Marriage migration in Asia

Studies on marriage migration have traditionally focused on women travelling from less developed countries in the global south to more developed ones in the global north. The focus of studies in the 1990s, on brides moving from the global south to the global north in pursuit of higher economic standing, has nonetheless created a foundation for future studies on marriage migration to build upon. *Marriage Migration in Asia: Emerging Minorities at the Frontiers of Nation States* exceeds the initial efforts of this tradition in many ways. The 10 essays in this volume provide insights into marriage migration studies and their relationship with nation-states’ migration laws. The essays push the field further by calling attention to the multiple directions marriage migration takes, making contributions in at least two domains.

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First, the essays contribute to elucidating the multiple geographic directions cross-border marriages take beyond the traditional south-to-north path, and the consequences for the migrants, their children and their families. For example, in Chapter One, Masako Kudo shows how Japanese wives married to Pakistani men in Japan choose survival strategies that result in some women migrating from Japan to Pakistan. As a result of difficulties in Pakistan, they often either return to Japan or migrate to another country. In Chapter Two, Chie Sakai focuses on marriages between Japanese women and Chinese men who live in Shanghai, examining two countries with similar socio-economic status. Similarly, in a case of global southern migration, Linda Lumayog shows in Chapter Three how until 2010, in Malaysia, professional migrant women from the Philippines once married to Malaysian men are submitted by law to comply with the gendered division of labour expected of married women in Malaysia. As a result, they lose access to the employ-ment opportunities they enjoyed as single women. Some of the essays look at cross-border marriages in which both men and women from the global north travel to the global south to either marry their partners or follow them and settle there. For instance, against the traditional focus, in Chapter Four, Huyy Tokoro discusses Japanese men who migrate to the Philippines following their Filipino wives. These men become socially and economically marginalised, both in the Philippines and in Japan, to the extent that they are unable to return to the latter.

The second contribution is the focus on the role of migration laws with respect to international marriage, and the strategies that surface as a result of marriage migrants trying to live the lives they long for, which at times have unforeseen detrimental consequences for their children and families. For instance, in Chapter Five, Sari Ishii focuses on the case of Japanese-Thai children whose Japanese nationality works against them when they return to Thailand, following their Thai mothers’ decision to raise them there. In Chapter Six, Caesar Daohim shows how the descendants of mixed marriages between Caucasian men and Malay women give up their ethnicity as Caucasians upon recognising the social, political and economic benefits bestowed by the Malay nation-state on those assuming a Malay identity. In addition to these contributions, one of the book’s most important points is that marriage migration sometimes occurs at the margins of state registration procedures, creating important adverse consequences for the individuals involved. Chapters seven through ten emphasise that marriage migrants without citizenship fall into very vulnerable situations after marriage, and are often unable to achieve their goals in either the sending or the receiving nation-states. This is exemplified in Chapter Seven, where Caroline Grillet writes about Vietnamese women and their children living in the borderlands between Vietnam and China. These women end up living a ‘non-existing life’ from the perspective of the Chinese state, as in China they are considered illegal economic migrants. Consequently, their marriages to Chinese men and their children’s births are not registered. Similarly, in Chapter Eight, Hien Anh Le illustrates how children born in Korea of marriages between Korean men and Vietnamese women live in a position of ‘de facto-statelessness’ when their mothers move to Vietnam after divorcing their Korean husbands. In Vietnam, the children lack citizenship and other social rights. Lara Chen (Chapter Nine) and Chatchai Chetsumon (Chapter Ten) further show how states deprive stateless individuals and their children of citizenship rights that would otherwise be accessible to them through marriage.

Theoretically, this book provides clear insights into the multiple dimensions and tensions that arise from the relationship between cross-border marriages and a state’s interest in controlling its population. Some authors in the West have seen in universalistic discourses on human rights a decline in the power of nation-state boundaries (Saksa Sassen, Losing Control?: Sovereignty in an Age of Globalisation, Cambridge University Press, 2000; Nuñez Núñez, Global Legal Orders and Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Although their insights have value in some cases, the authors argue that when others see the category of global diaspora contributes to furthering our understanding of the multiple situations in which marriage migrants operate, the use of universal information would provide support to this valuable claim.

Pundits of marriage migration and citizenship will find in this collection of essays a key piece for the policy. Policy experts, migrants and migrants’ advocates and their organisations will value these essays for the empirical data they provide, which may be used to advocate among state actors for better policies that will allow marriage migrants to improve their lives. These case studies will also prove useful to scholars invested in researching and teaching the relationship between the law and gender together with migration, citizenship and globalisation.

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**The Book of Yōkai**

If the current craze is anything to go by, the next big cultural export from Japan after manga and anime, will be Pokémon. As with its predecessors, in the translation to a global world culture, Pokémon’s links to a premodern Japanese world may barely be recognized. One suspects that the majority of its global practitioners may never proceed beyond the thrill of chasing after virtual monsters. But for some aficionadas, the new pastime may offer an entry into the world of traditional Japanese folklore. In that case, Michael Dylan Foster’s *The Book of Yōkai* will be the hard copy app of choice!

Natsuko Akagawa

Michael Dylan Foster, 2015


FOSTER DOES NOT WANT to be too specific in defining yōkai for those who have not been brought up in the culture they have traditionally inhabited. Introducing his subject, Foster’s response to the inevitable first question the non-initiated may want to ask is: ‘So what is a yōkai? For now let us just say that a yōkai is a weird or mysterious creature, a monster or fantastic being, a spirit or a sprite … [But] yōkai are ultimately more complex and more interesting than these simple characterisations suggest … [and] take us on a kaleidoscopic journey through history and culture (p. 5).

The aim of the book is to lead through that mysterious world. Foster begins his analysis with an optimistic note that he will become a graduate day and is the author of a number of publications exploring Japanese folklore, including the celebrated *Pendulum and Parade: Japanese Monsters and Transnationalism* (University of California Press, 2009), for which he received the Chicago Folklore Prize. This book is a synthesis of the author’s long involvement with this genre and aims to provide a com-prehensive overview of the field for the English-speaking newcomer. The *Book of Yōkai* is a two-part distillation of scholarship that draws upon an extensive corpus of literature on the subject (testified by 16 pages of references), as well as on interviews.