

# *Study on the Changes of Japanese Women's Views on Marriage and Love in the Process of Time*

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**Keywords:** Japanese women, View of marriage and love, Family status, Social status, Aging population, Declining birthrate

**Abstract:** Traditional Japanese women in the old days regarded marriage as their happy home and lifelong career, and believed that marriage could improve their economic level and social status. However, with the recent awakening of women's consciousness and the improvement of women's economic and social status, Japanese women's views on marriage and love have undergone great changes compared with the past. This change has directly led to many social problems, such as declining birthrate and aging. Studying the causes and effects of changes in Japanese women's views on marriage and love is of great significance to understanding Japanese society.

## **1. Introduction**

In the old days, Japanese women left the world with the image of a good wife and mother who endured humiliation and respected. Traditional marriage believes that: the male college should be married, and the female college should be married; in the past, women regarded marriage as their happy home and lifelong career, and believed that marriage could improve their economic level and social status. However, the traditional Japanese view of marriage has been greatly impacted recently. With the awakening of women's consciousness and the improvement of women's economic and social status, contemporary Japanese women's views on marriage have also undergone tremendous changes. The changes in Japanese women's views on marriage and love are the direct cause of the aging population and declining birth rate in Japan. The study of the changes and causes of Japanese women's views on marriage and love is of great significance for understanding Japanese society.

## **2. Japanese Women's Traditional View of Marriage and Love**

### **2.1 Primitive Wife Visiting System-The Age of Feminism**

In a primitive society where wealth is relatively evenly distributed, there is no material basis for determining the difference between men and women. Women have considerable labor in farming and salt production, so ancient Japanese women have a high social status. Until the end of ancient society, Japanese women did not fall into a low position of being completely subordinate to men. This is probably because the old system of primitive society has been retained for a long time and has not disappeared. The family structure at that time belonged to the matrilineal system centered

on the mother-child relationship. It is generally believed that wife-visiting marriage, which was widely popular in ancient society, reflects the legacy of this matrilineal system.

Since the early days of ancient society, although the inheritance of political rulers has been patrilineal, the principle of marriage is still in the form of wife-visiting from the husband to the wife's house. Therefore, the habit of similar matrilineal inheritance is also popular: mother and child live together, but father and son live differently.

Both men and women have the right to inherit, but the house is passed from mother to daughter. Husbands and wives build houses for themselves, and their new homes are often credited to their wives. Property not only increases a woman's chances of winning a good marriage, but also provides an important guarantee for her and her children.

After entering the law and order society, with the spread of Chinese culture, the family morality of patriarchal paternalism also appeared in Japanese law and order. But at this time, the marriage of married women has not yet become popular, and the marriage of visiting wives is still popular, so it is unrealistic to maintain this kind of morality. The relationship between men and women has always been extremely open, and marriage does not necessarily require the consent of the elders. Although there are restrictions on marriage before marriage, the stipulation that even if they are not guilty, they must be forced to separate. In the end, it is just a dead letter in the law. Nothing to do with reality.

## **2.2 During the Heian Period-Women are Becoming More Passive**

During the peace period, men seeking pleasure must abide by certain rules. After finding a favorite woman, or a friend or matchmaker mentions a possible relationship, the man will first send a poem to the woman to express his interest. The woman's reply was carefully evaluated. Although long and beautiful hair is regarded as an important sign of appearance, women's calligraphy and writing are the first to attract men's love. If both men and women have ideas for further interaction, the man is ready to visit. The meeting took place behind the woman's account and lasted from night to early morning.

Although the relationship between husbands and wives between the nobles during the Heian Period could be established based on feelings, marriage arrangements were more typical. The bridegroom's family will choose a bride that is right for him. For children of the emperor, the royal family chooses the marriage partner. When the princes held their crown ceremonies, they were often served by the minister's daughter. And this minister will become his backstage and protector. In this case, the status, political future, and economic strength of the other party's family become very important.

Just as the Fujiwara family obtained rights by marrying their daughters to the imperial family, the noble men in the capital can also pursue wealth, fame, and political interests through their marriage alliances. The bride may bring a huge amount of dowry, and the father-in-law also often plays an important role in the political career of his son-in-law.

During the Heian period, aristocratic women were different from ancient women who were the main bearers of productive labor. They did not have this social function. Apart from being the objects of men's courtship, they had very little reason for their existence, which made their social status vulnerable. And a man can stop going to his lover's house at any time to find a new love, so the separated lover is more worried about the husband's love going or staying than the cohabiting wife. Even if he is a regular wife, she is always worried that her son will not get the right of inheritance.

## 2.3 Marriage with Daughters-Women's Powerless State in Marriage and Love

After the Muromachi period, the status of women continued to decline, and reached the extreme after entering the Edo period. At this time, the wife-visiting marriage, which had been reserved for a long time in family life, ended, and the marriage with a daughter-in-law began.

The samurai class implemented couples living together earlier, that is, marrying women. Even so, at the beginning of the samurai, the fair distribution of inheritance between men and women continued, and women had the right to be allocated to the territory. However, women were at a disadvantage from the beginning, and the transition from distributive inheritance to independent inheritance established a monopoly where only one man inherited all the territories. Women were completely powerless, resulting in unequal conditions between men and women.

The wives of the samurai who lived with her husband by marrying a daughter began to develop a sense of chastity and a sense of housewife responsibility. The wife under the marry-to-daughter marriage system suffers from the oppression of her husband's family. The husband's indulgence is tolerated, and sometimes even encouraged, while the wife is obliged to keep the festival for her husband. Polygamy is recognized, and the status of concubines is stipulated outside the main room. Concubines must abide by the obligation of chastity, but they are different from polygamy in ancient times. Concubines are despised and their status is as humble as a servant.

Even so, the Japanese way of communicating with men and women since ancient times did not die out. This has a lot to do with the merchant culture that flourished in the Edo period.

Merchant culture exudes anti-human and hypocritical class ethics against the ruling class, and strongly exudes the spirit of pursuing equality and freedom. It has a healthy side to the public, and at the same time it inevitably shows a strong hedonic tendency. Although merchants used wealth to improve their social status, they took the samurai class as their main customers, parasitic on the feudal system. Once the samurai exercises power, the merchant is completely at a disadvantage. In order to give full play to the power of wealth, they often choose to spend a lot of money in Huajie Liuxiang. From another perspective, it can also be said that the people of feudal society resisted the social order-this is also an important cause of the prostitution culture in Japan now.

## 3. Changes in Modern Japanese Women's Views on Marriage and Love

### 3.1 Spouse Selection View

In the traditional view of choosing a spouse, Japanese women put forward the "three highs" requirements for men, that is, high education, high income, and tall stature. These three highs are actually related to the external aptitude of men. However, the current trend of Japanese women's choice of spouse seems to be surging in the direction of "three lows". The so-called "three lows" are definitely not "low education", "low income" or "low body length", but "low posture", "low risk" and "low dependence".

"Low posture" refers to men's respect for women; "low risk" means that men must have a stable job, that is, to have a stable income; "low dependence" means that men will not treat women too much after marriage Respect the other party's life and leave private space for the other party.

The changes in modern women's marriage thoughts also have the effect of the changing factors of men's living conditions. In the Japanese society in the past, men were basically able to get a salary to feed a family after working for a few years. However, the closeness between salary and length of service is not as close as before. Feeding a family has become a problem, and late marriages and declining birth rates have emerged. Or the changes in women's mate selection can also reflect women's understanding of men.

The transition from "three highs" to "three lows" is a change in women's requirements for men

from the outside to the inside. To a certain extent, it reflects the maturity of Japanese women's mate selection, and it is also a new understanding and grasp of happiness.

### **3.2 Views on Marriage Life**

With the changes of the times and the progress of society, the contemporary Japanese view of marriage has undergone great changes. The way of marriage has changed from love marriage, blind marriage, international marriage, de facto marriage without formalities, and separation marriage where the two parties do not affect each other's work and life, to the "contracted couples" that are emerging in big cities. Japan can be seen from this. The economic recession and the increase in work pressure have had a huge impact on Japanese people's view of marriage, changed the traditional Japanese marriage method, and had a great impact on Japanese family life.

In the old days, Japanese women regarded marriage as the end of their lives and worked hard for it all their lives. Even if their relationship broke down, they would never divorce lightly and endure it for the sake of their children or family members. However, with the transformation of women's values and views on marriage, more and more women have begun to pursue the quality of life and respect their inner emotions. Once there are irreparable rifts in their relationships, they desire freedom and give themselves a chance to choose again. Paying attention to the essence of marriage, unwilling to "make up" a lifetime in an unfortunate marriage, so a wave of divorce emerges.

## **4. Reasons for Changes in Japanese Women's Views on Marriage and Love**

### **4.1 Reasons why Japanese Women Choose to Marry Late or Be Single**

More and more Japanese women are willing to start working on an equal basis with men after receiving higher education. Once a Japanese woman gets married, she has to give up the job she had before marriage and become a full-time wife at home because she has to do housework and take good care of her children. When the child is older and then joins the work, it is difficult to find a job comparable to the past, and can only do some short-term temporary workers or men's auxiliary work. Therefore, women who consider late marriage or celibacy for work are much larger than in the past. Increase. Second, with the development of the times, many Japanese women believe that marriage is not a lifelong goal for women, and more women are pursuing personal relaxation and superior quality of life. Among them, the so-called "parasitic singles" appeared. They are all only children and live in their parents' homes, but spend a lot of money outside and enjoy the free life when they are single. Of course, the responsibilities and burdens of supporting each other and supporting the family after marriage will also make them reluctant to get involved in marriage.

### **4.2 Reasons why Japanese Women Choose to Balance Career and Family**

#### **(1) Changes in lifestyle**

Before World War II, the Japanese family system was mainly based on a large family system with three generations under one roof. However, after the Second World War, especially after entering the 1960s, with the rapid economic growth of Japanese society, a large number of rural people flocked to the cities, and the traditional big family gradually disintegrated, and gradually formed a "nuclear family consisting of husband and wife and only child." "In such a modern family, women gradually no longer only play the role of housewives. At the same time, the number of children has decreased and the housework has become more rationalized. This has led to an astonishing increase in the average life expectancy of Japanese women. All these reasons Housewives have a lot of free time that they have never had before.

(2) The economic downturn and the high cost of children's education

Someone has calculated that the cost of a Japanese child from birth to university graduation is 29.85 million yen (approximately 1.95 million yuan). If you go to a private university, the cost will be higher. In addition, the prolonged economic downturn has increased the economic burden of ordinary Japanese families and forced some housewives to return to work. Because it is necessary to choose a balance between career and family, coupled with the small housing area, many families choose not to have or have fewer children in order to reduce the burden on the economy and the family.

(3) Women's rights have been protected to a certain extent.

In order to protect the rights and interests of women, the Japanese government has issued a series of policies and regulations that are conducive to women's employment. The promulgation of these laws and policies has given women and men the same labor opportunities, protected women's human rights, and provided practical protection for Japanese women to go out to work. However, as a Japanese company based on a lifetime employment system, it is difficult to treat them equally. There is still a big inequality with men in terms of salary, promotion, and welfare.

### 4.3 reasons why Japanese Women Choose "DINK" life

In Japanese "DINK" families, usually both couples are well-educated and have good jobs. Both spouses focus on careers and are unwilling to be distracted by having children. "DINK" families are generally financially affluent, and both spouses can enjoy life better. In addition, Japan's perfect social security system makes it unnecessary for people to "raise children to prevent old age". This is also an important reason for the increase in the number of young Japanese couples joining the ranks of "DINK" families.

The "DINK" family is recognized by more and more Japanese, and the changes in the concept of marriage, love, family, and fertility have played a significant role. Like the "nuclear family" and the "single-parent family", the "DINK" family is also a manifestation of the diversity of family structures. The change of concept makes whether to have a child is completely a matter for both parties, instead of being interfered by the surrounding relatives and friends as in the past.

## 5. Conclusion

In recent years, Japan has been experiencing a prolonged economic downturn, and at the same time, various social problems have emerged in endlessly. In this series of so-called "Japanese diseases", the problems of "fewer births" and "aging" are the most prominent. The lack of labor force and talents in the science and technology industry will become the biggest problem that will plague Japan for a long time. Japan's population problem is bound to have a serious impact on Japan's overall national strength, industrial competitiveness, and science and technology talents in the future.

Women's issues have become the deepest social issue in Japan, which will directly affect the trend and development of society. Therefore, it is impossible to truly understand Japanese society without understanding the profound changes in Japanese women's attitudes towards marriage, love, and family.

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