

“Tanpopo” : Personal international narratives of Japanese women living in Spain

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This paper¹ is about my current research into the immigration and cultural experiences of Japanese women living in Spain who are married to Spanish men.

It deals with the immigration of women, individually and through marriage, associated with the opportunity for a meeting of cultures, which has resulted in the internationalization of the Japanese economy and culture, and an increase in Japanese presence in the world since the eighties.

Furthermore, Japanese immigration in Europe has barely, or only partially, been studied up to now, and as far as Spain is concerned there are very few geographical or social science studies which focus specifically on the economic presence of Japan : the investments of Japanese companies and their situation in Spain, the organization of Japanese companies, production management, labor relations between the Japanese and Spanish. There are even fewer studies on Japan's human presence and these are based on the statistical information on immigration published by the Spanish government. The results are often a statistical overview-a general and impersonal picture of the phenomenon-and do not focus on the individuality of the people or their personal reasons, desires, and aspirations to emigrate.

I believe that the lack of research and the preference for objective statistical analysis is due to the difficulty in using more humanistic and subjective approaches which seek to understand the decisions taken by immigrants

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about the act of emigrating or the cultural experience in the country of destination. In studying Japanese immigrants as a whole, the main obstacle would be the difficult physical accessibility (in Spain they have often been referred to as the “invisible community”) and, in particular, the difficult linguistic accessibility. Consider, for example, the difficulty of using qualitative methods, such as reading their written narratives, in-depth interviewing, or building life-stories without having a good command of the Japanese language, which is definitely how they best express themselves.

In doing this research I, therefore, aim to fill this double academic gap in terms of subject and approach, and to focus on the immigration of Japanese women and their settlement in Spain through marriage and love. I will use a humanistic approach in order to reach a subjective understanding of the immigration and cultural experience of the women who belong to the Tanpopo association “Tanpopo-no-kai” in Spain.

I used qualitative methods in my research, and focused on analyzing the written narratives of the members of the Tanpopo association, which have been published in the Tanpopo-Tsūshin association bulletin over the last thirteen years (1995-2007). I also found additional information to that in the bulletin by e-mailing the current president of the association, Izumi KANDO.

First of all, I will explain what the Tanpopo association is. Tanpopo-no-kai was formed in Spain in 1994 by four Japanese women, born and educated in Japan, who married Spanish men and who live in four very different Spanish provinces. The initial aim of the association was to promote friendship and the exchange of information between members of the Japanese community living in Spain about the cohabitation problems of intercultural couples, the multicultural education of children (Hispanic-Japanese), and other problems. The association officially registered as Tanpopo in 1999, as a non-profit association for Hispanic-Japanese families and Japanese people living in Spain, and it became the first and only association of this kind within Spain. (*Figure 1*)

Year	Key Events
1994	Group formation
1995	Tanpopo Bulletin Newsletter
1996	Circulating notebooks (3)
1997	Childcare notebook Barcelona Playroom (1st group)
1998	Website
1999	Official registration (non profit organization “Sociedad Tanpopo”)
2002	Barcelona Playroom (2nd group)
2005	10th anniversary commemorative activities

Figure 1. Chronology of key events in the development of the Tanpopo Association .

The association had the maximum number of members in 2001 (46 members). This number has been decreasing and there are currently 34 members, including a man married to a Spanish woman. The ages range from 34 to 78 years (the average being 42 years).

Aside from the bulletin Tanpopo-Tsūshin analyzed in this paper, the association publishes a newsletter containing news and announcements, and it has circulated to the members up to four types of notebooks : the “national edition”, “Barcelona edition”, “edition for the other regions (Madrid, the Basque Country, Andalusia etc)” and the “childcare notebook”. These are distributed among the members of each region, and are edited and written in Japanese entirely by members of the association and other potential contributors. A website was also set up in 1998 ; however, this has not been updated since 2003.

Tanpopo-Tsūshin is at the center of the association’s activities, and is the meeting point for all members. It has been published regularly every three months without fail since January 1995. It is written entirely in Japanese, on A4 paper, in black and white, and is distributed by conventional mail. In Tanpopo-Tsūshin, women write about their experiences as immigrants and foreigners living in Spain married to Spaniards, and as shapers of multicultural families and mothers of international children. They write about their individual perceptions of Spanish society, and the internal tensions and conflicts of daily life in a country such as Spain that is so different to their own. It is basically a publication by and for members of the Tanpopo association. (*Figure 2*)

For thirteen years the bulletin has been split up into sections, some of which have remained and others which have not, and new sections have also appeared which reflect the interests of the editors of the time. Throughout the thirteen years the format has remained the same ; each issue is devoted to a single subject on which two or more members will write, and also includes other sections, such as : interviews with members and contributors, cooking, childcare and education, surveys, free talk, yoga, opinions, and a section for free-style editing which is rotated between the members. Although not a section in its own right, the bulletin also includes adaptations of traditional Japanese stories for children, and reports of activities and news. (*Figure 3*)

The subjects dealt with until now have included : international marriage, the formation of your new bicultural identity, Japanese education of children, daily life in Spain, Spanish cultural shows, the Spanish language, Spanish eating habits, television programs, the culture of Japanese “manga” (comics), medical treatment in Japan and Spain, among others. Although the majority of the women are Buddhist or Shintoist, they do not consider the issue of living in a traditionally Catholic country such as Spain to be a significant enough internal conflict to be treated as a single subject (this is clearly a reflection of Japanese religious tolerance). They do not express opinions on Spanish (or Japanese) politics, or give reviews of Spanish literature, even though many of the women know Spanish, and even other Spanish mainland languages, such as Catalan. However, they do express their preoccupations and criticisms on the education of their children within the Spanish education system (“not structured enough”, “long summer vacations”), or on family relations (“too big”, “too many long reunions”).

However, there have been some changes to the format and content of the bulletin over the thirteen years, which is a sign of not only technological progression, but also a development in how the association defines itself.



tanpopo No.50

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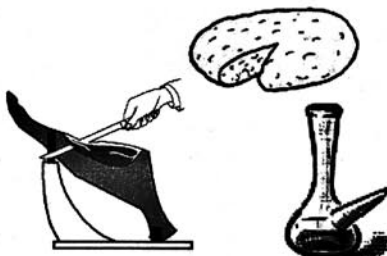
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Tanpopo es una asociación sin ánimo de lucro para familias Hispano-Japonesas y Japonesas residentes en España

■今回のテーマ

スペインあれこれ…



あれから10年、これから10年

ナがいたわけです。 ああ、なんてお手軽な話でしょう。

ウエスカ 三田貴広

日本を出てから、この夏でちょうど十年になります。ブリュッセルの音楽院に数年の留学のつもりでしたが、このまま、日本に帰らないこともあるかな、とは思っていました。でもまさか、スペインに暮らすことになるとは、まったく予想外のことでした。

アパートマンがひしめく都会で、ピアノを弾けるところは限られていて、結局楽器屋が経営している、音楽院の学生専門のアパートに落ち着きました。その階上にスペインからの留学生、エレ

それで、次の年の夏休みに彼女の実家に行くことになりました。バルセロナからウエスカ行きのバスに乗ってしばらくすると、どんどん緑がなくなって、乾いた大地が延々と続くようになりました。まるで、西部劇の映画のような荒涼とした景色に一体どこに連れて行かれるのか、不安になってきました。雑草でも雑木林でも、放っておいたら緑になる土地しか知らない身にとって、スペインは、まるでアフリカに来たかのような印象を与えました。実際、その後アフ

(2 ページに続く)

Figure 3. Tanpopo Bulletin (*Tanpopo tsûshin*) no.50, p.1, 2007.

The bulletin has evolved from a typical Japanese-style bulletin : where the bulletin opens from left to right and the writing is vertical from right to left, to a western presentation which opens from right to left and the writing is horizontal from left to right. The size of the characters have been increased twice, whilst the number of pages (around 16 now) have been increased to 24 during 2004, and have been decreased afterwards, although the edited text is reduced and is split up into two columns per page. The number of illustrations has increased, particularly the digital illustrations.

There has been a reduction in the number of articles in the bulletin, which now places more and more importance on the topic of children’s education. It has launched new sections, such as “Parent’s and Children’s Corner” and “Barcelona Playroom”, which teach Japanese to children until they start primary school.

The evolution of the activities of the Tanpopo association towards a greater emphasis on the transmission of the Japanese language and culture to children, and its publication in the bulletin, was a result of the interest, efforts and perseverance of the members of the Barcelona area, who expanded the network of members around Barcelona and, who have occupied senior posts in the association over the last seven years. On the other hand, there is a certain regionalization about the association, which has resulted in a loss of members in other Spanish regions. (*Figure 4 and 5*) Members of the Barcelona area clearly show their interest for maintaining their original cultural and traditional identity, and the collective desire to transfer their Japanese roots onto their children. In the absence of Japanese relations nearby, it will be the other members of the association who will provide ongoing help and cooperation to promote the children’s interculturality in Spain. (*Figure 6 and 7*)

The narratives of Tanpopo-Tsūshin, therefore, discover the issues that most preoccupy Japanese female immigrants through marriage in Spain. It is important to study this in order to find help and cooperation strategies aimed at easing or overcoming common problems, particularly in relation to child-

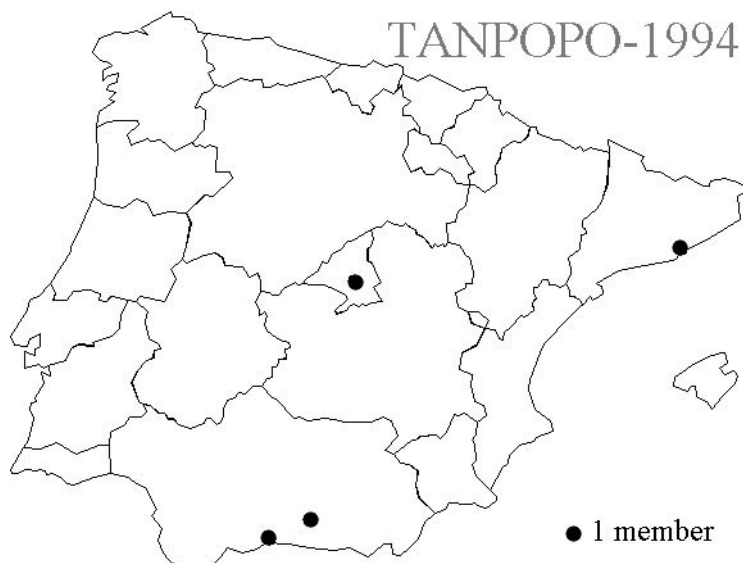


Figure 4. Distribution map of members of the Tanpopo Association in 1994.

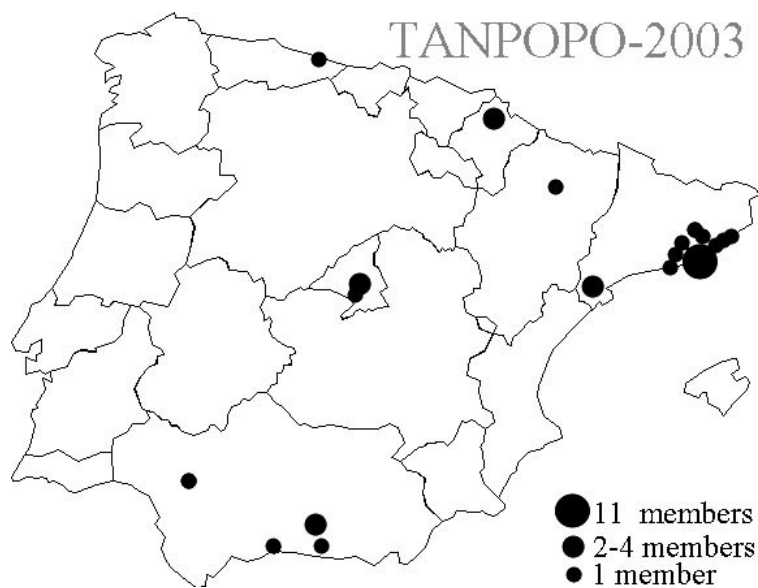


Figure 5. Distribution map of members of the Tanpopo Association in 2003.

たんぽぽ10周年記念企画、サロンコンサート
28-5-2005 会場: 菅藤宅




サロンで、気軽に素敵な音楽♪

心地良〜い気分〜

ピアノソロ: 三田 貴広
 スカルラッチェィ ソナタK.380
 モーツァルト ロンドニ長調
 ショパン 練習曲よりOp.10-3「別れ」

バイオリンとピアノ: Vn ラリッサ・シャロミ P. 菅藤 泉
 アルミタージュ ホップ・スコッチ
 ジョップリン シンコペーション
 菅藤 泉 バレエ曲“Eurasia”より
 「どろりゃんせ」実奏曲
 「朧月夜」実奏サン・サンス風
 モンテイ チャルダッシュ（ハンガリーダンス曲）

ピアノソロ: 三田 貴広
 ショパン 練習曲よりOp.10-6「黒鍵」
 Op.10-12「革命」
 グラナドス エル・ペレーレ
 ファリャ 火祭りの踊り




EUROASIA



イチョーキーはDOカーンと手作!

サロンコンサートの後、お家で
ティーパーティー。
楽しいだんらんの一時を
過ごしました。

7

Figure 6. Tanpopo memorial number (*Tanpopo kinen*), p.7, 2005.

たんぽぽ10周年、記念イベントⅡ《楽焼き作陶会》

2005年11月12日 Can Julia



慎重に作り方の指導を受けました。

完成作品です！



まずは、上軸がけ。
みんな自分のお茶碗作って、
ご機嫌です！



窯の温度が1000℃に達した所で火が弱えて、窯が空きます。
中から、真っ赤に焼けた、お茶碗が轆をのぞきました金バザミで、
慎重に取り出して、冷めます。 部屋の明かりを消すと、
取り出したばかりのお茶碗が赤く輝いて、パチン パチン パチン
と音を響かせていました。



Figure 7. Tanpopo memorial number (*Tanpopo kinen*), p.8, 2005.

care. Therefore, through the work of the association and the formation of voluntary aid networks at a Spanish national level, and through highly effective organization, they in turn will form their own way of incorporation into Spanish society.

要約

スペイン在住日本人女性の 個人的で国際的な語り —「たんぽぽ通信」—

ロサリア・アビラ・タピエス

近年の日本における経済および文化の国際化の流れ中で、ヨーロッパに居住する日本人人口が増加した。この現象は計量的な分析はされているが、質的分析があまり行われていない。そこで主観的な観点から国際結婚をしてスペインに在住する日本人女性の移住的かつ文化的体験について検討する。スペイン在住の日本人女性が作った社会ネットワークである「たんぽぽの会」とその会報である「たんぽぽ通信」(1995-2007) 50冊の記述をもとに質的分析を試みる。「たんぽぽ通信」の目的は交流・情報交換であり、スペインで暮らすなかでの様々な苦勞や不安、子供の教育(日本語の教育を含め)などが述べられている。『出会いの場』、『自己表現の場』、『情報交換の場』としての機能が当会の活動の中心的位置を占めている。年4回発行の会報であり、会員はスペイン全国に分散しているが、近年、「たんぽぽの会」の局地化(リージョナリゼーション)が目立つ。この会報を分析することによって、国際結婚した日本人移住者の社会ネットワーク組織の本質と発達過程に関する知識を深め、移住先での異文化との接触により発生する問題や摩擦と文化価値観の変化過程を知ることが出来る。

謝辞

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