

Internationalist Goodwill Amidst the Shroud of Racialized History: Life Stories of Japanese Wives in Post-colonial Korea

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This paper explores racialized history - how racial factors were embedded in the historical context and influenced people's experiences - through the experiences of Japanese women who married Korean men in Japan during the 1930s and 1940s. While socially stigmatized, these marriages were ideologically supported by the Japanese Empire's desire to assimilate Korean colonial subjects, forming a unique context for examining the racialized history. Interracial unions arose from the demographic realities during the Second Sino-Japanese War when Japanese men left for the battlefield, and Korean men were brought to Japan for labor. As Japanese males became scarce, some Japanese women chose to marry Korean men, transcending racial boundaries in their emotional connections. Following the Pacific War, most Korean husbands returned to Korea, and many Japanese wives followed them to Korea, often against the will of their husbands. Despite the 1965 diplomatic normalization between Japan and Korea, over a thousand Japanese women stayed in Korea, often rejected by their Japanese families. These women faced poverty, family violence, and racial hostilities, sometimes pushed to commit suicide. Nevertheless, those who survived exhibited 'internationalist' goodwill, working to better their adopted home and promote peace between Japan and Korea. This paper delves into critical moments in these women's life histories, shedding light on the development of their 'internationalist' wishes in the context of racialized history.