

Marriages between Japanese and foreigners Meiji 6 - Meiji 30 (1873-1897)

Noboru Koyama

The revision of unequal treaties (*jōyaku kaisei*) was the most important diplomatic issue for Japan before the Second World War. One of the principal arguments over the revision of unequal treaties was whether or not Japan should allow foreigners to reside outside foreign settlements, i.e., authorize mixed residence in the interior (*naichi zakkyō*), in order to abolish foreigners' extraterritorial rights. One of the main arguments against mixed residence in the interior was that the Japanese would not be able to compete in Japan with foreigners, particularly "superior" Caucasians. For example, Inoue Tssetsujirō, one of the opponents of mixed residence, thought that since Japanese were inferior to Westerners in intellectual, financial and physical powers and many other aspects, it was inevitable that the Japanese would be defeated by Westerners.¹

Professor Inoue Tssetsujirō of the Tokyo Imperial University was a conservative and nationalistic philosopher, like another principal opponent of mixed residence, Professor Katō Hiroyuki, Chancellor of the Imperial University. Katō described how dangerous it was to compete with Westerners inside Japan, saying the Japanese lacked experience in commercial competitiveness.² Interestingly, the arguments of both Inoue Tssetsujirō and Katō Hiroyuki were based on Darwinism and Herbert Spencer's theory of social evolution. The issue of mixed residence in the interior was mainly disputed towards the end of the 1880s.

In order to achieve revision of the unequal treaties, the Japanese government pursued quick Westernization in the 1880s, symbolized as a building called the "Deer Cry Pavilion" (*Rokumeikan*), and this period is sometimes referred to as the Rokumeikan era. During the Rokumeikan era there was a dispute over mixed marriage (*zakkon*). In Meiji 17 (1884) Takahashi Yoshio published an "Essay on How to Improve the Japanese

Race" with preface by Fukuzawa Yukichi, the most important representative of the Enlightenment and founder of Keiō University. Although the preface might have been written by Takahashi himself,³ Fukuzawa seemed to support Takahashi.⁴ First Takahashi divided methods of improving the Japanese race into two - training and self-improvement such as physical training, and genetic improvement. Takahashi dealt mainly with *zakkon*. He argued that the "inferior" race could be improved by intermarriage with the "superior" one, and that the Japanese should not hesitate to seek marriage to Westerners.⁵

On the other hand, opposing Takahashi Yoshio's argument, Katō Hiroyuki made the point that it would be honourable for the Japanese to civilize and enrich Japan by themselves, but dishonourable if they could achieve this only by borrowing the blood of Caucasians through mixed marriages.⁶ Katō did not want to civilize Japan through marriages with Europeans and Americans. As Katō Hiroyuki appeared to be an opponent of both *zakkon* and *naichi zakkyō*, it seemed that both mixed marriage and mixed residence in the interior were connected. Katō Hiroyuki explained that those who supported *naichi zakkyō* often approved of the methods of *zakkon*.⁷ Katō Hiroyuki regarded himself as a rival of Fukuzawa Yukichi. Both were known as scholars of the Enlightenment. While Fukuzawa was the founder of the *Keiō Gijuku*, a private school, and Fukuzawa and Takahashi expressed their views through the newspaper *Jiji shimpō*, Katō Hiroyuki was the head of the government-supported Imperial University and first published his counter-argument against Takahashi Yoshio's book in *Tōkyō nichinichi shimbun*, a government-patronized newspaper.⁸

The race issue was a very sensitive one, even in the first half of the Meiji period, so the issue of mixed marriage was sensitive, too, being related directly to the issue of nationality and indirectly to that of nationalism. Relations between nations obviously reflect relations between the people of the nations. Conversely, to a certain extent we can see relations between nations through relations between the people of the nations. Since marriage is the most important human relationship, relations between Japan and foreign countries can be examined through the study of marriages between Japanese and foreigners. In Japan acquisition and loss of nationality were directly related to marriages between Japanese and foreigner, at least until the first Nationality Law (*kokusekihō*) was introduced in Meiji 32 (1890). With the exception of residents of the Bonin Islands (*Ogasawara Shotō*) and a few Chinese, only the contracting parties in mixed marriages and their children were allowed to change nationality. According to *Nihon Teikoku minseki kokōhyō*, 59 foreigners acquired Japanese nationality and 298 Japanese lost their Japanese nationality in the 12 years from Meiji 19 (1886) to Meiji 30 (1897).⁹

As far as changing nationality is concerned, the first law on nationality in Japan was Decree No 103 (*Dajōkan fukoku 103*) of Meiji 6

(1873) which allowed Japanese to marry foreigners after obtaining permission from the Japanese government.¹⁰ Under this decree Japanese women who married foreigners [and lived abroad] had to give up their Japanese nationality and take their husband's nationality; foreign women who married Japanese men, and foreign men who married Japanese women [and lived in Japan] had to give up their own nationality and become Japanese nationals.¹¹ Two different Japanese terms were used for marriages between foreign men and Japanese women in which the foreign men became Japanese nationals: if the wife was the daughter of the head of the family, the marriage (or husband) was called *mukoyōshi*, and if the wife was herself the head of the family they were called *nyūfu*. Until Decree No 103 was overtaken by the Law Concerning the Application of Law, Private International Law (Hōrei) in Meiji 31 (1898), intermarriage required the Japanese government's permission.¹² That is why records of mixed marriages have been kept by the Japanese central government.

Decree No 103 was introduced in direct response to an enquiry from a British consul in Meiji 5 (1872) regarding the marriage of a Japanese and a foreigner. Since the Tokugawa Shogunate government had received a similar enquiry from a British consul in Keiō 4 (1867), the new Japanese government (the Meiji government) issued the decree.¹³ The first enquiry of 1867 from a British consul may have been related to the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Laws of Marriage*, which was published in 1868, rather than to an actual mixed marriage. The second enquiry from a British consul, in 1872, concerned two matters - the Japanese government's regulation of mixed marriages and married women's property rights.¹⁴ Probably the second enquiry was connected with married women's property in Britain. In any case by then there had already been marriages between Japanese and foreigners.

Decree No 103 raised a number of issues. One was the change of nationality of the foreigner who married a Japanese. Foreign envoys were concerned about this because they could not protect their citizens in "uncivilized" Japan after the change of nationality. For example, Nicholas Hannen, Britain's assistant judge at Yokohama, raised this issue, but the law officers in London confirmed that Decree No 103 was in line with similar regulations in European countries.¹⁵ Another issue was the complicated one of family or census registration (*koseki*).

There were two ways to get permission from the Japanese government for a mixed marriage: in Japan, by application via the local government to the Ministry of Home Affairs (*Naimushō*); and abroad, through Japanese consulates or embassies to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Gaimushō*). The documents on mixed marriages throughout the period (1873-97) which have been kept at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are accessible to the public at the ministry's Diplomatic Record Office (*Gaimushō Gaikō Shiryōkan*).¹⁶ The records of mixed marriages up to Meiji 18 (1885) kept at the Ministry of

Home Affairs are accessible to the public at the National Archives (*Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan*),¹⁷ but more recent records are not available. However, the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs include those relating to mixed marriages approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs after Meiji 25 (1892). Although the records of mixed marriages approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs between Meiji 19 and Meiji 24 (1886-91) are not available, I have tried to obtain the records of mixed marriages in the period from other sources like the Tokyo Metropolitan Archives (*Tōkyōto Kōbunshokan*).¹⁸ So far I have been able to collect records of 231 marriages approved by the Japanese government between Meiji 6 and Meiji 30. I am not claiming that 231 is the total number, but probably they represent the majority. I am able to estimate the number of missing records of mixed marriages approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs between Meiji 19 and Meiji 24 (1886-91) at about 35, using data from the *Official Gazette* (*Kampō*),¹⁹ so that the total number of mixed marriages from Meiji 6 to Meiji 30 is in the region of 270.

Some patterns may be observed among these 231 mixed marriages. In cases of the marriage of Japanese men to foreign women, typically the Japanese man was sent to the West to study Western civilization and brought a foreign woman back with him. In cases of the marriage of foreign men to Japanese women, typically the foreigner lived in a foreign settlement in Japan and employed the Japanese woman as a servant or mistress, and they married some years after they had begun living together. They often had children before marriage.

Mixed marriages reflected Japan's historical and international circumstances. For example, if we examine the nationality of the foreign partners in these 231 mixed marriages, we find: British 69 (59 men and 10 women), Chinese (Qing Empire) 57 (all men), German 32 (14 men and 18 women), US 26 (13 men and 13 women), French 15 (10 men and 5 women), Russian 5 (all men), Netherlands 5 (all men) and so on. If British colonies are included in the British number it reaches 75 (32.5 per cent). The arrival in Japan of Chinese, the second largest group, was closely related to the arrival of Westerners, particularly the British, because some Chinese were taken to Japan as servants, cooks, employees, etc., of the British.

If we examine the relative numbers of men and women we can see that the number of men is related to the number of foreigners in Japan by nationality and the number of women reflects the number of Japanese sent abroad to study by country. The foreigners in Japan from Meiji 9 to Meiji 30 were as follows: Chinese, 54.2 per cent; British, 19.6 per cent; Americans, 9.6 per cent; Germans, 5.2 per cent; French, 3.9 percent, etc.²⁰ The Japanese sent abroad by the Ministry of Education (*Mombushō*) from Meiji 8 to Meiji 30 numbered 95 to Germany, 44 to Britain, 29 to France and 27 to the US. The ministry was only one of several institutions which despatched Japanese

to the West during the period.²¹ The data match the patterns of the aforementioned 231 mixed marriages.

I mentioned earlier that both the conservative and nationalistic philosophers Inoue Tetsujirō and Katō Hiroyuki were deeply influenced by Darwinism and Herbert Spencer's social evolution theory. The theory of evolution was thought to be so important in connection with mixed residence in the interior and mixed marriage that a Japanese government official actually asked Spencer about them.²² Probably because of the influence of the theory of evolution, both Inoue Tetsujirō and Katō Hiroyuki stated that the Japanese were racially inferior to Caucasians. This opinion was expressed clearly by Inoue Tetsujirō and less directly by Katō Hiroyuki, who all the same let slip comments such as "There is no doubt that the Japanese are slightly inferior to Westerners," and so on.²³

The rapid Westernization of Japan in the middle of the Meiji period (1890s) was opposed by ultra-nationalism (*kokusuishugi*) through the journal *Nihonjin* (The Japanese) and the newspaper *Nippon* (Japan). Yet one of the representative thinkers of this movement, Shiga Shigetaka, referring to Japanese immigration, mentioned that the Japanese could not expect always to win in competition with Westerners because of the Japanese people's low brain-power and feeble body.²⁴ It may come as a surprise to present generations to discover how deeply rooted the inferiority complex of race was among the Japanese intellectuals of the Meiji period, including nationalists.

Notes

- 1 Inoue Tetsujirō, *Naichi zakkyo ron* (Meiji bunka zenshū 11), Nihon Hyōronsha, 1956, p. 475.
- 2 Katō Hiroyuki, *Zakkyo shōsō*, Tetsugaku Shoin, 1893, pp. 20-21.
- 3 Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū 21, Iwanami Shoten, 1964, pp. 342-343.
- 4 Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Tsūzoku gaikō ron* (Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū 5), Iwanami Shoten, 1959, p. 444, 447. Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Katō Hiroyuki kun e shitsumon* (Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū 10), Iwanami Shoten, 1960, pp. 537-538.
- 5 Takahashi Yoshio, *Nihon jinshu kairyō ron* (Meiji bunka shiryō soshō 6), Kazama Shōbō, 1961, pp. 45-46.
- 6 Katō Hiroyuki, *Zakkyo shōsō*, pp. 45-46. Katō Hiroyuki, *Nihon jinshu kairyō no ben* (Katō Hiroyuki monjo 3), Dōhōsha, 1990, pp. 43-44.
- 7 Katō Hiroyuki, *Zakkyo shōsō*, pp. 49-50.
- 8 Itō Masao, *Fukuzawa Yukichi ronkō*, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1969, pp. 348-349.
- 9 *Kokusei chōsa izen Nihon jinkō tōkei shūsei* 2-4, Tōyō Shoin, 1992.

- 10 Egawa Hidefumi et al., *Kokusekihō*, Yūhikaku, 1989, p. 34.
- 11 *Dajōkan nisshi* 6, Tōkyōdō, 1981, pp. 290-291.
- 12 Ishii Ryōsuke, *Nihon kon'inhō shi*, Sōbunsha, 1977, pp. 336-337.
- 13 *Dainihon gaikō bunsho* 6, Nihon Kokusai Kyōkai, 1939, pp. 695-698. *Kanagawa-ken shi shiryō-hen* 15 (Kindai, gendai 5: shōgai), Kanagawa-ken, 1973, pp. 454-463.
- 14 *Dainihon gaikō bunsho* 6, Nihon Kokusai Kyōkai, 1939, pp. 695-698.
- 15 *Dainihon gaikō bunsho* 6, Nihon Kokusai Kyōkai, 1939, pp. 701-707. FO 97/503 7280 (the draft of the law officers 28 August 1873).
- 16 *Naigai jimmin kekkon zakken* 1 (Meiji 6-12), 2 (Meiji 13-20), 3 (Meiji 21-30).
- 17 *Dajō ruiten* 2 (Meiji 4-10), 3 (Meiji 11-12), 4 (Meiji 13), 5 (Meiji 14), *Kōbunroku* (Meiji 8-18).
- 18 *Kaigiroku kekkon no bu* (Meiji 14-18), *Naigaijin kekkonbo* (Meiji 19-20), *Naigaijin kekkon* (Meiji 21), (Meiji 23-25).
- 19 *Kampō* 1669 (24.1.1889), 1676 (2.2.1889), 1746 (29.4.1889), 1964 (18.1.1890), 1985 (14.2.1890), 2261 (15.1.1891), 2564 (20.1.1892), 2598 (2.3.1892), *Jogaku zasshi* No 95 (4.2.1888).
- 20 *Nihon chōki tōkei sōran* 1, Nihon Tōkei Kyōkai, 1987, p. 52.
- 21 Watanabe Minoru, *Kindai Nihon kaigai ryūgakusei shi* 1, Kōdansha, 1977, furoku.
- 22 Ichijima Kenkichi, *Meiji bunka hasshō no kaiko* (Meiji bunka hasshō kinenshi), Dainihon Bummei Kyōkai, 1914, pp. 12-13.
- 23 Katō Hiroyuki, *Nihon jinshu kairyō no ben* (Katō Hiroyuki monjo 3), Dōhōsha, 1990, p. 33.
- 24 *Shiga Shigetaka zenshū* 1, Shiga Shigetaka Zenshū Kankōkai, 1928, p. 75.