

Filipina Daughters-in-Law

Social Change in Asia

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Terms of Relations of Filipina-Japanese Marriages

- ◆ Japanese men gained wives
 - ◆ Children
 - ◆ Companionship
 - ◆ Domestic (and sometimes waged) labor
 - ◆ Care for elderly parents
- ◆ Filipina women
 - ◆ Could financially support their families in the Philippines
 - ◆ Craft selves as “good wives, wise mothers”
 - ◆ This could challenge and transform Japanese communities’ expectations and allow them to express Filipino identity

Oyomesan お嫁さん

- ◆ Dialogically links everyday practices to broader categories of *gender, kinship, ethnicity, national identity, and cultural belonging*
- ◆ *Yome/oyome* the position of a married in woman in an *ie*, or corporate family
 - ◆ Understood as “traditional” and distinctively Japanese
 - ◆ To call a Filipino a good oyomesan thus contradicts:
 - ◆ Dominant discourse of Japan as racially homogeneous with a biogenetically based identity
 - ◆ Rural Japan as a traditional native place (*furusato*)
 - ◆ Japanese imaginary of Filipinas as prostitutes and foreigners

Power of Discourse

- ◆ Discourse of oyomesan
 - ◆ Embedded in essentialized notions of Japaneseness that stresses continuity of the household over personal ties
 - ◆ I historicized this in a previous lecture (Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan*)
- ◆ Simultaneously disciplines women and challenges Japanese
 - ◆ Disciplines Filipina brides by giving them criteria by which they are judged
 - ◆ Challenges biogenetic conceptions of national belonging when Filipinas successfully become “good oyomesan”

Characteristics of a Good Bride

- ◆ Reliable and Certain (shikkari de iru 確りでいる)
 - ◆ Manage household chores by herself
 - ◆ Maintain relations with neighbors (greeting them properly)
 - ◆ Give up natal ways and assimilate (dōka 同化) into household
- ◆ Needs explicit training by in-laws, husband, and neighbors
 - ◆ Preparing and serving Japanese food
 - ◆ Greeting and interacting with neighbors
 - ◆ Caring for Japanese houses (shōji, tatami, futons, etc.)
 - ◆ School principal lectured on “uniquely Japanese” shitsuke (躰) (what Faier calls discipline, but that I would gloss as “decorum and etiquette”)

Images of National Character

- ◆ Suzuki-san “Japanese people are detail-oriented and think deeply before making a decision, but Filipinas are *iikagen* [良い加減 irresponsible, careless] and give up halfway.”
 - ◆ Counteract by becoming shikkari ni
- ◆ Foreign food does not “suit” Japanese—i.e. Japanese bodies are unique and can only digest certain foods prepared in certain ways
- ◆ Eating with one’s fingers is “dirty” kitanai 汚い
- ◆ Some Filipinas “learn naturally” shizen ni oboeru 自然に覚える 경험해 알게 되다—and this separates them from run-of-the-mill Filipinas

More Japanese than Japanese?

- ◆ The idea of *shikkari* can be used to criticize contemporary young Japanese women—i.e. not solid (しっかりでわない)
- ◆ Discourse of “selfish, indulgent, unpatriotic, and irresponsible” young Japanese women who have become Westernized and won’t have babies or marry rural men
- ◆ Traditional Filipino care for the aged earns them respect among older Japanese
- ◆ All Filipino children responsible for care for the elderly, not just the eldest and his wife

Interpellation

- ◆ Term from Louis Althusser (1918-1990), French structural Marxist philosopher
 - ◆ Society imagined as a structure of roles whereby human subjects become constituted (constructed)
 - ◆ If one is treated as if one occupies a certain role with certain norms, then one might accept these norms (ideologies) as natural—one is *interpellated* (inserted into) into these roles
 - ◆ (a form of internalization used frequently in kinship studies)

Consequences of Interpellation

- ◆ Some Filipina and Japanese women get interpellated into the oyomesan role and thus conform to traditional gender norms
- ◆ For some locals accepting some Filipinas as good daughters-in-law is an expression of modernity and cosmopolitanism
- ◆ Other locals would celebrate “traditional rural” as superior to “modern urban” to counter discourses that “only Filipina women would marry local men”
- ◆ Category of “good oyomesan” redefined as embedded in the body and rooted in natural characteristics, but not biogenetically based

Filipina's Motivation

- ◆ Oyomesan is a performance (as are all roles)
 - ◆ In Japanese contexts they “perform oyomesan”, in other contexts they may “perform Filipina” (i.e. *situated identity*)
- ◆ Reasons to perform oyomesan?
 - ◆ To counter negative stereotypes of Filipinas
 - ◆ To take pleasure in the accomplishment of performing oyomesan
 - ◆ Power works to make its mechanism economically advantageous and politically useful thus inducing pleasure (Foucault)
 - ◆ Craft a sense of oneself as legitimate wife, mother, and daughter-in-law in Japan
 - ◆ If they take Japanese citizenship they become more than mere *Japayuki*

Sacrifices of Oyomesan

- ◆ Dual pressures to natal household in Philippines, and demands of one's marital family
- ◆ Gendered Filipino-Catholic discourse of sacrifice and suffering give meaning to their difficulties
 - ◆ Tagalog ideal of *babae ng martir* (female martyr)
- ◆ Sacrifices for “family” (birth family in Philippines, children, sometimes husbands and in-laws)
 - ◆ Doing things the Japanese Way
 - ◆ Giving up other hopes and dreams for their lives
 - ◆ Working long hours doing both waged and domestic work
 - ◆ Performing emotional labor by remaining affable despite indignities

Exercising Agency

- ◆ Refusing oyomesan
 - ◆ Tessie not “oyomesan” because she didn’t live with her in-laws
 - ◆ Negotiated a freer living situation, though community thought of her as “good oyomesan”
- ◆ “We chose this path”
 - ◆ Japanese ask, “are you happy,” implying they would be happier in the Philippines, to which Tessie replies, “We chose this path, so we have to keep trying”
 - ◆ Tessie frames keeping a good house, greeting the neighbors, and helping in-laws as how a Filipina would treat people

Resonant Ideals Overlap

💧 **Resonant filiality**

- 💧 In Philippines demonstrating obedience and indebtedness to aging parents is gratitude for the “gift of life” (similar to Confucian filial piety)
- 💧 N.B. Christian commandment, “honor thy mother and father” (4th commandment in Catholic Bible, 5th in Hebrew and Protestant Bibles)

💧 **Resonant womanhood (“that’s her job”)**

- 💧 Ideally a Filipina woman should remain in the home, not work at night

Resonant Patriarchy

- ◆ “wives be subject to our husbands” Ephesians 5:22-25 (also found in the non-canonical Gospel of Peter)
 - ◆ Filipino saying, “The man is the foundation of the house, and the wife is the light inside”
- ◆ Tessie’s deference made her Yamato Nadeshiko (倭撫子 Yamato Cherishing Flower)
 - ◆ Acting for the benefit of one’s family, and obeying and assisting authority figures (with style and class)
- ◆ Upward mobility for conforming to ideals:
 - ◆ *Genesis*: “Eve is sentenced to pain in childbirth and husband to rule over her, men to work”
 - ◆ Philippines culture: men who can support their families are more masculine, and women are more feminine who make good mothers and homemakers

Dianthus superbus (pink)



Boundary Objects and Practices

- ◆ Boundary Object

- ◆ An object that inhabits several intersecting social worlds and is both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of several parties, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites (scientists Griesemer and Star)

- ◆ Boundary Practices

- ◆ Practices that inhabit multiple and overlapping worlds of meaning
- ◆ Enable resistance to be read as compliance p184

Examples of Boundary Practices

- ◆ Practices of domesticity that resonate both in Japan and the Philippines
 - ◆ Cf. filiality, patriarchy, womanhood noted above
- ◆ “Resistant” practices
 - ◆ Filipino prayer groups and parties with Filipino food and pop music and Tagalog-speaking outside Japanese gaze, are resistant but also resonant with the traditional oyome withdrawing from the family so as to not cause disruption
 - ◆ Daughter-in-law cooks Filipino and eats by herself resonant with traditional oyomesan eating later and alone

Identity Performance

- ◆ Stuart Hall (cultural theorist 1932-2014)—identities do not inhere in us as persons, but must be constantly reproduced
 - ◆ Identification is a conditional and contingent process of “articulating” whereby subjects are interpellated into discourses and then fashion, style, produce and perform those positions in situated and changing times
- ◆ Judith Butler (critical theory 1932-)-gender is performatively produced as an effect of “citational practices”
 - ◆ Wearing makeup
 - ◆ Sitting with one’s legs crossed

Abjection p187

- ◆ Those parts of the performative self that form a “domain of exclusion” against which the normative subject constructs a gendered self
- ◆ Julia Kristeva (Bulgarian/French psychologist 1941-) *Powers of Horror* 1980
 - ◆ “the state of being cast off”—that which disturbs conventional identity and culture
 - ◆ The horror comes from breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between self and other
 - ◆ Often used to explain misogyny, misandry, homophobia, and genocide (i.e. what is abjected are parts of oneself incompatible with one’s self-identity, so when confronted with these thing one feels horror, and may lash out)
- ◆ Judith Butler: The repetition of “citational practices” produces a domain of exclusion or abjection, a category that is undesirable and uninhabitable and against which the normative subject constructs a gendered self
- ◆ For Faier, however, the more interesting question is “why and under what conditions” do people get interpellated into roles (rather than the psychological processes of internalizing them)

Faier's Chapter 5 Conclusion

- ◆ Filipina women interpellated as good daughters-in-law
- ◆ Filipinas responded to this interpellation
 - ◆ Able to identify as good daughters-in-law because of resonances in the articulations of meanings, but also in the contradictions, ambivalences, and misunderstandings
 - ◆ Caring for their families made the Filipinas good wives and daughters-in-law in Japan, *and also made them* good Catholic, middle-class Filipinas
- ◆ By so doing the Filipinas became breadwinners for their families in the Philippines, and gained leverage within their families in Japan
- ◆ They feel ambivalence, however, in that they left the Philippines to escape domestication and poverty, but found a semblance of a better life by performing traditional Japanese domesticity
- ◆ Yet because of boundary practices many activities had double meanings

Running Away

- ◆ Kind of agency

- ◆ One means of managing the dissatisfactions that emerge between the dreams and expectations for lives abroad, and the demands and constraints that Filipina women faced
- ◆ Alternative means for supporting families in the Philippines and crafting lives in Japan
- ◆ Legally and socially unsanctioned form of movement that resisted Japanese immigration laws and the demands that Filipina's Japanese families placed on them

Sharyn

- ◆ Married to a *sachō* 社長 and thus better off than most
 - ◆ Found her twice-divorced husband was having an affair with another Filipina
 - ◆ Stress made her have hallucinations and she thought she was bewitched by her husband's mistress (that a kwak-kwak doctor might fix in the Philippines)
 - ◆ She knew of another Filipina who had run away, and she did in the middle of the night
 - ◆ She got advice and employment and a place to live through Filipino informal networks in the city
 - ◆ Divorce was a poor option because she would likely lose custody of her child, as well as her Japanese residence visa

Extradomestic Spaces

- ◆ Domestic can mean both “home” and “home country”
- ◆ Extradomestic spaces are clandestine, underground worlds that Filipina migrants who run away create through personal networks to enable their day-to-day survival
 - ◆ Urban bars
 - ◆ Runaways can feel independent, glamorous, and make good money at these places, but this is an underground economy

Dangers of the Extradomestic

- ◆ Filipina migrants are ordinarily under state surveillance
 - ◆ Married Filipinas are only given temporary visas at first (6 months, 1 year, 3 years, 6 years) and officers make home visits
 - ◆ Women dependent upon husbands and their families for visas, and the state is looking for “fake marriages” gizō kekkon 偽造結婚
 - ◆ Their visa might run out and they might befall a bad fate
- ◆ Running away is also stigmatizing in the Filipino community
 - ◆ She made a bad husband choice, or didn't uphold the sanctity of marriage

Runaway Stories

- ◆ Circulate among Filipinas as gossip (tsismis)
 - ◆ While gossiping Filipina women negotiate among themselves about what a woman should endure and when she should run
 - ◆ Those worried about the reputation of Filipinas might say she should put up with infidelities
 - ◆ Consensus that since her husband supported her well and didn't beat her, Sharyn shouldn't have run
- ◆ Gossip encouraged women to both stay and leave, but also allowed some Filipinas to distance themselves from runaways

Those Who Return Home

- ◆ Returnees can sometimes renegotiate terms with her husband and his family
 - ◆ Leverage
 - ◆ Families dependent on Filipina's domestic labor
 - ◆ Some men were attached to their wives (or humiliated by their departure)
- ◆ Prospect of a runaway can motivate Japanese families to take steps to discourage their leaving

Sharyn Versus Dely

- ◆ After running away, Sharyn agreed to return to a renegotiated marriage
 - ◆ Husband's motivation—this would be his third marriage failure and would ruin his reputation
 - ◆ Husband paid for an apartment in Nagano, a car, a modest living allowance, and sponsored her visa as long as she wouldn't file for divorce
 - ◆ Sharyn didn't rule out moving back with her husband some day, but in the meantime was working and saving money
 - ◆ (Later she returned to her husband, and he financed her working as a mama-san in a nearby city)
- ◆ After running away, Dely suddenly returned
 - ◆ One issue had been her inability to help her family in the Philippines, so while away she worked for 9 months until her family was able to build a house
 - ◆ Her Japanese family took her back because they needed her labor to run the store
 - ◆ There was talk about her getting a better deal, but her husband later forced her to have another child

Updates

- ◆ Rural decline continued even faster after 2000
- ◆ In 2004 a US report criticizing Japan for trafficking Filipino entertainers led the Japanese government to crack down on entertainer visas
 - ◆ Existing bars hired part-timers from the local Filipina population
 - ◆ Filipinos now came in *omiaikēkkon* (mediated marriages)
 - ◆ Tessie, “How could they marry a man they had barely met?”
 - ◆ Long term Filipina wives spoke Japanese better and were more integrated into society
 - ◆ In-laws in some cases had died of old age making the *yome*’s life a little bit easier

Theme

- ◆ Everyday life, relationships, and the dialogic processes of encounter through which Filipina women have come to be identified and to identify themselves as *oyomesan*
- ◆ Desires for glamour, mobility, and political-economic stability came into productive relationship with local Japanese residents' ambivalent longings to be part of a modern, wealthy, and cosmopolitan Japanese nation

Stakes

- ◆ Dynamics of cultural and social process in the contemporary interconnected world
- ◆ Look for:
 - ◆ Relations of power through which relationship develop in multiple and sometimes conflicting ways
 - ◆ Everyday processes show intimate and contingent dynamics that are just as important as nation-state activities

Transformed National Identities

- ◆ Japanese and Filipinas negotiated new terms of national identity and belonging through their shared daily lives
 - ◆ Elderly Japanese sometimes preferred their Filipino daughter-in-law to Japanese
 - ◆ Japanese men sometimes adopted their wives' Filipino children and raised them as their own
 - ◆ Filipina women learned to prepare traditional Japanese foods, raised Japanese children, and came to be identified as good daughters-in-law
 - ◆ Some became Japanese citizens