies in the last decade. The declaration of both 2003 and 2010 as “Turkey Year” in Japan is the clearest confirmation of this increased cultural interaction. However, comparative research encompassing Japan and Turkey remains mostly limited to the economic sphere, and cultural interactions of these two countries are often overlooked due to the geographic distance of 10.000kms between these two Far East Asian and European/Middle Eastern countries.

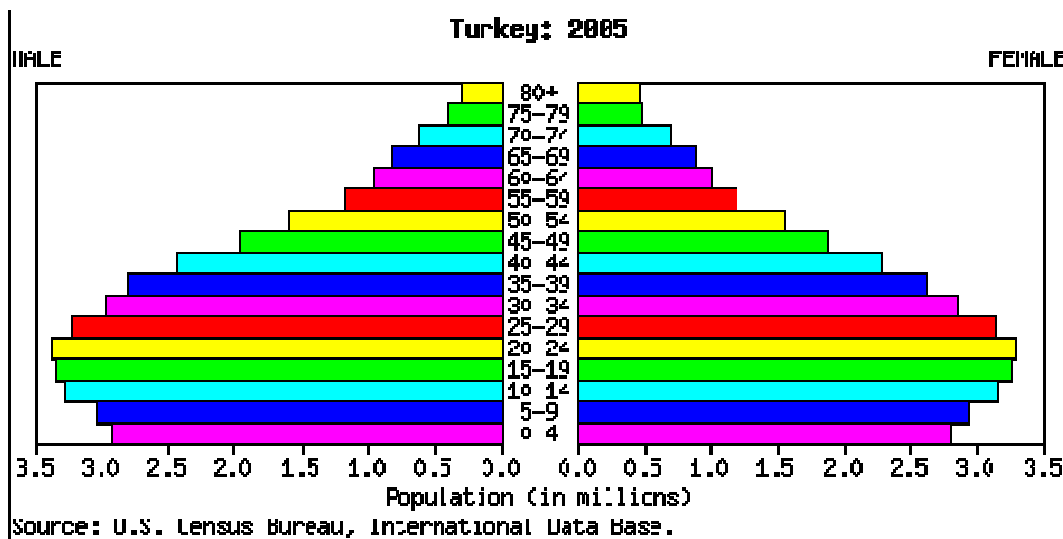
Despite their geographic distance, Turkey and Japan encompass many similarities in their cultural traditions and family structures besides their economic alliances. Both are patriarchal societies dominated by men in both public and private spheres and marriage is an important institution for social recognition in the natural course of adult life for which both encompass the culture of arranged marriages. Furthermore, children are considered as the ratification of a happy marriage and marriage in both societies entails involvement of the extended family members especially in-laws in the couples’ lives and decision making processes. As host societies for foreign spouses both societies are conservative with strong in-group relations and emphasize homogeneity and assimilation over tolerance for differences and multiculturalism (Sormen 2007; Erder, 1985; Edwards 1982 & 1987 & 1989; Talkie 1984; Hendry 1987; Weiner, 1997).

Despite their cultural proximity in their family structures and their engagement to western countries, one of the reasons that render Turkish – Japanese transnational marriages interesting research topic is the contradicting trends we find in these two societies’ population growth and fertility rates. On the one hand Japanese society is facing a population problem with its aging society, less and late marriage and the dropping birth rate whereas on the other hand Turkey has a very young population and sustainable fertility rate (Remez, 1998). The demographic difference between Turkey and Japan is especially visible through the following two population pyramids;

Japan's Population Pyramid, 2005;



Turkey's Population Pyramid, 2005;



The sharp difference in these two nations' population pyramids is clearly displayed above and becomes furthermore meaningful when elaborated upon under the framework of globalization and migration. On the one hand we have Japan's aging population with low fertility rate and the economy in need for young labor force to support the pensions whereas on the other hand we have Turkey with a very young

population and high level of unemployment. In such a balance between two befriended countries, creation of new migration networks and increase in transnational marriages is a natural outcome if not inevitable. This paper does not solely focus on the movement of low skilled labor from Turkey to Japan and marriages that result from these dynamics. These demographic statistics and cultural similarities outlined above are presented in order to explain the increased interaction and rate of transnational marriages however the focus of the paper will be on the cultural interaction and negotiations that have resulted from these transnational marriages. Objectives of this research are to asses a better understanding of transnational marriages of these two cultures by focusing on how significant their encounter with and approach to their spouse's culture is.

The first section of this paper elaborates on previous research on transnational marriages in Japan with reference to different migrant groups and dynamics. The second section is the ethnography section which is based on fieldwork findings. The data presented in the second section was gathered through fieldwork conducted in Japan from January 2010 until November 2010 and in Turkey on December 2010. The topics that are explained in length in this section are selected based on issues that have often been underlined as problematic or contradictory areas of transnational marriages by the couples interviewed. Lastly, the third section links the first and second sections and elaborates on findings outlined through out the paper.

Field Research and Data

This paper heavily relies on qualitative data however also incorporates quantitative data published by Japanese and Turkish authorities such as the number of Turkish nationals residing in Japan and proportions of transnational marriages in Japan. The qualitative data was gathered through in-depth semi structured interviews conducted with 30 people; 7 Japanese women, 2 Turkish women, 2 Japanese men and 11 Turkish men who live in Japan and 8 Japanese women who live in Turkey. Each spouse was interviewed separately in order to prevent any tension, argument or misunderstanding between spouses and for the spouses to feel free to speak honestly without reservations. In some cases only one spouse has been interviewed due to privacy reasons or busy work load, in total one Turkish male spouse and one Japanese female life partner living in Japan and 8 Turkish men living in Turkey refused the interview although their spouses accepted to take part in the research.

The research data also encompasses an interview conducted with the Turkish Embassy in Japan as well as participant observation data gathered through diverse

regular and irregular meetings organized by different Turkish community groups in Tokyo and Japanese groups in Istanbul as well as social gatherings with interviewees and their families. Interviewees have been selected and contacted by snowball sampling mostly through personal connections, acquaintances, cultural events in Japan and introductions from mutual friends. The language used during data collection varied according to the interviewees' choices and the setting of the interview however in most cases was a mixture of all three Turkish, Japanese and English languages. Interviews were held mostly at café's and restaurants and in some cases at the interviewees' homes.

Transnational Marriages in Japan

Transnational marriages in Japan and the complexities these entail are best explained under the framework of globalization, facilitation of people's movement across borders and the increased interaction of cultures resulting from it. Globalization plays an important role in the formation of transnational families because it has facilitated the interaction of people from different cultures and has led to the creation of new migration patterns.

Marriage is a social institution that is quite complicated even for people born in and raised through same socialization mechanisms and this social institution becomes much more complex when it gains a transnational nature and involves two geographically distant countries, with diverging cultures and religions. The table below portrays how transnational marriages have been on the rise in Japan since 1970's with the exception of 2007;

Table 1. International Marriages of Japanese Nationals

years	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
number	5 546	6 045	7 261	12 181	25 626	27 727	36 263	39 511	41 481	44 701	40 272

Source; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2007.

As seen in the table above, the number of transnational marriages in 2007 is 7.26 times greater than the number in 1970, thus the rate of Japanese nationals getting married to foreigners has increased about 626% in the last four decades. In order to better understand the proportion of this number to all marriages in Japan, Table 2 below presents division by gender and nationality.

Table 2. The Percentage of International Marriages in Japan within Total Number of Marriages

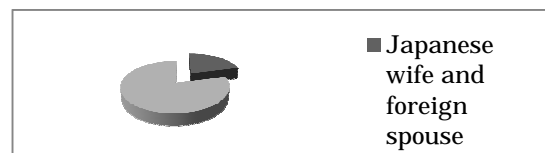
	<u>Both Japanese</u>	<u>Wife Japanese</u>	<u>Husband Japanese</u>	Total
Number	679,550	8,465	31,807	719,822
Percentage	94.4 %	1.2 %	4.4 %	
		5.6 %		

Source; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2007.

As seen in the table above, transnational marriages constituted 5% of all marriages in Japan in 2007. However, variations in regional distribution are also significant, according to Tokyo Metropolitan Government's website the rate of transnational marriages in Tokyo is twice the rate of Japan in general with 10%¹. The table 3 and Graph 1 presented below presents the gender division of transnational marriages in Japan.

Table 3 & Graph 1. Gender Division for International marriages in Japan (2007)

	<u>Japanese wife and foreign spouse</u>	<u>Japanese husband and foreign spouse</u>	<u>Total</u>
Number	8,465	31,807	40,272
Percentage	21%	79%	100%



Source; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2007.

Transnational marriages in Japan have already been analyzed to a large extent in the academic literature and are often classified by the foreign spouse's nationality. However, in accordance with the rate of transnational marriages most of these focus on marriages between Japanese men and Asian women or Japanese-American families (Nitta, 1990; Suzuki, 2003; Sellek, 1994). Willis and

¹ <http://www.metro.tokyo.jp/ENGLISH/PROFILE/appendix02.htm>

Murphy-Shigematsu (2008) underline that the largest number of foreign spouses for Japanese men are; Koreans, Filipinas and Chinese (ibid; 30). This is one of the main reasons why most of the literature on transnational marriages in Japan remains focused on Asian spouses (Suzuki, 2003; Selek, 1994). Research done on transnational marriages of Japanese to non-East Asians and non-Americans² still remains limited and is mainly due to the small number of immigrants living in Japan, in proportion to the large Japanese Population. The proportion of transnational marriages which do not fall into these categories are often classified all together as “other nationals” by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare for which, classification is limited to East Asians, U.S. citizens, the British and Latin Americans. In terms of classification by nationality with highest proportions, the percentage of foreign spouses according to their citizenship is presented below in Table 4;

Table 4. Number of international marriages in Japan classified by spouses' nationality (2007)

Nationality of Foreigner	<u>Wife Japanese</u>		<u>Husband Japanese</u>		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Korean	2,209	26 %	5,606	18 %	7,815	19%
Chinese	1,016	12 %	11,926	37 %	12,942	32%
Filipinos	162	2 %	9,217	29 %	9,379	23%
US citizens	1,485	18 %	193	1 %	1,678	4%
Other	2,685	32 %	2,897	9 %	5,582	14%
Total	8,465		31,807		40,272	

Source; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2007.

The table above demonstrates that the highest number of foreign spouses for Japanese men are; Chinese, Filipinas and Koreans respectively. On the other hand, the highest number of foreign spouses for Japanese women are; Koreans, US citizens and the category of “other nationals”. One of the striking findings in this table is the size of the category of “other nationals” for Japanese women, which constituted 32%, thus one third of Japanese women’s international marriages in 2007. This is the largest group in

² Within the term non-Americans I refer to all habitants of the continent of America as a whole including North and South America in general and referring to the US and Latin American populations in particular. Although US citizens are often referred to “Americans” in everyday life, within this paper I will use the term US citizens to avoid confusion with Latin Americans.

Japanese women's foreign spouse choices and thus has two implications; firstly, this shows that Japanese women choose their foreign spouses from a wider variety of nationalities compared to Japanese men who mostly prefer Asian spouses. Secondly, the size of this category implies need for more research in this area and perhaps revision of these standard categories presented by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Decision making for marriage includes many factors at different levels and priorities in spouse choices diverge greatly from one person to another. This process, which is already complicated involving so many factors even when between two people from same nationality, becomes even more complex for transnational marriages. Thus, this section aims to simplify the explanation of this process by omitting particular or personal factors and aims to present general explanations for foreign spouse choices in Japanese transnational marriages. Understanding transnational marriages and foreign spouse choices of Japanese require a closer look into historical, social and economic factors that have shaped these preferences. The following section focuses on these factors with reference to the quantitative data provided so far.

Historically, Japan's colonial past has long played an important role in Japanese transnational marriages especially with Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese nationals. During Japan's colonial rule, all colonial subjects were granted Japanese citizenship, however this changed with the implementation of the San Francisco Treaty in 1952 which took away their citizenship rights and legally turned them into foreigners living in Japan. This has led to many conflicts and human rights issues and the case of Koreans became even more problematic due to the political division of their country into two different territories and regimes as South and North Korea, which also exacerbated diplomatic tensions with Japanese government. After 1952, subjects from colonial rule residing in Japan were given the option of acquiring citizenship. However, this requires naturalization as Japanese citizenship is based on *jus sanguinis*, blood ties and descent. This option was rejected by many Koreans mainly due to nationalistic sentiments and consequently these populations have continued living in Japan as foreigners and today present a unique case of up to third generation residents of a country without citizenship. Although they are given more rights than other foreigners living in Japan under their special classification as permanent residents, in the case of marriages, their numbers are included under the category of foreigners. Thus, this is one of the important factors to explain the high number of international marriages with Koreans³, and also Chinese to a limited degree⁴.

³ Kim (1985) shows that the marriage patterns for Koreans have changed after 1970's, although the tendency for in-group marriage was high within this group until 1975, from this date onwards transnational marriages of Koreans residing in Japan with Japanese has surpassed their in-group

Transnational marriages data presented in the previous page has demonstrated that foreign spouse choices for women and men are different in Japan, thus these need to be explained separately except for the case of Korean spouses outlined above. In terms of Japanese men's choices of foreign spouses socio-economic factors play an important role. The high rate of Chinese and Filipina spouses are closely related to increasing marriage migration from Asian countries to Japan. Single Japanese men living on the countryside, especially farmers, are having difficulties finding Japanese wives. This is linked to their social status and residence in the country side which is less preferable for contemporary Japanese women, who prefer to live in urban areas and have a career. Although their income level is not always low, these men are looked down upon as they do not live in urban city centers and their work usually involves a physically tiring manual labor (Nakane, 1967). Being a farmers' wife or living at the country side with the husband's parents according to the *ie* system is quite demanding for wives and a task Japanese women are no longer willing to carry on (Moon, 1998). Consequently, Japanese government has launched assistance agreements with neighboring countries to find Asian spouses for these men and today many of these foreign brides come from China, Philippines, Korea, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Cultural differences in family structures, household management traditions and communication styles or habits may lead to distress in transnational marriages. For example, Nitta (1990; 109) notes that in terms of marriages between Japanese men and US citizens, most commonly expressed problem was the Japanese husband not helping his wife with housework and not being affectionate. In traditional sense, Japanese man's role in the family is limited to the role of breadwinner and the wife is responsible for the household management and taking care of the husband. This was one of the main problems transnational couples face due to cultural differences. Some of the interviewees even expressed feeling of loneliness due to the Japanese husband's long working hours and lack of display of physical affection (Piper, 2003; Faier, 2007).

In terms of Japanese women, their place in and traditional roles projected on them by Japanese society plays an important role in the wide variation of their foreign spouse choices. Borovoy (2005; 29) touches upon the impact of Japan's engagement with the US with reference to the place of Japanese women in Japanese society and links it to Kelsky's (2001) book which explains how today many Japanese women seek to break free from the gender discrimination and are fetishizing foreign men as emblems of; "sexual potency, romance and passion, upward social mobility, and chivalry". Borovoy

marriages.

⁴ The high number of Chinese spouses is also relevant to the "mail ordered brides" literature that will be covered to a larger extent in the following sections.

(2005) also refers to Kelsky's (2001) work as it underlines the labeling of Japanese men as poor lovers, selfish, infantile and tasteless. These criticisms are closely related to the traditional Japanese household in which men are breadwinners and women bear all the housework on their own and are responsible for taking good care of their husband, addressing their needs. This division of labor within the household has become a problem for Japanese women who have joined the workforce and who are at some occasions still expected to be full-time housemakers besides their professional employment. This topic is even covered in some magazines as promotion for Japanese women to get married to foreigners as they help out more in the household (Richardson, 2004; Holthus, 2009)⁵. On the other hand, prestige and Japanese women's upward mobility through foreign spouse choices also plays an important role. Accordingly, nationals of English speaking countries are preferred with a future possibility of living abroad in an English speaking country. This upward mobility is motivated especially by the will to escape from sexual discrimination in the workplace and the society in general (Borovoy, 2005). Furthermore, according to Kudo's (2007) research Japanese women's choices of Pakistani husbands is largely based on qualities of these Muslim men as being; honest, kind, caring and very family oriented. Thus the divergence in Japanese men's and women's foreign spouse choices can be explained by their differing approach to marriage and priorities in marital life choices.

Turkish – Japanese Couples; forces that pull them together and keep them as a family

Research conducted on Japanese transnational marriages to diverse immigrant and religious groups still remains limited mainly due to the small proportion of these immigrants in the gender breakdown and high proportion of transnational marriages with Asians. However, literature on Japanese transnational marriages with Muslims have been attracting more and more attention recently with reference to migration flows to Japan from Muslim countries, especially from India and Pakistan (Kudo, 2007). Still, a shortcoming in this literature is that the size and composition of Muslim world, different levels of religiosity in different Islamic countries, is usually disregarded. There is need to clarify this diversity, otherwise literature under this framework would be limited to Edward Said's Orientalism and would result in the totalization of all Muslim populations as having a homogeneous Islamic culture

⁵ Holthus, Barbara. "Marital happiness: A wish for All? Discourses on Marriage in Japanese Women's magazines" presented at The Thirteenth Asian Studies Conference Japan (ASCJ) June 20th – 21st 2009.

regardless of different sects and practices around the world. The negative image of Islam due to association of backward countries with this religion was worsened by the 9/11 attacks and even Muslim people far distant from such terrorist acts often undergo discrimination due to ignorance on Islamic religious belief system. This also affects Turkish immigrants in Japan, religious or not.

The Japanese Acquaintance with Turkish Culture

The prejudice on Islamic cultures was clearly displayed in only the case of one of the couples interviewed. One Turkish groom living in Japan faced discrimination from his Japanese wife's parents when she announced her willingness to marry him. Although he is fluent in Japanese, has been living in Japan for 15 years, obtained an M.A. degree from a Japanese university and has a well paying prestigious job and quite liberal in his religious identity he was labeled as a "terrorist" by his in-laws due to the Islamic cultural heritage of Turkey. Although this was the most extreme case, other Japanese spouses interviewed have also mentioned a lack of knowledge about Islamic culture in general and Turkish culture in particular on their own and families' part. Only four out of seventeen of Japanese spouses expressed an interest in Turkey before their acquaintance with their Turkish spouse. It is important to note that although nine out of seventeen Japanese spouses in total have met their spouse in Turkey among these nine, four were studying and living in Turkey whereas five were only visiting as tourists. When Japanese spouses who were visiting Turkey as tourists were asked why they had chosen to travel to Turkey, main reasons were price deals offered by the travel agencies and the opportunity to see an exotic country rather than an interest in Turkish culture.

All Japanese spouses were also asked about their first cultural shock in Turkey and customs they have found interesting or intriguing. Three of the Japanese spouses who are now living in Japan but who had lived in Turkey in the past expressed surprise by the militarist nature of Turkish society, the communality of carrying weapons by both the police force as well as civilians and the society's fear of and caution on the Kurdish issue and fear of terrorism.

One Japanese spouse living in Turkey has expressed surprise about honor killings taking part in the eastern part of Turkey due to strict social regulations on single Turkish women's virginity and minimal social interaction with men before marriage. Other than this response answers given by Japanese spouses living in Turkey had a pattern of emphasis on two issues. The first issue was male and female relations in Turkish society and difficulties they were facing when they first started living in

Turkey. Most of female Japanese spouses living in Turkey expressed being misunderstood by Turkish men as flirty when they were trying to be social and friendly. Most of them have also been warned by their husband to dress more conservative. Secondly, they have expressed how they had to change to adapt to the individualist nature of Turkish society and to freely express contradicting opinions without reservations in order to protect own their rights. Six out of eight Japanese spouses interviewed in Turkey have expressed that they learned to speak up to people through time although it is very uncommon to express counterview in Japanese society. These spouses have also expressed having difficulties while visiting Japan and as they continued the habit of expressing counterviews, two were criticized by their family for their expressive attitude in Japan.

Meet the Parents; Relations with In-laws

Although the role of in-laws are emphasized on various levels and occasions in both Japanese and Turkish societies, quite interestingly parental turn out for both Japanese spouse getting married in Turkey and Turkish spouse getting married in Japan was low. Reasons given most often were; geographical distance, difficulties of travelling abroad due to old age, work related restrains, late notices and economic conditions.

In two cases the Japanese families had no knowledge about Turkey and asked where it is located geographically. However in most cases the Japanese family has travelled to visit Turkey and to meet the Turkish in-laws even though they had no language to communicate in. Three Japanese women living in Turkey have expressed that their parents never met their in-laws. There seems to have been a wide range of different approaches to these transnational marriages from both the Japanese and Turkish families however a common concern that parents often expressed to their children was their fear of geographic distance, not being able to see their children or grandchildren often. Turkish spouses living in Japan and Japanese spouses living in Turkey have also expressed similar concerns especially for the cases of severe ill-nesses or deaths in the family. One Japanese spouse living in Turkey expressed her fear of dying and being buried in Turkey instead of being cremated in Japan whereas one Turkish spouse living in Japan has expressed the importance of maintaining good relations with the Turkish community in Japan to have a social support system in case of death in Japan.

Turkey and Japan both have a strong tradition of parental approval on marriages. In traditional Japanese society the potential groom is expected to write a

letter to his potential father-in-law to ask his permission to marry his daughter. Although most Turkish spouses have met their in-laws before marriage, with the exception of four, only one of the Turkish male spouses has written this letter to his father-in-law before their marriage. Ironically the Japanese father was strongly opposing their marriage and never replied or spoke to his son-in-law even when they were attending social family gatherings together throughout the years. Similarly, in traditional Turkish culture the groom's family is expected to visit the bride's family before the marriage decision to officially ask for the family's approval. However this custom has been modernized in Turkey as a social gathering for the in-laws to meet once their children have decided to get married. This Turkish custom has been fulfilled by one Japanese groom and his family who travelled to Turkey for this occasion and the engagement six months prior to their wedding. In terms of wedding parties, Japanese or Turkish, all brides are more interested in having wedding parties compared to their spouses and most of the Turkish extended family members were insistent on a wedding party in Turkey although there was no such demand from any of the Japanese families or extended family members.

In terms of parental approval for marriage the age issue and parental approval due to concerns on their children not being able to marry after their 30's was often expressed by both Turkish and Japanese, male and female spouses regardless of the country of residence. This also supports the literature outlined in the first section of the paper on marriage being a natural and expected part of an individual's life course in both Japan and Turkey. Five Japanese spouses have expressed that their age and lowering chance of getting married in the Japanese marriage market has worked to their advantage in distracting their parents from the foreign nationality of their spouses and any difficulties or social pressures they might have faced.

Most of the interviewees who took part in the research emphasized the link between their relations with their parents and their personalities and characters when expressing how their families reacted to their decision to get married to a foreigner. An approach expressed by six Japanese female spouses was that their parents knew they would "do as they wish" no matter what they said. Interviews with Japanese spouses living in Turkey indicated an emotionally distant relation with their Japanese families compared to their current close relations with their Turkish in-laws. Most of these Japanese spouses are housewives with children who live close to their mother-in-laws and saw them weekly. On the other hand in the case of Turkish spouses living in Japan they seem to have established close ties with their Japanese in-laws, meeting with them as often as possible depending on their city of residence while keeping close relations

with their families in Turkey through phone calls or the internet. This situation supports the Turkish family pattern of establishing close links between the husband's and the wife's kin which also common in other Japanese transnational marriages with Muslims (Kudo, 2007). Japanese spouses, both male and female, have expressed appreciation for the close family ties they have due to their spouse's Turkish culture.

Bi-cultural Child Rearing

All parents interviewed expressed concerned about their children fitting in the host society without problems and not being discriminated against due to their bi-culturalism. One Japanese mother living in Turkey has even expressed her happiness for her son looking more like his Turkish father and not her. When asked about the main source of arguments in the family almost all couples with children have expressed the negotiations they often had disagreements about their children's future. The negotiations of child rearing process seem to start with the pregnancy and the name choices, continue with the choice of language of communication and schooling options.

The country of residence seems to have an important impact on the child rearing process. The children who are being raised in Turkey have more common Turkish names whereas the naming process is harsh on the couples living in Japan as they prefer choosing names that can be easily used in both languages and which could be written with kanjis so that their children could better adopt and fit in Japanese society. On the other hand couples living in Turkey seem to be less concerned about Japanese names as they are more concerned about their children fitting in Turkish society. All Japanese women have kept their original registry with their father's name in Japan and most of the children's names are written in kanji in their registry with the exception of two families. In the case of one child he was registered with a Japanese name only under her mother's registry with her last name and with a Turkish name under his father's registry in Turkey. Thus, this child has a Japanese name and surname in Japan whereas he has a Turkish name and surname in Turkey. To the mother's surprise the couple had their most severe argument of their marriage on this issue when the father found out that his son was registered as a Japanese citizen without a trace of his Turkish heritage in Japan.

A couple living in Turkey was an exception to all others in terms of name selection, this couple communicates in English and they have chosen an English name for their daughter although the Japanese mother communicates with her in Japanese and the Turkish father communicates with her in Turkish. This couple had met when

they were both studying in a third country and they have plans to move to a third country in the close future.

Most parents talk to their children in their native languages with the exception of two Turkish fathers living in Japan who speak to their children in English. Most of the interviewees' children seem to first pick up on the mother's native language before schooling however the language they use once they start school depends on the country of residence. Children living in Japan seem to prefer communicating in Japanese whereas children living in Turkey prefer Turkish.

All Japanese mothers have outlined a similar pattern for the changes that they observed in their children's feelings for their bi-cultural identity. Children seem to first pick up on the mother's language and then the host society's and schooling language(s). However all mothers who have grown up children have identified the same phases of assimilation to fit in the host society during early schooling years which changes into an emphasis on bi-cultural identity in late schooling years. Japanese mothers in both societies are mostly focused on helping their children adapt to the host society without problems rather than cultural education whereas Turkish fathers seem to value cultural education of their children as well.

Conclusion

There are many different patterns of interaction within families in different countries, cultures and religions, and their blending through transnational marriages often lead to rise of conflicts in the process of cohesion. These conflicts are either overcome by different modes of negotiations among spouses or in some cases lead to divorces. This paper has focused on the negotiations and adaptation process that sum up to make Turkish - Japanese transnational marriages work.

The first section of the paper has demonstrated that transnational marriages in Japan show diversity in terms of men's foreign spouse choices and women's foreign spouse choices. Japanese men seem to have a preference for Asian spouses, mostly Chinese, Filipinas and Koreans. This composition has been explained through the "mail ordered brides" literature and third generation, so called, foreigners living in Japan without citizenship due to Japan's colonial past. On the other hand, Japanese women's foreign spouse choices incorporates more variety and is portrayed by the size of the category of "other" which covers all non-American and non-East Asian nationals with a

proportion of 32%⁶. This was explained to a larger extent through contemporary social and economic problems that have influenced Japanese women's foreign spouse choices with reference to gender discrimination in Japan and the clash of the modern Japanese women's preferences and lifestyles with traditional Japanese values. Under this topic although Japanese transnational marriages with Muslims have been attracting more attention in the academia recently, differentiation based on diversity within the Muslim world is often overlooked and needs to be explored along with different modes of interaction created within Japanese society to interact with these groups. Turkey has a moderate Islamic model and is portrayed culturally more proximate to the west compared to its Muslim counterparts. This is especially due to Turkey's geographic proximity and historically close relations with Europe dating from the Ottoman era and stretching to the present with close economic ties with the European Union.

The second section of the paper presented the ethnography of Turkish – Japanese couples based on field research conducted in both Turkey and Japan with Turkish – Japanese couples. Although there are many different interesting issues to cover under Turkish – Japanese transnational marriages, three topics were chosen for this paper; Japanese spouses' impressions on and approaches to Turkish culture, the role and attitude of in-laws towards their children's transnational marriages and negotiations in the bi-cultural child rearing process of these transnational marriages. Most interviewees had little knowledge of their spouses' culture before marriage and see their marriages as a learning and adaptation process; learning about the person they married and adapting to the culture and family they married into.

There is a great variety in the negotiation mechanisms that Turkish – Japanese couples have developed throughout their marriage years. Gender roles assigned by both societies seem to play an important role in the creation of the balance of power within these transnational families. However one common point to all spouses interviewed was that they were all aware of the necessity to make cultural concessions at some point to make their marriage work and have expressed having chosen the person they wanted to be married to regardless of their nationality. All spouses have at some point or another expressed difficulties in overcoming some problems in their marriages however marriage and co-habitation takes work and effort regardless of nationality. When interviewees were asked if they think they would have had fewer problems if they were married to a person from their own culture the answer was often a simple no, marriage necessitates sacrifices.

⁶ The same category sums up to only 9% for Japanese men's foreign spouse choices.

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