

Yenjit Thinkham. 2009. *Cross-cultural Marriage of Thai Women with Japanese Men*.

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this thesis were 1) to study cross-cultural marriages of Thai women with Japanese men phenomenon and 2) to study transnational relationships of cross-cultural marriage couples. Key informants were 1) 20 Thai women who are married to Japanese men and 2) 16 Thai women's families. Research areas were located in the Northeast of Thailand, namely Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, Maha Sarakham and Buri Ram provinces; and located in Japan namely Kobe city in Hyogo province, Saku city in Nagano province and Kyoto city in Kyoto province. Qualitative research methods were used to collect and analyze the data. Data were collected by using interview and observation guide. The research found that

1) Cross-cultural marriages of Thai women with Japanese men

Cross-cultural marriage couples were varied in age, education level and occupation. The road that led to cross-cultural marriage started from meeting, courting and deciding to get married. Thai women met Japanese men both by chance and by match-making. Most of them made a decision to get married by themselves, with little influence from their family and kin.

Thai women decided to marry Japanese men based on economic and socio-cultural factors. Before getting married many cases of Thai women expected better economic status. After marriage they expected love and understanding from their husband more than economic concern.

Most cross-cultural marriage couples had official marriage registration and informal wedding. Cross-cultural marriage couples had three pattern of cohabitation after marrying, namely couples living together in Thailand (in villages and cities), couples living in Japan and couples living in different places. Most cross-cultural marriage couples shared their productive and reproductive roles. However cross-cultural marriage couples participated less in community management and political roles.

2) Transnational relationships of cross-cultural marriage

Cross-cultural marriage of Thai women with Japanese men could not destroy social network of Thai women and their family of orientation in Thailand. Thai women who lived in Japan maintained their social networks with their family of orientation in Thailand by various channels, including *telephone, electronic mail, mail and sending messages* through friends who visited Thailand. Many of them returned to Thailand occasionally. Sometime their family visited them in Japan.

Even though Thai women lived with their husband in Japan, they still considered themselves Thai and felt that their real home was Thailand. They also felt the obligation of a child's duty and gratitude towards their parents and family of orientation.

Thai women reproduced Thai culture in Japanese society in their daily lives in various ways, including Thai and northeastern Thai food cooking, making merit at Thai temple, organizing and participating in traditional ceremonies and events, dining at Thai restaurant, getting Thai massage services and consuming Thai product and Thai media.

Thai women who married Japanese men and lived in Japan tended to develop social network with Thai women who lived nearby. As such, Thai women married to Japanese men constructed transnational communities, by creating and maintaining social relationship with other Thai women and Thai people in Japan and with families, kins and friends in Thailand.

