

Interracial Marriages In Asian Countries

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Abstract: This study focuses on the analysis of interethnic marriages in four Asian countries: China, South Korea, Japan, and India. The unique historical, cultural, and demographic characteristics of these countries allow us to identify both general trends and specific manifestations of this social phenomenon. The study explores the historical origins, cultural, and social aspects of interethnic marriages, as well as the impact of globalization on interethnic relations in the Asian region.

Keywords: Marriage, family, caste, demographics, nation, ideology, politics, population, religion, and migration.

Introduction: Interethnic marriages in Asian countries represent a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon that reflects the historical, cultural, and economic ties among the peoples of the region. Asia, as the most populous and ethnoculturally diverse continent, has always been a space of active interethnic interactions. It is home to hundreds of ethnic groups speaking dozens of languages and practicing various religions from Buddhism and Hinduism to Islam and Confucianism.

Interethnic marriages serve as a kind of mirror reflecting the processes of globalization, migration, modernization, and cultural adaptation. They demonstrate how traditional Asian societies are gradually integrating into the modern world while preserving elements of their own identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of interethnic unions in Asian nations has been the subject of extensive investigation in recent decades across the disciplines of sociology, cultural studies, and anthropology. Academic literature underscores that these unions symbolize not merely the autonomous decisions of individuals but also embody significant social, cultural, and historical dynamics (Li, 2018; Kim, 2021).

Numerous scholars assert that interethnic matrimonial unions possess deep-rooted historical significance and have traditionally functioned as pivotal mechanisms for political and dynastic alliances. Historical analyses reveal that in China, unions between individuals from disparate ethnic groups were employed as instruments

of diplomacy and conflict resolution as early as the Tang dynasty (Zhang, 2020). Contemporary research suggests that China, characterized as a multiethnic nation, continues to exhibit a propensity for interethnic marriages, particularly in border and coastal regions where migration and economic interactions are notably vigorous (Wang, 2022).

Significant emphasis in scholarly literature is placed upon India, nation renowned for its remarkable ethnic and religious heterogeneity. As noted by researchers (Patel, 2019; Kumar, 2021), interethnic and interreligious matrimonial unions in India are intricately intertwined with the caste system and religious impediments. Notwithstanding the constitutional affirmation of equality among citizens, prevailing social norms and familial as well as religious community pressures frequently curtail the autonomy of marital selection. (Rao, 2023). Studies devoted to Japan and South Korea note that the process of recognizing interethnic marriages began relatively recently. In Japan, traditionally considered an ethnically homogeneous country, intercultural marriages began to spread actively in the 1980s (Sato, 2022). Modern sociological surveys record growing tolerance among young people, especially in large cities, although traditional views on the "purity of the nation" still persist in rural areas (Tanaka, 2023).

In South Korea, according to Kim (2020) and Lee (2023), the increase in interethnic marriages is associated with economic migration and demographic changes in rural areas. The government actively supports foreigners marrying Korean citizens through programs for

linguistic and cultural adaptation. Despite some factual challenges like discrimination, cultural barriers, and bureaucratic difficulties, these unions are becoming increasingly common and socially acceptable.

An analysis of academic sources shows that interethnic marriages in Asian countries are an important indicator of sociocultural transformation. They reflect the influence of globalization, migration processes, and changes in traditional values. Contemporary research emphasizes the dual nature of this phenomenon: on the one hand, it promotes intercultural dialogue and tolerance; on the other, it reveals the persistence of traditional ideas about ethnic identity and family norms.

METHODS

The article employs commonly accepted sociological methods such as interviews, observation, surveys, as well as archival and statistical documents related to these countries. It is based on generally recognized scientific approaches comparative-logical and historical analysis, consistency, objectivity, and a dialectical approach to social phenomena, also utilizes case study and role-playing methods.

RESULTS

Historically, interethnic marriages on the Asian continent have played an important role in forming alliances between tribes, states, and dynasties. For instance, in China, marriages between Han Chinese and Mongols, Tibetans, Uyghurs, or Manchus were often used as political instruments to strengthen peace. As early as the Tang dynasty (7th–9th centuries), the imperial court encouraged unions between Chinese princesses and rulers of neighboring nomadic peoples of Central Asia. China remains one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, officially recognizing 56 ethnic groups. Although Han Chinese make up more than 90% of the population, interethnic marriages between Han and national minorities (such as Uyghurs, Zhuangs, Tibetans, and Hui) are quite common, especially in western and southern regions. In India, inter-caste and interreligious marriages were long considered taboo. However, the period of British colonialism brought changes: the first unions between Indians and Europeans appeared, and in the 20th century, industrialization and urbanization accelerated this trend.

In Japan and Korea, interethnic marriages began to spread actively only after World War II, when foreign workers, students, and military personnel started arriving. Thus, while the historical roots of interethnic marriages in Asia go back centuries, their modern forms are products of globalization, migration, and economic exchange. Since the beginning of

the 21st century, marriages with foreigners have also become part of China's social reality. They are most common in coastal cities such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Shanghai, where large numbers of migrants from Southeast Asia and Africa reside. According to official statistics, by 2020, more than 700,000 interethnic marriages had been registered in China. However, public attitudes remain ambivalent: while the state does not restrict such unions, traditional culture and family expectations can create challenges for couples, often due to linguistic, religious, and lifestyle differences.

South Korea, long considered an ethnically homogeneous nation, has undergone significant change since the early 2000s. As the economy became dependent on foreign labor, rural men began marrying women from Vietnam, China, the Philippines, and Thailand. According to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of the Republic of Korea, by 2023 every tenth marriage in the country was interethnic. The government has implemented adaptation programs for foreign spouses, including free language courses, health insurance, and cultural integration counseling. Despite ongoing challenges discrimination, bureaucratic barriers, and cultural differences interethnic marriages are increasingly viewed as a normal and accepted part of South Korean society. Japan has traditionally been regarded as one of the most ethnically homogeneous and closed societies in the world. However, since the 1980s, with the expansion of international contacts, the number of interethnic marriages has steadily increased. The most common unions occur between Japanese citizens and nationals of China, the Philippines, South Korea, and the United States. According to Japan's Ministry of Justice, about 5% of all marriages registered in 2022 were interethnic. Foreign women are more likely to marry Japanese men than the reverse, which can be explained by gender roles and cultural patterns. Despite growing tolerance, Japanese society still approaches mixed marriages with caution. In smaller cities and rural areas, traditional notions of "national purity" remain strong. Nevertheless, the younger generation demonstrates an increasingly open attitude toward cultural diversity.

India, in contrast, is a country of vast ethnic and religious diversity, home to more than 2,000 ethnic groups and dozens of religious communities. Interethnic marriages in India are closely intertwined with issues of caste and religion. Although the Constitution of India guarantees equality of all citizens, traditional norms and family expectations often restrict individual freedom in choosing a marriage partner.

Marriages between representatives of different religions. For instance, between Hindus and Muslims can provoke social tensions and even acts of violence.

However, in urban centers and among the educated youth, interethnic and interreligious marriages are becoming increasingly common. In megacities such as Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore, globalization and digital communication are gradually erasing cultural boundaries. Such marriages foster intercultural dialogue, promote tolerance, and reduce ethnic prejudice. They serve as bridges between different cultures and faiths, broadening social and familial perceptions.

At the same time, these processes are not uniform across Asia. While large cities are becoming centers of multiculturalism, rural areas often retain conservative traditions. Couples in interethnic marriages frequently face social pressure, legal constraints, and the need to adapt to differing cultural norms.

CONCLUSION

Interethnic marriages in Asian countries are an indicator of how traditional societies are learning to live in a globalized world. It demonstrates the gradual weakening of ethnic and religious barriers, as well as the growing mutual understanding among peoples. Despite existing challenges like social pressure, language differences, and cultural conflicts, interethnic marriages are becoming an increasingly natural part of modern life. For Asia, a region that is home to half of the world's population, this process is of particular importance: it reflects a movement from isolation to interaction, from prejudice to mutual respect.

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