

“War Brides” in Australia: Japanese Female Marriage Migrants After the Pacific War

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Abstract:

On August 31, 2025 in Australia, thousands of Australians took part in anti-immigration protests, and clashes broke out between anti-immigration protesters and counter-protesters in parts of Australia. Tom Bennett, a Senior Journalist at BBC News, reported that “The March for Australia, one of the most famous anti-immigration groups in Australia, says “mass migration has torn at the bonds that held our communities together.” As the incident illustrates, anti-immigration sentiment is becoming more widespread in Australia currently, even though Australia is regarded as a multi-ethnic country.” In addition to Australia, Japan faces challenges related to immigration issues at present. Such conflicts over immigration are not only contemporary problems but have also existed in the past. In particular, Australia has a history of systematically excluding Asian immigrants through the White Australia Policy, which lasted from the late nineteenth century until mid-twentieth century.

However, Australia and Japan share deep historical connections regarding immigration. This is exemplified by the phenomenon of war brides: Japanese women who married Australian servicemen stationed in Japan during and after World War II (Tamura, 2016). The majority of these women migrated to Australia with their Australian servicemen husbands. Until 1952, approximately 650 Japanese women migrated to Australia as war brides (Tamura, 2003). Various factors enabled these Japanese women to enter Australia as war brides despite the White Australia Policy. This study employs an historical approach to examine the three key factors: first, the policies enacted by the Australian military headquarters were unable to effectively restrict encounters between Japanese women and Australian servicemen; second, the prevailing social norms embedded in a Confucius patriarchal context of Japan strongly emphasized marriage as an expected and ideal path for women to follow; and third, stereotypes portraying Japanese women as shy and submissive made them appear non-threatening to Australians and easily assimilable into Australian society.

Keywords:

Marriage migrants, patriarchal society, Australian migration policy, assimilation, gender, race.