Gender and Globalisation : the Japanese diaspora

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Junko SAKAI

University of Essex

INTRODUCTION

The mobility of goods and commodities is increasing due to rapid globalisation, as well as the circulation of information around the world which is leading to ordinary people encountering other cultures in their everyday lives, or living in what is known as the 'global village'. Although the current global movement of people as well as the globalising economy have been recently recognised as phenomena of globalisation, the phenomena themselves are not new historically, for the modern world has been expanding and human beings have been interacting between different regions for thousands of years. The sceptics of 'globalisation' claim that the scale of economic globalisation was much larger at the turn of the 19th century [HIRST 1997], but the phenomenon has brought about numerous discussions on 'globalisation' and posed questions on what the boundaries between nations are and the superiority of Western values. Encountering other cultures and living in the liminal space between cultures has become a new concern for us. The Japanese, too, have been involved in current global movements of people.

This study is to explore an aspect of globalisation, which has been argued to be less important and even completely overlooked so far: that is, the gender aspect of globalisation. Gender is a crucial factor in the interaction and movement of people beyond national boundaries [CLIFFORD 1994: 313]. To pursue this topic and examine the case of Japanese globalisation, I focus on how far Japanese men and women have been involved in the recent global expansion of the Japanese economy and culture, above all, how they have constructed different cultural identities through their experiences of encountering other cultures.

The paper is divided into four sections Firstly, Japanese globalisation is discussed. I point out that Japanese globalisation has been so far viewed in relation to Japanese transnational companies and Japanese products. In other words, many scholars have focused on the economic aspects of globalisation, by using the term, 'Japanisation' in production and management, or by exploring Japanese business culture in terms of 'harmony' or 'uniqueness'. However, this paper looks at more complex and layered phenomena of Japanese globalisation, by focusing on the

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Japanese people who are spreading out into the world following the country's economic expansion after the high growth of its economy.

Secondly, I argue that the global movements of Japanese are highly gendered, in spite of the images of Japanese globalisation that are represented by men in business or in politics. In reality, the globalisation of the Japanese economy and culture as well as the development of Japanese overseas communities has involved both men and women. Japanese men and women have followed different patterns of global movement, and locate themselves between Japan and the world in different positions: men in the centre of Japan and women in between Japan and the 'outside'.

Thirdly, I analyse the life story of a Japanese woman who migrated individually to Britain in the early 1970s, comparing her story with those of Japanese expatriates and of younger Japanese women in Britain. The life stories of Japanese men and women, who worked or lived in the Japanese overseas community, were collected in London and Tokyo between 1992 and 1995, and additional interviews with Japanese women who were preparing to leave Japan were conducted in Tokyo in 1998. Here, I illustrate how the Japanese men and women, who worked in the Japanese business community, located themselves within Japanese society and in the Japanese overseas community. The different positions of the men and the women made them construct in their narratives different images of their own country and of the world.

Having heard the life stories of men and women who have experienced encountering other cultures, I consider how far global movements of Japanese are connected with their gendered cultural identities, despite the fact that the Japanese cultural identity has been so far discussed based on those images of nationalistic male businessmen or male politicians. I assert that the relationships between gender and ethnicity are complex. Japanese women migrants who have been hidden from the male representation of the Japanese economic expansion have constructed a 'floating' identity between the Japanese and the global. Their voice has not been heard in existing studies. It is urgent to demonstrate that the male representation of Japan's globalisation cannot represent the cultural identities of the Japanese, which have never been homogeneous.

Furthermore, I consider how gendered identity relates to our understanding of our own nations. Men as leaders talked about their nation as an excellent homogeneous group, while women, who denied the men's stories, constructed negative images of the nation. The Japanese 'diaspora' is the place where such gendered stories of nation are discussed. Men in the centre of their own nation emphasise their cultural identity, while women who are on the margins look for their place between their original nation and outside it. Such gendered cultural identities seem to force the Japanese spread towards the Japanese diaspora.

JAPANESE GLOBALISATION

The economic significance of national boundaries has been declining dramatically with the increasing number of multinational companies, advances in communication and the development of transportation. In the 1970s and 1980s, the volume of world trade grew more rapidly in the manufacturing sector, and direct foreign investment rose much more rapidly than ever before. In fact, globalisation was particularly evident in the world of finance in the 1980s, in which Japan played a significant role as a world investor [DÜSER 1990; SATŌ, LEVICH and RAMACHANDRAN 1994].

In parallel with economic globalisation, the global movement of Japanese has been increasing since the 1970s, when the restriction on the amount of dollars one could take abroad was abolished in the early 1970s. In the 1980s, alongside the strong value of the yen, the global presence of the Japanese was highly recognisable. Even in the midst of the recession in the 1990s, according to statistics, 764,000 Japanese were living outside Japan in 1996, and many more Japanese were travelling or living temporarily outside Japan. According to statistics, 16,803,000 Japanese left Japan or returned in 1997. As the total population of Japan was 126,166,000, numerically more than ten per cent of the total Japanese population entered or departed Japan in 1997 (Japan Figures 1999). Of course there must have been many people who repeatedly left and entered Japan during the year, but it is clear that an increasing number of Japanese are moving outside Japan.

Despite the recognition that Japanese people are moving around the world, the globalisation of the Japanese has been considered through their production and trading rather than the people themselves [EMMOTT 1993]. For example, the success of Japanese products such as the Sony Walkman or Toyota cars produced a massive reputation for excellence in the Japanese production system. In parallel, there emerged a discourse on the high quality of the Japanese production and management systems [AOKI and DORE 1994]. As a result, Japanese overseas communities tended to be looked at as cases for examining the unique Japanese business and production cultures [CAMPBELL and BURTON, 1994]. The so-called Japanisation of production and management systems was a serious concern among Western scholars [ACKROYD, HUGHERS and WHITAKER 1988; OLIVER and WILKINSON 1991; BRATTON 1994; ELGER and SMITH 1994].

Although Japanese products and management have spread, cultural hybridity does not seem to be highlighted in Japanese overseas communities, but instead cultural segregation is being pointed out. Harumi Befu and Nancy Stalker, in their article on Japan's globalisation that refers to Appadurai's five scapes of globalisation, discuss the fact that the ethnoscape of the Japanese is particularly characteristic of Japan's globalisation. They pointed out that Japanese businessmen and their children in Japanese overseas communities do not mingle with people in the host country [BEFU and STALKER 1996]. Kousaku Yoshino argued as well that

Japanese businessmen assert strong cultural nationalism towards the world [YOSHINO 1992]. The globalisation of Japan has neither decreased such cultural nationalism nor created a hybrid culture, but has rather enhanced the local in the global.

The localness of Japanese overseas communities is one reason why I call them the Japanese diaspora. The presence of Japanese all over the world has become apparent since the 1970s, but one might say that it is impossible to call Japanese overseas communities a diaspora. The word 'diaspora' has been mainly used to describe the Jewish movement all over the world as a necessity for victims who did not have a state. It can be questioned whether or not non-victim globalisation such as Japanese expansion can simply be called a 'diaspora'. In addition, it is questionable whether or not the quantity of Japanese global movements is enough to be called a 'diasporic' phenomenon. However, it is clear that Japanese expansion is gradually but steadily proceeding, and the influence of their knowledge and culture around the globe cannot be denied.

As Robin Cohen points out, the Japanese diaspora has dispersed following its economic expansion, or following the direct investment of Japanese capital into the world economy. He argues that the original meaning of diaspora was for the colonies of ancient Greek cities. Robin Cohen further expanded the meaning of diaspora to explain Chinese and Japanese overseas communities by naming them 'trading diasporas' [COHEN 1997: 159-160]. Although one can argue whether or not such non-victim communities can be called a diaspora, his categorisation clearly shows how Japanese globalisation is perceived in the 'metropolis'.

Diasporas are characterised by strong links to their home countries and the exclusiveness among themselves within communities away from their homeland, having transnational networks [CLIFFORD 1994: 306]. In this sense, Japanese overseas communities are clearly evident to be a diaspora. In addition, the emotional eagerness of Japanese to move towards the centre stage of the world has encouraged them to move beyond national boundaries. I therefore argue that the present move of contemporary Japanese people, which is much larger than ever before, is a diasporic spread.

Just as Paul Gilroy re-examined the modern world and the cultural process around the Atlantic Ocean from the perspectives of Black people [GILROY 1993], so this paper examines, from the perspectives of Japan's globalisation, the relationships between Japan and the world. The Japanese, located in the locale of the modern world, have developed their own cultural identity which should be re-examined based on empirical research.

For conceptualising Japan's globalisation, the gender aspects of diaspora should not be overlooked. This paper intends to explore the gender aspect of the Japanese diaspora in the process of globalisation, which has been viewed as less important or even neglected so far. In the case of Japan's globalisation, how have individuals constructed different stories of Japanese cultural identities in their experiences of encountering other cultures? This paper focuses in particular on

narratives of 'Japanese identities'. In doing so, I suggest that previous analyses of Japan's globalisation do not represent more complex and layered characteristics, but rather stereotypical images.

GENDERED ASPECTS OF JAPANESE GLOBALISATION

The global movement of the Japanese is highly gendered. This can be traced in the following. First of all, the images of Japanese represented in its overseas business communities are still predominantly those of Japanese men. Men in business and politics appear as representative of 'Japanese' and talk about their views on Japan and the world as if they were genuinely typical Japanese views. Their images appear to be neutral, but, in fact, have created the false image that such men represent both Japanese men and women. Secondly, as my research in London illustrated, Japanese overseas communities are clearly structured by male expatriates sent from head offices in the centre and women are located on the periphery. In the case of the Japanese business community in London, there are bureaucrats, journalists and male managers in the centre of the community. Around them, there are the wives, female expatriates and locally-hired Japanese employees. Most locally-hired employees are women who have migrated to Britain individually. Around such companies, there are Japanese working for shops, restaurants and estate agencies, teachers for expatriate children, and students as part-time workers. In Japanese organisations within Japan, men mainly occupy the elite courses in their career tracks, and women are still marginalised even if their educational and family backgrounds are sometimes higher than those of their male counterparts. In Japanese subsidiary companies abroad, the gender division still remains, or is even worse. Finally, the patterns of staying abroad are also gendered. In general, men sent by head offices stay at overseas subsidiary companies for a while, and bring back their wives and children when their assignments are finished. There are not many female staff sent from Japan. In contrast, locally-employed women are living in the overseas communities as individual migrants. In addition, there are also many women who are preparing to go abroad by learning languages in Japan. The globalisation of the Japanese economy and the development of Japanese overseas communities have given these women job opportunities abroad. Such jobs are still based on Japanese management practice, but images of working and living abroad give women the idea that they could gain power for a better life. The images of the West, limited working conditions for women and a western ideology of women's roles make women think that they could have better lives abroad [SAKAI 1997].

The migration studies show that two thirds of global migrants are women, in other words, global migration is now feminised [BENMAYOR and SKOTNES 1994: 2]. The Japanese pattern of migration is not exceptional. It is now a social phenomenon that Japanese women move away, or desire to leave Japan for other countries. It is questionable why women, who have been associated with

domesticity, move more freely beyond national boundaries. Compared with them, although the discourse of life-time employment is now collapsing due to the economic recession, men still remain in the centre within the family and workplaces. Following the globalisation of the Japanese economy, women who are living in peripheral positions in Japanese society find that they can move between national boundaries as an individual free agent.

LIFE STORIES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE JAPANESE DIASPORA

Life story interviews of Japanese men and women conducted in London provided information on how they constructed boundaries between nations and how they perceived their sense of belonging to their 'imagined communities'. Although Japaneseness or Japanese society was talked of as essential from their positivistic view points, their imagined community was in fact more uncertain. Nevertheless, there were common stories of identities in the narratives of Japanese men and women in my research. The recorded life stories of forty-seven male Japanese expatriates, seven female Japanese expatriates. two wives of male expatriates, one Japanese male locally hired and thirteen locally hired Japanese women, were unexpectedly divided into narratives of men and women. In addition to the interviews in London, I interviewed three women in their thirties who were about to go abroad. They provided similar stories to those women I interviewed in London.

Sachiko was working in a Japanese financial company in London as a locally-hired employee. She was born in a provincial town in the Kansai area in 1951. She is the youngest of three daughters and her father was a woodsman. According to her, she was good at school and she wanted to be a teacher by studying at university. Yet, her mother always told her that rearing daughters cost a lot and bore no reward for parents. Although she wanted to take the entrance examination for university, she first took an examination to become a bank clerk. Unfortunately for her, she passed the exam and gave up the idea of going to university. Like hers, other life stories tended to be hypothetical, for example, it was often said, 'I could have been a teacher', 'I could have been a lawyer if I had been able to study at university', or 'I could have been a newscaster and it would have suited my ability more'. In reality, Sachiko worked for the bank after she graduated from highschool, but she felt that women were discriminated against in the workplace. She recalled:

> When I was about eighteen or twenty years old, if I took a seat, I was told
> that I had to take a seat in the lowest position. When I was in front, my male
> colleague would tell me that I had to be at the back, because I was a woman.
> I still remember his words. He said, 'Women should not behave in a
> noticeable way'. In addition, I found during my training that my male
> counterparts were assigned to collect deposits from customers. But female
> staff had to stay in the bank and were given no opportunity to show their

> ability. I thought there were still feudalistic ideas in Japan. So, I really hated
> Japanese society, and every day thought about leaving the country...

After working for two years for the bank, she resigned and left her family, living on
her own after moving into the capital city of the prefecture. She started to go to .
secretarial school and to study English. Then she went to Britain to improve her
English. In the early 1970s, when she first arrived, she thought that Britain was
closer to the idealistic world of gender equality. She described how she felt:

> At that time I was happy. I was young and ambitious. I had nothing to be
> afraid of. I had dreams and I had a future. Now I am horribly worn-out by
> household worries. At that time I had freedom. I could do everything I
> wanted. My parents were in Japan and I was alone. I was brave, and although
> at that time there must have been rapes and murders, I did not think of such
> things. When I had no friends, I went to the cinema and went back to my
> lodgings on foot, by myself, at midnight.

Although Sachiko said she had been happy, her life seemed to be one of a lonely
traveller without friends in a foreign country, but she felt she had gained her
freedom. Originally her plan was to stay in Britain for one year, her savings not
being enough to stay longer. But she did not return to Japan. Sachiko stated:

> I used up the money that I had brought with me after one year, then found a
> job in a bank... I did not want to go back from the start... I was young. I did
> not feel afraid. I did not know *seken* (the world)... Life in Britain was more
> stimulating than that in Japan. I was interested in the many people of
> different races when I walked in the streets...There were many different
> people, and different ways of thinking...I could not meet anyone in Japan
> who had the same way of thinking as me. But I found here newer, and more
> progressive women than me. I felt empathy with them when I came to
> Britain. I felt that these were the ideas and the world that I sought... Since
> that time Britain has become a melting pot of races. I felt wonderful when I
> got on the train and found people of different races. I felt empathy with the
> fact that women are stronger in this country.

Here, she clearly illustrated the contrast between her image of Japan and Britain.
Then she married a British man under pressure from her parents who were asking
her to return to Japan. She explained why she married him.

> I met a British man who was interested in *zen*. At that time Britain had begun
> to look at Japan. He was also interested in oriental women. Then we lived
> together, and without an engagement we were married. I cannot tell whether
> my marriage has been good or not. I married him when I was too young. I

was twenty-four years old. I should have done more of what I wanted to do. I
did not come to Britain in order to marry. Part of the reason for my marriage
was loneliness. I fell in love, and at the same time, I was receiving many
phone calls from Japan asking me to go back soon. I felt pressurised by these
phone calls, so I got married.

It is ironical that she hated working for a bank in Japan, but, in order to stay in
Britain, she chose to work for an overseas Japanese bank, which remained in or
emphasised the Japanese management system. Later, she gave up pursuing her
career after she had her second child. She once had an opportunity to be promoted,
but she chose to be 'a good mother' and remained a clerk. She told me that she had
lost her opportunity to further her career by her own decision. She expressed that
her independent and progressive life was valuable, but she now somehow regrets
her marriage:

> My second eldest sister has a very obedient character, and is a typical
> Japanese woman. She graduated from high school and prepared to be a bride,
> learning sewing, and then got married. If I look back now, those women are
> happier than I am. They need not work and they only look after their children
> and do the housework. In addition, they can maintain a good standard of
> living in Japan.

Like Sachiko, all interviewees who had come to Britain individually said that
they had not been able to fulfil themselves in Japan. Especially women over forty
thought that living in Japan had been unbearable and staying in London provided
them with some power. For some it was 'freedom' and for others it was a job
opportunity. Less pressure from their own parents and neighbourhood was another
reason for them to stay outside Japan. They had a clear idea that living in the West
had given them energy and power.

In contrast to these women's stories of their life and country, most males
described themselves in their life stories as inevitably Japanese. Mr Aoyama was
born in 1946. His father was a bureaucrat and his grandfather a landlord who lost
his property in the American Occupation Land Reform. Mr Aoyama had a much
better standard of living during his childhood than Sachiko. He went to a
competitive secondary school where most students went on to Tokyo University.
He said it was taken for granted that he would study at Tokyo University, since his
father and his uncles had all gone there. He then read Law and joined a government
owned bank. He was assigned to the head office as soon as he joined the bank, and
mainly had responsibility for contacts with the Ministry of Finance. Two years
before I interviewed him, he was suddenly assigned to the London branch to
examine what the market was like at that time. Because of his background he liked
to be sophisticated in his lifestyle and he denied that he was a typical Japanese. He
told about his sense of belonging to his nation as follows:

> I cannot say that I can locate myself midway between typical Japanese and typical British. I am still among the Japanese. However, if I used a magnifying glass and looked at the Japanese group I might not be at its centre. I can just say that among the Japanese I am not typical but a little bit of a different type. Anyway, the difference is not big.

Not only did he locate himself as Japanese but also he emphasised Japanese uniqueness.

> People in Japanese banks are a group who have a homogeneous culture. To put it in an extreme way, workers in Japanese companies work without any orders from above. The organisation is not an organisation which consists of people who work for their remuneration here and now. People do not work for their present interest, but for their long-term prospects; for example, if people think that it might be useful for their future or that it would be good to learn something, they are willing to do so. If I compare this with agriculture, we need both harvest and seeding and ploughing. The advantages of a Japanese corporation are that it can cover many aspects of activities within it. In this sense, there can be some stability of employment.

The story he repeated was that of the uniqueness of the Japanese system and culture. After I interviewed him I found that he had returned to Japan and been promoted to a higher position. The life story described by Mr Aoyama was a typical one among Japanese expatriates I interviewed in London, although there were slight differences between younger and older generations and between expatriates who had always worked abroad and those working mainly in head offices.

As these typical life stories narrated by men and women in their forties show, men and women talked about different collective selves in relation to their own country and the West. In other words, there were different stories of globalisation between the men's and women's narratives. We need to have reservations in that the differences were not essentially men's and women's stories and that they were not the same among all men and all women. There were gaps between stories by different generations and between those of people of different family backgrounds. Younger women I interviewed had a better educational background and did not have such extreme personal crises. The additional interviewees in Tokyo also had better backgrounds. For those of the younger generation, moving between cultures does not bring so much conflict, but rather enjoyable and flexible choices.

Identities seemed to be formed according to position in the original society. The younger generation talked less about conflict with identities between Japan and elsewhere outside. I therefore do not claim that all men and women describe the same story. Nevertheless, there are still tendencies in that women talked about the West as a land of new opportunities for them, and men talked about their

Japaneseness as a positive aspect.

GENDER, CULTURAL IDENTITY AND DIASPORA

The empirical research showed that gendered global movements of Japanese were strongly connected with their cultural identities. Cultural identities tend to be discussed as homogeneous within one culture, but identities are diversified within a community. Japanese men expressed hegemonic identities as being in the core position. Although wives and full-time female employees accepted such 'Japaneseness' in their life story, locally hired Japanese women thought that the only way to be free from hegemony was to go abroad where they could find another order. They held different images of the world and the 'self' from those of key male workers. Going abroad seemed to give the opportunity to reevaluate and adopt different identities.

The relationships of ethnicity and gender are complex. Men from different cultures compete against each other, and they therefore construct conflicting cultural identities. Women from different cultures tend to be in contrast to men and to themselves. Although all men and women within a cultural community are not at all homogeneous and there are significant diversities among them, women and men have constructed different images of a nation and the world, according to their positions in their own society. Japanese, without exception, have had diversified identities according to gender and class. Men may claim their cultural identity when they face other cultures, but women may not necessarily have the same sort of views on their own identity. Discussion on cultural identity based on male views could easily fall into the pitfall of cultural nationalism. It is necessary to emphasise that cultural identities are never homogeneous in Japanese society or in any other culture. From the life stories in my interviews, it can be said that there are differences between male and female Japanese identities.

Post-war Japan recovered from the damage after the Second World War by its construction of a highly gendered society, in other words, a strong ideology of family which provides women who have responsibility for family as wives, mothers and daughters as being inadequate workers for full-time positions. Most women have had to play dual roles keep the images of a respectable family, even though, in reality, women have much more responsibility for work and their communities. The statistics show that women between 30 to 34 quit their jobs for their responsibilities in child rearing [RŌDŌ-SHŌ, JOSEI KYOKU 1998]. This prevents companies from providing better working environments for women of that age. As a result, the limits in their own society have made Japanese women who want to pursue their careers in their thirties to look for by-paths for finding better opportunities. Going abroad seems to be a possibility for these women. Especially by entering the Western world it looked as if they could gain cultural power. In parallel with the expansion of the Japanese economy, women have found job opportunities abroad by working for Japanese overseas companies. In addition, the

high value of the yen made it possible for women to go abroad on their own savings after working for several years. In the case of Japanese women in London, despite the strong ideology of family in Japanese society, women move more freely than their images portray.

People who move between cultures swing between identities. When women move between Japan and the West the gap between cultures is bigger than for men, who are protected by the structure of Japanese society. These women construct their identities, and reconstruct them repeatedly. The barrier to entering another culture has made them return to nationalistic ideas of their own country, and on the other hand, living away from their own country has made them lose connections to their original country. Neither culture made them happy, but neither of them tied the women to one particular place. They are floating between cultures with uncertain feelings. There may be possibilities in their new places to create new identities. The strong gender-biased Japanese society eventually gave its women possibilities for creating new identities. They might overcome the barrier between Japan and elsewhere.

As Benedict Anderson points out, the nation is an 'imagined community' [ANDERSON 1991]. The Japanese who talked about their cultural identities expressed how they 'belonged to their nation' in different and varying ways. Men, at the core of Japanese society expressed how they think about their nation, and how they belong to the community. Their dominant stories of what the Japanese nation is have prevailed and been adopted in the West as a 'true' representation of Japan. On the other hand, women do not share the same story of the nation and the ways in which they belong to 'the nation'. The ongoing globalisation seems to provide new stories for men and women which do not represent the modern Japanese nation. In other words, globalisation is weakening the boundaries of nations. The Japanese diaspora has accelerated such a tendency, and Japanese men and women are moving towards the diaspora.

CONCLUSION

Globalisation is not only a phenomenon of economic change, but also the transformation of cultural identity. In the process of globalisation, on the one hand there have emerged 'cosmopolitans', but on the other hand, 'local identities' have been enhanced [HANNERZ 1989]. The expansion of the Japanese economy has not necessarily created 'cosmopolitan' identities, but rather defensive ethnic identities as a result of economic tension. However, such localised identities are not shared by women who are marginalised by Japanese cultural identities.

Cultural identities are recognised differently by men and women. The modern images of women who stay in the private sphere are of women who stay outside family, community and nation, by moving beyond the boundaries. Why has this happened? Despite the dominant representation and stories of Japanese society in which men of senior position occupy the core of authority, women live more freely,

seeking for more flexible images of 'self'. The main story that men are breadwinners and leading Japanese society is now being challenged by the presence of women who are living in the liminal space of cultures.

What is thereby meant by Japanese globalisation? This study has considered gendered cultural identities in the course of Japanese globalisation, and suggests that it would be beneficial to recognise that male identities are not necessarily representative of Japanese identities but that it would also be beneficial to create new ones which could include women of different roles in Japanese society. This would help communication between the Japanese and people outside Japan. Japanese globalisation should not be viewed only as an economic phenomenon or as a male representation of culture. It could be represented by new identities of women as free agents in the Japanese diaspora.

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