

Intermarried Couples and "Multiculturalism" in Japan

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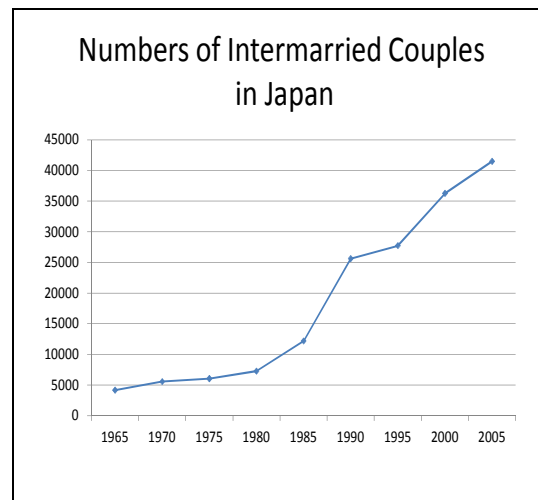
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Abstract: In her article "Intermarried Couples and 'Multiculturalism' in Japan" Kaori Mori Want discusses why hyphenated names for the children of intermarried children are important for the achievement of multiculturalism in Japan in an era of globalization. In Japan the number of people who marry interracially or inter-ethnically is increasing, but changes to naming practices must occur for Japan to become a multicultural society. Intermarriage is not a reliable indicator of the maturity of multiculturalism. Foreign residents who have intermarried in Japan do not have the rights of Japanese, such as those of voting, social welfare, education, and so on. This fact alone makes Japan far from multicultural. One of the aspects missing in the critiques of multiculturalism in Japan has to do with naming practices. Children of intermarried couples have at least two cultural heritages but under the present Japanese family law, it is almost impossible to give children a hyphenated last name that would reflect their multicultural heritage.

Kaori MORI WANT

Intermarried Couples and 'Multiculturalism' in Japan

Globalization has enabled people to cross national boundaries. As a result, the number of intermarriages beyond national borders has increased all over the world. In Japan, the number of people who marry interracial/ethnically is increasing as shown in the chart below. It is reported that one in twenty couples are intermarried. Intermarriage is considered to be an indicator of racial/ethnic tolerance as well as coexistence, and therefore an indicator of the maturity of multiculturalism (Fu and Heaton 1). We might think that the increase of intermarriage suggests that Japan has become a multicultural society.

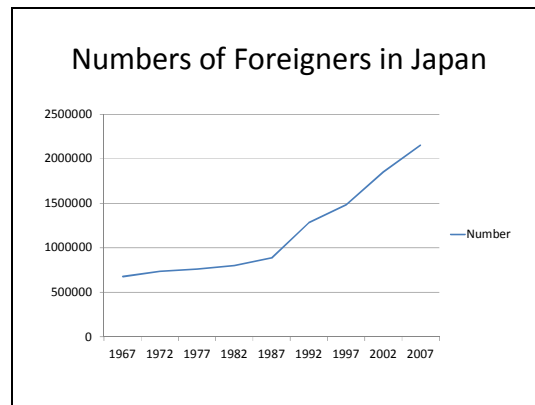


(Kokuritsu 105)

Some argue for Japanese multiculturalism in terms of foreigners' rights and the lack of such rights (e.g., Higuchi; Hirota; Suh), labor (e.g., Kura; Billingsley and Whalley; Tanno), education (e.g., Ota), social welfare (e.g., Okawa), visa status (e.g., Suzuki; Watado), intermarriage (e.g., Da-anoy and Satake; Ishii; Nitta). Atsushi Kondo argues that "In Japan, there are people who avert their eyes from the multicultural reality of Japan, and insist on a 'monoracial/ethnic' myth of Japan. These people delay social change towards multicultural society in the era of globalization" (294). These arguments are very significant when we think of Japanese multiculturalism. Japan has had more and more foreign residents, and their settlement has changed Japanese culture and society. With their increase, Japanese cultural, legal, educational, and social frameworks have been transformed so that both foreign residents and Japanese could coexist peacefully as citizens living on Japanese soil. One of the aspects missing in the arguments of multiculturalism in Japan is a right to name. Researchers on intermarriages point out the importance of peer networking and support for intermarried couples and their children, of bi/multilingual and cultural education for children, of providing appropriate racial/ethnic labels for children, and so on. All of these points are very important, but a right to name is rarely argued. Children of intermarried couples have at least two cultural heritages. Under the present Japanese family law, it is very difficult, not necessarily impossible though, to give children of intermarried couples a hyphenated last name to reflect their multicultural heritage. This paper discusses why hyphenated names of children of intermarried couples are important for the achievement of multiculturalism in Japan in an era of globalization.

The number of foreign residents in Japan significantly increased after 1990 (as the chart below shows) due to a change in immigration law in that year. Prior to 1990, unskilled laborers were not given a labor visa to stay and work in Japan. However, because of the lack of laborers bolstered by so-called the "bubble economy" in the 1980s, many Japanese companies needed laborers. To meet the demand, the government decided to issue visas to unskilled foreign laborers, who have Japanese heritage. This change invited the flow of foreigners from South American countries where there are

many Japanese descendants. Intermarriage rates have sharply increased since 1990 in Japan, resulting in 5% of all marriages currently being intermarriages. In this paper, intermarriage is narrowly defined as the heterosexual marriage of partners who are from different countries, have different race or ethnicity, and different nationalities.



(Kokuritsu 163)

In the past, social views towards intermarried couples as well as their children were multifaceted in Japan. Gary Leupp suggests that when Europeans first came to Japan in the sixteenth century, sexual relationships between Japanese women and European men, as well as their offspring were tolerated (42), although Leupp also suggests that loneliness and isolation were factors (204-11). On the other hand, in the beginning of the twentieth century, bi-racial children seemed to be the targets of social ridicule and prejudice. Imao Hirano, whose mother was Japanese and father was French, wrote of his experience as a child in the early twentieth century that "the living room windows were sometimes broken. When I went to see the room, a few kids screamed, 'Hey! Come on, Hanketou (half European)!' at me. ... I was so scared and even felt I might be killed. Threatening was not done only to me but also to my mother. People rumored, 'look at the woman, she is the mother of the Ainoko (mixed kid).' 'How come such a beauty married a foreigner.' 'She might be a mistress of foreigners'" (50). A Portuguese, Wenceslau de Moraes, who lived in Tokushima prefecture in the early twentieth century also attests to the negative social attitudes against relationships between Japanese women and European men and their children: "the Japanese hate 'Ainoko,' meaning mixed children. The word Ainoko itself embodies the Japanese resentment and disdain against the casual sexual relationships between Japanese women and European men. They see in Ainoko European men's sexual domination over Japanese women as well as Japanese women's consent to that domination. They regard Ainoko as uneducated and immoral" (256). Overall, social attitudes towards relationships with foreigners and their children were more negative than positive this increased after World War II. After the U.S. dropped two atomic bombs on Japan in 1945, the US-American occupation army of approximately 400,000 servicemen came to Japan with the mission of democratizing the country. The defeat of the Japanese put millions into extreme poverty and prostitution was a way of survival for some Japanese women and US-American servicemen bought services from these impoverished women. However, other Japanese women who had children with US-American servicemen were often regarded as prostitutes despite their committed relationships. Numerous Japanese women who had children — such were called ハーフ (half-Japanese) — could not stand the social stigma and exclusion, and some fled to the U.S. with their, but the number of those who were lucky enough to go to the U.S. was small. Many were abandoned by their US-American lovers and had to raise their children under harsh discrimination and some abandoned their children.

The non-acceptance of foreign relationships continued after 1945 and I discuss several examples: Hitomi Ishiyama, born in 1950 in Sendai whose father was stationed in Sendai temporarily during the Korean War before abandoning her and her mother. She was raised by her grandparents, went to a Christian school and while she did not have discriminatory experiences there, in her neighborhood she was a target of exclusion: "A few children were waiting for me on my way home from school. When

they found me, they screamed, 'American,' 'Ainoko,' and 'Panpan's child.' They threw pebbles or mud at me, and spat on me. I ran away crying, but the more I cried, the more they were pleased. This continued day after day, and I had scars and injuries all over my body" (190). Ozeki Keiko, born in 1947, reports similar experiences: like Ishiyama she has a US-American serviceman father, but was abandoned by him, as well as by her Japanese mother. Since her father was African American, she had harsher discrimination, was a target of bullying because of her dark skin throughout her life, and could not marry a Japanese man: "I am 18 years old and mature enough to know how Japanese people think of my dark skin. It is really sad to accept it but there would be no Japanese men who love me! ... If I married a Japanese and had a child, the child might be bullied like me because of the dark skin. I don't want my child to undergo such pain! I should not marry after all" (190-92). Ishiyama's and Keiko's mothers left them supposedly because they could not bear the discriminatory pressure on them. And Kaneko Kazuyo lived with an African American serviceman for three years, became pregnant, and then had the baby without the father who left following his tour of duty. Kazuyo's decision to have the child invited criticism and curiosity. Regardless of the harsh social atmosphere surrounding her, she explains why she delivered the child in her letter to her lover: "I made a firm decision when I realized I was pregnant. Having a mixed child in Japan now is impossible without my love for you. The child is a symbol of my eternal love to you. No matter what kind of conditions I am in, I never stop loving you. No matter how much I am criticized, no matter how cruel our relationship will be, I still love you" (426). To make things worse, she developed pneumonia and was not strong enough mentally or physically to take care of the child and had to give it up to a US-American couple. Further, in the U.S. Japanese women who wanted to marry US-Americans was difficult because of the Japanese Exclusion Act of 1924.

Yoko Seki, who married a Canadian, explains that "Some Japanese people told me that we would break up soon. On the other hand, other Japanese people, especially women, say that having a Canadian husband is 'cool,' and 'envious.' They ask me 'is your husband kind?,' 'does he help you with the housework?,' 'mixed children are pretty'" (19). These views are stereotypical and problematic, yet, we can see that some Japanese people see intermarried couples and their children with envy. Another problematic view is that bi-racial people, especially those who are part Japanese and part Caucasian are regarded as beautiful by the Japanese. Even cosmetic materials which make women look like part Caucasian were sold. Maya Yamashita shows another stereotypical view on bi-racial people that such people have more advantages than the Japanese because they are raised in multicultural environment and therefore they have better skills to survive globalization (31). On the other hand, Fumiteru Nitta points out that bi-racial children still have negative social experiences such as name calling and being treated as 外人 (*gaijin*: foreigner) at an early stage of their life, although many of them gradually settle down well in Japan and so do their parents (203). Today, with the increase of their numbers and the length of time they have lived in Japan, intermarried couples and their children are no longer outright social outcasts, although the level of acceptance varies because of Japanese stereotypes against certain racial/ethnic groups and it is difficult to generalize about the experiences of intermarried couples and their children. Yet, socially and culturally, many intermarried couples and their children are well integrated in Japan. While intermarried couples and their children are more accepted socially and culturally in Japan today, the legal framework for them has also changed.

Obviously, the ways nation states grant nationality vary. Some nations confer nationality to those who are born in the country (*jus soli* [right of the soil], e.g., the U.S. or Canada) and others to those only who are born to parents who have the nation's nationality already (*jus sanguinis* [right of blood], e.g., as in several European countries). Japan follows *jus sanguinis* generating problems because the nation did not provide nationality to children born between Japanese mothers and non-Japanese fathers before 1984 or to the children born between unmarried couples of non-Japanese mothers and Japanese fathers before 2008. These problems were fought in courts and brought changes to the Japan's Nationality Law. Because of lawsuits and ensuing legal revisions, children who have a Japanese parent can have Japanese nationality. On 25 May 1984, a revised Nationality Law was enacted. Before this revision, only Japanese fathers could give Japanese nationality to their children. The main reason why this revision was made was that Japan signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980. Article 9 of CEDAW stated the

equality of the sexes in acquiring, changing, or maintaining nationality, including the bestowal of nationality on children. Thus, to comply with CEDAW, the government needed to revise the Nationality Law, which did not give Japanese women the right to bestow nationality to their children. Other reasons were the increase of Japanese women who married non-Japanese men, the existence of stateless children, and the increasing social consciousness towards gender equality. The revision of the Nationality Law in 1984 was welcomed by many people who married internationally. An US-American father who had two children with a Japanese woman wrote of his joy: "this year my wife and I gave our children something different — a new nationality. We took advantage of a new law effective January 1 allowing children of Japanese mothers and foreign fathers to hold Japanese citizenship. ... And I had to go to the ward office to return the alien registration certificates no longer needed by the two brand new Japanese citizens" (Battenfeld 7).

However, matters were complicated: Japanese immigration laws include a visa category called "entertainer visa" and with this many women from countries such as the Philippines and Thailand came to Japan to work as entertainers such as bar hostesses or prostitutes in the 1980s. Some of these Asian women had children out of wedlock from Japanese men. Here is a situation of note: the parents of ten children, ranging 8 to 14 years old who were born to unmarried Filipino women and their Japanese men sued the state. A newspaper article reported an experience of one of the plaintiff families:

a Filipina came to Japan in 1988 and had a baby with a Japanese man out of wedlock. He admitted the baby as his one year later after the baby's birth. She gave the baby a Japanese name and went to the city hall to register the baby as Japanese but the city hall staff told her that the baby was not Japanese so the name had to be changed into a non-Japanese style name. Some years later, the child cried and asked her "Why am I not Japanese?" when she found out that she was not Japanese. The child was ridiculed by her classmates at school. The child was called "gaijin (foreigner)," and the child said, "I don't want to go to school." The Filipina had a second child with the same Japanese man, and he admitted the child as his while the child was a fetus so the second child was Japanese at birth. The siblings did not have the same nationality because of the definition of Nationality law. ("Children's Dreams" 2)

Article 14 of the Japanese Constitution states that discrimination against race, religion, social status, or family origin is against the law and based on this the plaintiffs claimed that it was unconstitutional to deny Japanese nationality on the basis of social status as illegitimate children. The Japanese Supreme Court's decision was made on 4 June 2008 and the plaintiffs won. The decision stated that the Nationality Law that required parents' marriages as a condition of giving Japanese nationality to children was unreasonable and unconstitutional ("Supreme Court" 4). Further, Tomomi Takasa wrote the following opinion:

Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says "no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, not to attack upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks." Equally, Article 17 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights defines that "no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks." The same treaty writes, "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." (67)

Hiroshi Sano explains that parents' marriage was a condition of giving nationality to children of non-Japanese mothers and Japanese fathers because if parents did not marry, it was not certain whether children really had a tie with Japan (88). Yet, the judges acknowledge that the parents' marriage does not necessarily guarantee children's tie with Japan. In fact, one plaintiff's parents were not married, but had lived together and the children were well acculturated in Japan. Following this decision, the revision was made, and the revised Nationality Law was enacted on 12 December 2008. With this revision, if a Japanese parent recognizes a child as hers/his by the time the child becomes twenty years old, the child can get Japanese nationality regardless of parents' marital status.

Any child can now get Japanese nationality whether their parents are married or not and we can say that *jus sanguinis* system is now almost completed (see Mori, "Emigration"). However, while legal frameworks for intermarried couples and their children have improved in Japan, there still is a problem: specifically, the right to name. In an article, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Names,

Multiracial/Multiethnic People, and the Politics of Identity," Daniel Nakashima writes that "in diverse society, we read names as signifiers not only of one's individual identity and membership in a particular family, but of one's membership in a particular racial, ethnic, and/or cultural group" (114). Names are inseparable from one's identity and cultural belonging. For example, in the U.S., one can show one's dual identity by hyphenated surnames or by taking up a middle name that indicates racial/ethnic heritage. US-Americans have several possibilities to change their names for free without undergoing a complex legal procedure. They can change their names when they marry, divorce, or when they become citizens. Analyzing the experiences of US-Americans of Japanese heritage, whom he calls Amerasians, Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu notes the importance of reflecting both parents' surnames in bi-racial/multi-ethnic children's names: "Amerasians may desire to assert an identity through a name which reflects one's inner sense of emotional ties, convictions, commitments and experiences. They seek for a sense of congruence of inner and outer selves through the act of naming. This aspect of self- definition potentially brings together congruence and the power of the word. The changing of names can be a natural extension of the recovery of ethnic awareness and identification with community" (110-11).

Donna Jackson Nakazawa wrote a guidebook on how to raise mixed-ethnic children and recommends intermarried couples give their children names that reflect multicultural heritages by quoting an experience of a woman: "Jamie Mihoko Doyle (Japanese/Irish/Caucasian), age 23, discusses how integral her name has been to her biracial self-concept over the years. 'When I was a child, I was nicknamed Mimi — from the mi in my first name, Jamie, and for the mi in my middle name, Mihoko. By calling me Mimi, my parents emphasized that I shared both heritages. Later, in high school, I decided I only wanted to be called Jamie. But when I got to college, I realized how important having my Japanese name was to me. It's something from my Japanese culture that I can never lose'" (173). This is a good example that having a flexible system allows people to change their name whenever they want to do so and that this would be supportive for the identity development of multi-ethnic people.

Names also function to strengthen multi-ethnic peoples' sense of cultural belonging. Matt Kelly, who is part Caucasian and part Korean explains how names connect multi-ethnic people to their racial/ethnic community: "I know many Eurasian hapas with white fathers who were given Asian middle names, or claimed Asian surname and create a hyphenated last name later in life to reflect their biracial heritage. ... Although largely symbolic, an Asian name publicly identifies your child to his or her Asian heritage and creates an important connection to that community" (155). As said, in the U.S. people can freely change their last names with their identity development in the course of their life, but doing so is difficult in Japan. What children of intermarried couples can do with their surname is the following: 1) in the case of parents having the same last name, a child can take the same last name as her/his parents; 2) in the case of parents having different last names, a child can take the Japanese parent's last name; 3) in case of parents wanting to give a child the non-Japanese parent's last name while the parents keep different last names, the child needs to claim to a family court to have the non-Japanese parent's last name. In this case, the child and her/his Japanese parent have to belong to a different family registry (Moriki 144-47). Unlike Japanese-Japanese couples who have to have the same surname, intermarried couples do not need to have the same surname: if the parents have different surnames, their children have to choose either parent's surname. They cannot have both. In addition, it is not allowed to hyphenate parents' surnames or to have a middle name. Names of children of intermarried couples are allowed only one from their parental heritage. They cannot claim their ethnic/racial heritage of both parents in their names.

However, the family registration law allows surname changes in some instances. In order to file the surname change, one needs to submit the following: 1) an application form for surname change, 2) a certificate of foreign resident registration, 3) a certificate of family registration, and 4) an application fee. In practice, in addition to the documents above, one is required to submit official documents which prove hyphenated names are commonly used in a country of one's non-Japanese parent country. For example, if one's non-Japanese parent is US-American, one needs to find the U.S. official documents that allow US-American people to have hyphenated surnames and the document must be submitted in Japanese. With regard to this hyphenated surnames, there is an intermarried

couple who succeeded in giving their child a hyphenated last name. Mary Angeline Da-anoy and Masaaki Satake, who are both sociologists and work on intermarriage issues, tried to give their daughter a hyphenated surname and succeeded in doing so for the first time in Japan in 1993. When they had their child, they submitted a report of birth to a local city office with a hyphenated surname. However, the city did not accept the document because the child was supposed to have a Japanese parent's surname since the couple did not have the same surname. Thus the couple challenged the family law and they contended that "we would like our child to have self-consciousness as a Filipino by having her mother's last name in her name. If our child's name has only a Japanese name, she writes down her Japanese name throughout her life. However, if she has a name that also incorporates the mother's last name, she will always write down the mother's last name, and will grow the consciousness as both Japanese and Filipino. We wanted our child to be aware of her mixed heritage (Da-anoy and Satake 141). One year after they filed the case, their claim was partly admitted by the family court. Their daughter kept the father's surname as her surname and added the mother's surname to her Japanese-sounding first name. They succeeded in incorporating the mother's surname, but it was not hyphenated with the father's surname. Da-anoy and Satake write that the purpose of incorporating both parents' surnames into their child's name is to teach their child about gender equality (141). However, having the mother's surname as a part of the child's first name seems to give an impression that the mother's surname is secondary to the father's because the mother's surname cannot function as the last name. In comparison with the U.S., Cynthia Nakashima writes that "in many Asian American communities ... having an Asian surname, which suggests patrilineal Asian heredity, seems to have an advantage" (84-85) and as we saw in the case of Da-anoy and Satake, it was the father's surname which was maintained for their child while the mother's surname was secondary. Thus I argue that if gender equality is aimed at and if the multi-ethnic heritage of the child is respected, both parents' surnames should be been admitted as the child's surname.

Discourses on multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity in Japan rarely deal with the issue of a right to name for multi-ethnic families. However, as I have discussed, allowing hyphenated surnames for intermarried couples and their children is crucial for the maturity of Japanese multiculturalism. A multicultural society is a society where people of different backgrounds can respect each other's differences and peacefully coexist. If a person has to sacrifice his/her multicultural heritage, he/she does not live in an inclusionary. Thus, if Japan respects the rights of intermarried couples and their children, now would be a time to think about changing the family law and to give a right to hyphenate surnames not only for multi-ethnic children but also for women and/or revise the law that it would be an option for the children to select either the father's or the mother's surname. My discussion of matters relating to family laws and regulations of surnames suggests that unless multi-ethnic families voice their wishes their rights will not be acknowledged. My next question, then, is as to why is Japan there is, still, indifference with regard to multicultural rights? One of the clues to analyze Japanese indifference to multiculturalism would be the myth of Japan as a racially/ethnically homogeneous nation: this myth is still prevalent in Japan. Miyuki Yonezawa posits that the existence of "minority groups does not, of course, mean that Japan is becoming a multiethnic, multiracial society. Quite the contrary, Japan is still in a daydream that it is a homogeneous nation. Although scholars of race and ethnicity have pointed out the multiethnic elements of the country, most Japanese are unaware of them. The image of a homogeneous nation is so rooted in Japanese culture that mainstream Japanese hardly notice the ethnic minorities' existence" (128). While the percentage of foreigners in Japan is less than 5%, it is perhaps understandable that many Japanese people are in a "daydream" of racial/ethnic homogeneity. On the other hand, the number of foreigners has increased year by year owing to globalization and thus allowing intermarried couples and their children a right to at least hyphenate their surname might sound a small step, but it would be a significant step to make Japan a multicultural society.

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