

ETHNIC RELATIONS AND HARMONIOUS COEXISTENCE THROUGH CROSS-CULTURAL MARRIAGE: ITS NEW PROSPECT IN THE GLOBAL AGE

Masanori Yoshida
Nihong University, Japan
nori4511@jcom.home.ne.jp

ABSTRACT

It is said that the age of globalization of Japan started at 15th century like other Western countries. It was the beginning of world-wide dispersal of the Japanese in history such as the trade by Wako ships to the Southeast Asia (Befu Harumi 2002). Since then, Japan entered the age of isolation by the Tokugawa Shogunate and closed the door for other countries except for the Dutch. The new age began after the American Black ships came to Japan at the end of 19th century. Japan accepted the foreign culture, especially western culture which was the aspiration of the Japanese in those days enthusiastically. However, it was through the experience of the overseas migration and the dispatch as soldiers at war and colonization that the general Japanese lived in and learned from the foreign culture directly. This paper considers ethnic relations and harmonious coexistence through cross-cultural marriage between Japanese and Indonesian nationals in the anthropological perspective. We asked how the couples crossed the cultural difference and how they obtained the harmony by maintaining their ethnicity in their daily life. The Japanese do not always recognize their ethnicity or culture in their daily life and are not aware of multiplicity of cultures in Japan. Once they meet with other culture, they start to recognize how to understand and how to live with other culture and people more seriously. I focus on the cross-cultural marriage because we can learn the process of learning, negotiating and understanding other culture and ethnicity based on the concrete data.

Key Words: Globalization of Japan, Ethnic Relation and Harmonious, Cross-Cultural Marriage.

The Japanese and the Cross-cultural marriage

Intermarriage in Japan is called *kokusai kekkon* or international marriage which means the marriage between different nationality. Actually, it includes the difference not only in the nationality, but also in race, ethnicity, language, religion, social status, social system, food habits and so on. Therefore, I want to call *kokusai kekkon* (international marriage) as *ibunka kekkon* (cross-cultural marriage) (Yoshida, 2010). Intermarriage is essentially cross-cultural marriage in European context. Next, I will introduce some of the important cross-cultural marriages in Japan in history.

The Japanese migrated to and lived in Davao, Philippines before the WWII and got married with native Bagobo people. Migrant Japanese men learned native language, wore their costume and accepted their way of live for their survival. It is said that they established a model of ethnic co-existence through cross-cultural marriage (Ohno Shun 2006).

Some of the Japanese soldiers stationed in the Southeast and the Pacific during the WWII did not return to their home county and stayed and married the indigenous women in those areas. Especially, many

Japanese veterans who remained in North Sumatra married with local ethnic women and had many descendants. Their second and third generations now work in Japan as migrant workers (Yoshida, 2010).

After the WWII, some of the American and other some western troops who stationed in Japan married Japanese women and took them to their home countries. Such women are called as war brides.

Hundreds of Indonesian students who studied in Japan as the war compensation program after the WWII. Some of them married with Japanese women and took them to their home country. Most of this kind of marriage in Japan have to do with migration, colonization and war.

Through the business, study program, tourism, marriage, religious activities and so on, many Japanese men and women got acquainted with foreigners in Japan and overseas in recent times.

There are some young Japanese men who marry local women while they work overseas and others who marry and live with local women after retirement or in their older age. In addition, some Japanese women married Muslim people from Islamic countries try to live as pious Muslims in Japan (Kudo Masako 2008) and some Japanese business men

married Indonesian office workers in Jakarta now live in Japan. Some Japanese female students get acquainted with Indonesian students in Western countries and now live in Jakarta (Yoshida 2010). Contemporary cross-cultural marriages in Japan are globalizing due to the influence of international population movement and business activities.

Anthropological Approach to the Admiration for Other Culture

Anthropologists visit many part of the world from the Arctic to the Tropic, live there, learn the people and culture directly and consider the diversity of culture and people from the comparative perspective. It is challenging and ever-ending project.

In my 20's, I made a field trip to Papua New Guinea alone to study so called primitive culture as an anthropological student because anthropology solves my facing problems and gives me something key to understand the influence of culture and religion to my life. This first anthropological field trip enhanced me to study further other culture more intensively (Yoshida.2012).

In my 30's and 40's, I shifted my

focus from primitive culture and religion in Papua New Guinea to more sophisticated culture and society with long history and tradition. While studying in the graduate college in Japan and USA. I started to study Indonesian culture and society. I focused on the interethnic relations and folk medical system in North Sumatra for my doctoral program.

In my 50's, I have started to conduct the field research of the cross-cultural marriage between Japanese and Indonesians to study the ethnic relations and negotiation of different ethnicity (Yoshida. 2011).

Anthropological Field Approach to Understand Other Culture

In order to explore the problem of ethnic and cultural relations and co-existence in the anthropological perspective, I have to mention the basic approach of field research in anthropology.

First of all, we have to see the study area and its culture with positive and relativistic viewpoint. At the same time, we try to see them with subjective and emotional feeling. It is a basic attitude of anthropologists toward the study area and people but sometimes contradictory. Anyway, anthropologists devote their time and energy to be accepted by the local

people.

It is important to get the native's viewpoint via field research which involves our life styles. I stayed with my family during my field research. My wife learned Indonesian language and tried to accept the local food and life styles. Two small children attended the local kindergarten although they did not understand Indonesian. We make an effort to learn the daily life and culture of the area together with family. But it was good not only for establishment of the smooth human relations but for the research activity in general in the area (Yoshida. 2013).

It is always crucial that anthropologists as stranger in the field have to disclose and explain who they are, why they are, and what they want to do in order to study the local culture and society smoothly. Then, they visit local administrative offices, heads of villages, rural farming houses, mosques and so on to tell them the purpose of my visit. It sometimes takes time to communicate well in the field. So, it is important to meet a key informant or the most reliable cooperator of their research.

In the beginning of the research, the anthropologist might have not well understood the local situation and the

language yet. A key informant is expected to understand what an anthropologist asks and to respond the question properly. Therefore, the key informant has a flexible thinking and is a person with a lively imagination.

So, an anthropologist tries to train the key informant to come to view his own culture relatively and to make him explain so that the anthropologist can understand well. In my research in Sumatra, I was able to meet a good informant, Mr. Umar Effendi, Shimalungun farmer and healer, a son of late village head, cross-ethnic marriage with local Javanese. It was the turning point for my research that I met with such informant who was smart and had strong curiosity about his own culture, Japan in addition to anthropology.

The relation between an anthropologist and an informant is not a one-sided relation so that the former asks and the latter just responds it. In the anthropological fieldwork, an informant understands what an anthropologist asks, then he responds with the word which an anthropologist understands about the informant's culture. The anthropologist further asks if he needs more detailed explanation or other aspect of information. We need mutual communication based on the

consistent conversation between the two. It is a cooperative attempt of the two which repeat self-reflection about the other's explanation and about his own thinking (Shurtz and Lavenda. 1990). I think I was able to establish such relation with Umar in the process of field research in Sumatra.

Field research is a process of making new understanding and translation about the culture in the field that the informant and anthropologist create through dialogue. The two finds new culture and become different persons. This kind of relation between the anthropologist and informant is a basis of understanding culture in the anthropological perspective. However, there is no an ultimate goal of understanding the culture in the field but only a part of the translation of the culture. In order to understand other culture more fully, we need more mutual endeavor by the anthropologists and informants in the field (Yoshida.2013).

We believe that the relation between anthropologists and informants who attain to understand the culture may shift to the relation of the couple of the cross-cultural marriage. Cross-cultural marriage is also the cooperative effort for mutual understanding of the couple who have

lived in the different culture. Both of them tries to understand each other by listening to other words, explaining the meaning of each other's behavior and thinking while reflecting themselves. As a result, each of the couple become different people from previous one, shares the common world, and explores the true way of co-existence in their daily life together.

Living in the Cross-cultural Marriage- Strategy for Harmonious Coexistence

I have studied the cross-cultural marriage between the Japanese and Indonesian nationals for a past decade in order to explore the ethnic and cultural relations. Because cross-cultural marriage provides an opportunity that the couple with different culture meets directly, exchanges the different idea and behavior in their daily life and try to establish a new but inherent life style.

Once getting married, the couple meets exotic and sometimes difficult aspect of life such as language of the couple, food habits, relations with parents and children or siblings, a way of thinking about the time and space, socio-economic status of the couple, and so on. But cross-cultural marriage gives us the proper space how to accept other people and

culture and how to settle or negotiate the difference between them.

I have visited Japanese men and women in Jakarta, Japanese veteran's family in Medan, Indonesian women who married with Japanese in Yokohama from 1998 to present. I have listened to their experiences in their married life. I asked how they transformed their life and obtained a new idea in their married life. Today, it is accelerating to meet with other culture in our daily life and co-existence with foreigners is emphasized. I suppose that one of the useful methods of understanding other culture is to learn the life and experience of cross-cultural family (Yoshida 2010).

One of the important findings in this research is that the couple shares the recognition of each other's identity or what is important to him or her in their life. Further, the couple allows each other to maintain their identity. If the one attempts to retain his major matter, he would concede his minor matter to the other to carry out the smooth family life. For example, Japanese men adapt their religion and language to their Muslim spouses, but they emphasize a style of their main business and of Japanese food habits. This kind of reciprocal spirit is a desirable strategy to coexistence or

survival for the cross-cultural marriage. I will pick up four cases of the cross-cultural marriages between Japanese and Indonesians as follows (Yoshida 2010).

(1) Cross-cultural marriage of Japanese women in Jakarta

In accordance with the generation, the place to meet, the difference of ethnicity of husbands, the life style of women in Jakarta varies. There is a generational difference in their life styles among the Japanese women. Older generation met their Indonesian husbands in Japan while they studied as students. They had a hard time in their early days of their life in Jakarta. Younger generation, 30's or 40' year of age, met their husbands in the universities in USA or Europe. They spent more affluent life in Indonesia. The former couples spoke in Japanese in their conversation and the latter talked in English as their common language.

Compared with Japanese women, the ethnicity, language and religion of the Indonesian husbands are complex. Their ethnic affiliation varies such as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Minangkabau etc. Their ethnic languages also vary like ethnic groups. Japanese women usually cannot enter the world of ethnic languages. In addition, as the husband's religious

affiliation is also diverse such as Islam, Hinduism, Catholicism, Protestantism and so forth, the life styles including religious practice and food intake are different in every family.

The common experience that Japanese women encountered when they got married was that their family and friends were opposed to her decision about cross-cultural marriage with Indonesian men. Many Japanese are indifferent with the country and culture of Indonesia. Therefore, it was challenging for such Japanese women to get married with Indonesian nationals.

The first problem was to adjust her life to the Indonesian society. One of the urgent problems is to learn Indonesian language so quickly and also to learn the husband's ethnic and religious practice. She has to get acquainted with the relation with family members who emphasize the parent-children and sibling relationship, Muslim food habits which abstain from pork and alcoholic beverage, multi-language conversation in the family and the environment with maids and baby-sitters. But it was good release and freedom for them to work for the office in the daytime and to spend with some Japanese friends who are also married with Indonesian men. They

are making an active effort to adapt to the new environment in Indonesia.

Many Indonesian husbands and their families take care of Japanese women who come far away from Japan so warmly in general. They understand the Japanese wives retain their nationality and stress the Japanese language acquisition. They know some merits to hold Japanese nationality and language for their family members in the future. They do not force their spouses to attend religious ritual and practice. They refrain from their native language in the family gathering for their spouses and show interest in the Japanese food and custom. They are generous and cooperative in their family life to their Japanese wives who are making an effort to adapt to the new family environment.

Japanese women had to learn the Indonesian language and culture as a whole. In addition, they were involved in the husband's ethnic practice and religion. The Japanese family in the home country gradually got accustomed to the life of their child or family member in Indonesia through their visit to Indonesia and frequent communication.

On the contrary, Indonesian husbands learned the Japanese food

intake and the importance of English and Japanese language. As a result, they knew another life style and thinking from their spouses which did not know before. The cross-cultural marriage is a place of new family building through the reciprocal culture learning for the couple.

(2) Cross-cultural marriage of Japanese men in Jakarta

In the middle of 2000's, I met some 20 Japanese men who are married with Indonesian women in Jakarta. I asked them the reason to come to Indonesia, meeting with Indonesian spouses, jobs, language, food taste, children's education, religion, and general opinion for Indonesian culture and society. As a whole, what I was impressed was the deep attachment to their job, their adaptation to the language and religion in Indonesia and their persistence to Japanese food.

Many of the Japanese men I met have experienced the changing jobs and divorce. Some of them got married in the middle of 40's or after 50's. So, their life styles can not be generalized. However, Japanese men well recognize what they hold or what they do not in their life in Jakarta. Especially, we can see them in their language, religion and food.

The Japanese men devote

themselves to learn Indonesian language and talk fluently. Their wives are not always interested in the Japanese language, but as many of their children attend the Japanese school, they understand Japanese. But they speak in Indonesian in their family.

In order to spend their family life smoothly, Japanese husbands follow their wives religious practice. Most of them convert to Islam when they get married, but they are not involved in the religion deeply. There is no problem that there are devout Muslim and nominal Muslim among the Indonesians. Therefore, Japanese men are not enthusiastic in their daily prayer, but co-operate the fasting practice in the Ramadan or fasting month in consideration of their Muslim wives. In addition, they neither eat pork nor drink alcoholic beverage at home. They do not keep alcohol beverage at home so that it does not make their wives embarrass when they are found by other Muslim.

Japanese husbands stick to the Japanese food. Some love Indonesian food, but some other eat only Japanese food. Generally speaking, they cannot live without Japanese food. It was a Japanese food that a Japanese saw the most important requirement for the marriage with an Indonesian woman.

I met a Japanese man who did not eat Indonesian food at all. The man said that it was so funny that he could not give up Japanese food even though he decided to live in Indonesia permanently. A man always requests his wife to cook Japanese food. So, his wife learned how to cook Japanese cuisine on TV program or from her Japanese friends. If an Indonesian wife could not cook Japanese food, it was pity that her husband returns home after he has dinner at Japanese restaurants in town.

As a result of Japanese husband's food habits, family members come to eat Japanese food. Only Japanese husbands may eat Japanese breakfast separately, but their children and wives eat Indonesian food in general. I found similar phenomena among the Indonesian wives living in Japan. Indonesian wives cook Indonesian food separately or secretly in addition to cook the Japanese dinner normally.

It is difficult to educate children in the cross-cultural family. There are some options to go to local schools, Japanese schools, Australian or Indian style International schools and so on. So, it is different for each family which schools children may attend. Generally speaking, the children of

Japanese men have more options for the selection of schools because of economic background or hegemony in the family. But they have different views from ordinary Japanese family for the children how to live in the world in the future. There are many families who have their children attend international schools in Jakarta or in Australia.

(3) Cross-cultural marriage of Japanese veterans in Medan

Several hundreds of Japanese soldiers remained in Medan area, a capital of North Sumatra province, after the WWII. It is estimated that some three or four thousands of Japanese descendants lived in this area. There are lists of family members and genealogies of 146 families in Medan branch of *Yayasan Warga Persahabatan* or Association for the Japanese Indonesians. Some of the Southeast Asia historians have focused on the role of such Japanese soldiers for the Indonesian Independence, but their life and marriage including the succeeding generations have not been well studied.

I recognized 32 surviving spouses for 30 families in Medan from 2008 to 2009 and met 13 of them. Their children also attended my interviews and talked the memories of their

fathers and their younger age.

The majority of ethnic groups of Japanese spouses are the Javanese and Chinese. Many of the Japanese became relatively devout Muslim. The style of their marriage included polygamy, so they had many children and formed the basis of the current Japanese Indonesian society in the area.

The remained Japanese were engaged in many jobs such as agriculture, repair of automobiles and bicycles, soldiers, private medical practitioners although majority engaged in the Independence war with the Netherlands. They adapted to the local life and spoke Indonesian and other ethnic languages. They did not stick to their Japanese food but ate everything and lived as Indonesians.

After the Japanese enterprises came back to this area, many were employed as full employees. But their children have not been properly educated as Japanese since the Japanese fathers have hid their ethnicity after the War. Anyway, Japanese veterans have adapted to their local life desperately through their jobs and marriages.

The Japanese as fathers often said it was not necessary to learn Japanese to their children, but they cooked Japanese cuisine and

celebrated a New Year with Japanese food with their family. The families remembered the name of Japanese food such as *sashimi* or raw fish, *tempura*, *miso* soup, *nimono* or cooked vegetables and so on. These memories represented the days in the life with their fathers.

The Japanese often spent with their Japanese friends while drinking *sake* or whisky, singing Japanese songs, playing the game of *go* and *shogi* or Japanese chess, playing mah-jong and playing Japanese cards or *hanafuda*. They might have healed themselves through such activities by thinking about the home country.

A daughter told me with pride that she was taught how to sing Japanese children's songs and games and how to wear Japanese Yukata or a casual kimono by her father.

After permitting the labor in Japan for the Japanese descendants like Japanese Brazilian, many young Japanese Indonesians are employed and stay in Japan. The relations between the two countries are being deepened in this area. There is also a new case of harmonious coexistence of Japan and Indonesia.

(4) Cross-cultural marriage of Japanese men and Indonesian women in Japan

I visited 10 Indonesian women who

were married with Japanese men in Yokohama area in the summer of 2001. They were members of the Indonesian family group consisting of around 30 to 40 years of age. Most of their children still attended their elementary and middle schools.

The Indonesian women belonged to different ethnic groups such as Javanese, Balinese and so on and believed in the different religions such as Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. When Japanese husbands stayed in Indonesia to work for the Japanese business firms, they met and got married. Now, they live in Japan.

I asked several questions for their families such as language in the family, food and diet, religious practice, social activity and neighborhood relations, the role of husbands and wives, problems of understanding different cultures. I tried to clarify how each couple tries to overcome their difference and attain their harmonious relations in the family. I especially paid attention to their life how each maintained his or her identity and overcame their difference.

When Indonesian women were working in Jakarta, they talked with their Japanese husbands in English. But once they moved to Japan and started their life, Indonesian women

naturally learned to speak in Japanese in order to communicate with their parents-in-law and their neighborhood people. When I met them, they spoke Japanese fluently. But they could not read and write Japanese language well. So, their children asked their fathers to help their study or to read the school notice.

The Indonesian families I visited in Yokohama cooked Japanese food basically. One family served *sekihan* or red steamed rice and *nimono* or cooked vegetables to me. But they did not cook pork. Their popular Japanese cuisine is *tempura*, *misoshiru*, *sukiyaki*, but not *sashimi*, *sushi*, *natto* or *fermented soy bean paste*. Muslim family made a habit of preparing the festive cuisine for the Muslim New Year, but they usually cooked Indonesian food a couples of times a week for side-dish.

Japanese husbands converted to Islam and carried out a circumcision ceremony to become Muslim. Young sons also carried out the same ceremony when they returned to Indonesia. Islam is only a new custom for Japanese husbands. However, Indonesian wives live as Muslim more seriously while they live in Japan. They want to bury themselves in the Muslim grave in a Muslim style in

Japan in the future.

Indonesian wives have attended international events such as ethnic food stalls and dancing supported by Yokohama city or other city wards and religious events such as Christmas and Islamic New Year as members of Indonesian women and family group. Muslim members support the Christmas party and Christian members help the gathering of Muslim New Year.

The female members of different ethnic groups bring their own ethnic food to the party and exchange the taste or menu of their favorite food in the family gathering. They were able to experience interethnic exchange through food which they could not experience when they were in Indonesia.

In the international exchange activity, they introduced Indonesian cooking and dancing to the mothers of local school areas. Sometimes, some were invited to talk in class about Indonesian culture. Their children came to respect their mothers and got to know that their cross-cultural marriage was not always negative. Longer they stayed in Japan, more fluent they spoke Japanese. Since they understand the life in the community more deeply, their lives seem to become more stable.

Japanese husbands take charge of accepting the complaints from their mothers and Indonesian wives and of explaining the Japanese culture to their wives. Indonesian wives have to learn the role of Japanese housewives. They come to understand to do all domestic work which are taken care by the housemaids in their home country. They also come to understand why their husbands come back to home late at night, which show the Japanese employee's behavior and business culture in Japan.

The role of Japanese husbands in the cross-cultural marriage is harder and more complicated than that of ordinary Japanese husbands. They take their wives to the clinics or hospitals, take care of their school children and manage the family account etc.

Even so, family problems often tend to arise in the cross-cultural family. If there are good mediators who can understand the both side, it is lucky but if not, both of them have to make efforts for their final settlement. For example, all family were preparing for the returning home at Christmas, but a son, junior high student, was reluctant to go together because he wanted to attend the extra-activity or *bukastu* of his school. His mother did not understand his son's behavior and

fell in panic. It took tenacious persuasion until her consent.

In the family of cross-cultural marriage between Japanese men and Indonesian women, Indonesian women in Japan have to learn Japanese language, cook Japanese food and many other Japanese customs or culture. On the contrary, Japanese husbands convert to Islam, take care of young children, help their wives to adapt to the Japanese society. Therefore, Japanese men have to take care of their wives more carefully and are required to be generous to have their Muslim wives keep Islamic belief and practice.

For the couple, cross-cultural marriage is a mutual dependent and cooperative work who sometimes insists on their opinion and other concedes their trivial matters. In such process, they establish harmonious co-existence of different gender and culture.

Conclusion

In the cross-cultural marriage, the couple starts to live in a husband or wife's living area in accordance with the place of jobs. However, the couple with free spirits exchanges their idea, crosses each other's culture and becomes new people.

In the beginning, Japanese wives in

Indonesia were opposed to get married with Indonesians by their families and friends and therefore, they had to make a disparate effort to adapt to the life of Indonesia because they thought they could not return to Japan. In this situation, they changed their shy character to more active one and became curious and adventurous in their life. They sometimes forgot their nationality and came not to be conscious that their spouses were foreigners. These experiences brought such change in their life and thinking.

It seems that if one likes other people and their culture, one comes to accept them naturally. Then a new ego arises. In this case, it was important for the existence of other people who encouraged to change the other. Human exchange and harmonious co-existence are truly dialectic phenomenon.

Globalization develops, people cross the national boundary to survive, men and women who have different culture get married and live together in wider area. In these conditions, people should not have any prejudiced views against other people and should try to learn the other way of life or culture. Such attitude and thinking will give many people new views and ideas for the future life.

Harmonious coexistence of different ethnicity and culture is basically to live together with reliable others harmoniously. However, in order to attain these situations, we have to overcome many political, ethnic, religious conflict and barriers. We always have to make a persistent effort for the harmonious coexistence although it is everlasting process.

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(Lecturer of Anthropology, College
of International Relations, Nihon
University)