SHIFTING MULTIPLE MASCULINITIES

Alternative views from Japan and Papua New Guinea

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Introduction: globalization and the ‘crisis’ among men

Today’s globalizing world has brought hegemonic masculinity to the fore in diplomacy, as seen in exclusionary nationalist fervour in the US and Europe, as well as Japan and China. Such developments call for an earnest consideration of masculinity. As globalization continues, men and masculinities are undergoing major changes in the Global North and South (Chant and Gutmann 2000; Kimmel 2003, 2013). Global capitalism in the post-Fordist era has given rise to the feminization of labour, thereby diminishing men’s identities as breadwinners. The proliferation of non-regular employment has led to declining upward social mobility, loss of status and declining social power (Kumagai 2012). The recent literature explores how such conditions have been behind a crisis in masculinity and men, as well as swelling radical movements built on masculinist politics of xenophobia, White supremacy and terrorism (Kimmel 2003, 605). Such movements deploy masculinity as a form of symbolic capital and restore a safe space for men in crisis, where they may perceive themselves as thriving and in power (Kumagai 2012). Current changes, along with renewed attention to masculinity, beg the question of whether a crisis is truly occurring. In this chapter, I argue that while recent shifts have, indeed, led to increased tension in models of hegemonic masculinity, they have also opened spaces for alternative masculinities to emerge.

Changes in men and masculinities vary by place, culture and society. Masculinity is temporally and geographically contingent (Berg and Longhurst 2003). As such, geography is uniquely equipped to explore not only how masculinities play out in different spaces but how those spaces shape the very experience of masculinity and how it relates to other key dimensions of social relations (Hopkins and Noble 2009). Amid these changes, ‘hard’ masculinities rooted in strength, violence and the domination of women and others continue to prevail, while ‘soft’ masculinities (Louie and Low 2003) or alternative masculinities are nevertheless emergent. Here, I present spatially diverse and temporally variable masculinities as I review how men and masculinities are constructed differently, according to the national and local context.

Geography has been criticized as a masculine discipline (Rose 1993), as well as one where the perspective of White men implicitly prevails (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Blunt and Rose
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1994; Longhurst 2001). Berg and Longhurst (2003) also note that, while knowledge produced from work in metropolitan Anglo-American sites is regarded as universal, or theory building, the knowledge from work in non-metropolitan ‘peripheries’ is typically regarded as local, or a mere case study. Instead, I highlight masculinities in Papua New Guinea, where I have been doing fieldwork since 1979, as well as Japan and its neighbouring East Asian countries. They should be understood not as local case studies but as dynamic models for situating masculinities in globalizing societies.

Rethinking concepts of masculinity

What is masculinity? The debate surrounding this very point is far-reaching, as masculinity is hard to define, while the binary construct of male and female is itself undergoing transformation.

There are differences in the lived realities and geographies of masculinity, manliness and maleness. Nevertheless, it is clear that masculinity is constructed relationally to femininity (Connell 1995). What typifies the negation, or opposite, of manliness? In Japan, if a man is deemed to be ‘too feminine’, he may be constructed as uncertain, inconsistent, unprincipled and effeminate and/or ruled by emotion. In other words, masculinity subsumes positively viewed traits such as decisiveness, rationality and authenticity, and necessarily stands opposite to negative traits or qualities associated with feminine (or degraded) persons. Masculinity is produced from homosociality, which is part of a matrix of homophobia and misogyny (Sedgwick 1985; Ueno 2010). For my purposes here, masculinity – when rooted in the binary construction of gender – may be understood as qualities believed to be inherent to ‘men’s’ bodies, differentiated through society as being opposite to ‘women’.

Much has been written on the relationship between men and masculinities on the one hand, and bodies and nature on the other. Feminist geographers and others have exposed the ways in which men, unlike women, are viewed as possessing a rational consciousness that transcends the body and nature and are therefore upheld as creators and proprietors of culture (Longhurst 2001; Ortner 1974; Ortner and Whitehead 1981; Rose 1993). Western culture rests on the notion that White men transcend physical conditions and existence through the use of this consciousness, while the same is not presumed for women, ethnic and racial minorities, people with disabilities and/or non-heteronormative identities, the elderly and children, among others (Longhurst 2001). However, masculinity entails the demonstration of physical strength. Sports – that is, competitions involving rivalry and body contact – as well as military and/or physical training and discipline are typically viewed as testimony to one’s masculinity (Connell 1995). Such a relationship between masculinities and physical strength is a transcultural and also a historically evolving construct.

In Japan, for example, masculinity has shifted over time. Prior to the modern era, Bushido was the individual relationship of loyalty between a vassal and his lord. A chain of such lord/vassal relationships structured the warrior (bushi) class. This was quite different in nature from the modern military unit, whose lines of authority and responsibility make it a bureaucratic type of organization (Watanabe 2012, 31–32). Moreover, historically, Bushido was only relevant to the bushi class of Japanese society. However, the Meiji state restructured and appropriated this idea under the modern imperial system to form a new, ideological universe embracing the Japanese state as a household and the emperor as its patriarch, thereby requiring the people (as children of the emperor) to pledge their loyalty to the emperor. In pre-war Japan, there was a cultural loathing of the physically weak (‘weakness-phobia’), and the Japanese state cultivated it by tying it into the conscription system to nurture strong, imperialist soldiers, while the media, especially boys’ magazines, further amplified it (Uchida 2010).
The literature on sexuality reveals a fluidity between the categories of male and female (Butler 1990), which amplifies queer geographies (Horschelmann and van Hoven 2005; Johnston 2005). At the same time, masculinities and femininities exist as qualities separate from the physical body. For example, the literature covers a spectrum including female masculinity (Halberstam 1998), butch identity (Butler 1990; Sedgwick 1995) and male femininity, embodied in man-breasts (Longhurst 2005), among other things. In addition, additional genders beyond the male and female dichotomy have been recognized in numerous societies around the world, such as with the hijra in India and the fa’fafine in Samoa (Johnston 2019; Shore 1981).

Rethinking men’s violence and bodies from Papua New Guinea: 
Papua New Guinea’s masculine societies

Academic exploration of masculinity aside from its physical body/embodiment remains under-developed, at present. More must be understood about how masculinity is constructed, apart from its essential physical qualities. The following case from Papua New Guinea stands as an example of such an inquiry.

While Papua New Guinea has a multicultural society, with over 700 distinct ethno-linguistic communities and pronounced geographic diversity, it is regarded as an extremely patriarchal society dominated by men. As of 2012, only three women were among the country’s 109 parliament members. Violence, including sexual assault, is widespread in urban areas and unmarried men constitute the majority of the offenders. Papua New Guinea is also home to the practice of strict gender segregation and antagonism toward women, especially in the Highland regions (Gelber 1986), owing to the belief that masculinity is violated and damaged through excessive contact with women.

However, one should not interpret men’s violence in urban space as an expression of the inherent violence of Papua New Guinean men. Rather, they reflect the real impacts of a gradual othering of ethnic groups, or wantoks, in urban space. Wantoks (a pidgin word derived from ‘one talk’) are associations formed of people of the same linguistic or geographic roots, and they serve as social safety nets in urban areas. Wantoks are crucial providers of housing and jobs in a state that offers insufficient public assistance. Many migrants to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea’s capital, are living in spontaneous (squatter) settlements comprised mostly of wantoks. Moreover, against a background of competition and conflict among wantoks, violence has become a means for making visible the cohesion within groups (Kumagai 2016).

The spatial structure of the city reinforces these conditions. The urban spatial layout of Port Moresby carries the vestiges of Australian colonial rule, seen in the diffusion of urban zones and the reliance on private vehicles for travel, which is not only inconvenient for ordinary people but hinders the formation of autonomous local communities. Public transport stops running in the evening and the city streets never attract crowds at night. Street vending, mostly undertaken by women, and other informal income opportunities have been suppressed in the name of urban beautification, and the city lacks even competitive sports or movies at evening events. Young men are frustrated by their circumstances and are practically channelled into crime by the lack of public space for interaction and avenues for earning an honest living to support families (Kumagai 2016).

In recent decades, urban life has been imbued with two forms of hegemonic masculinities: the wantok system governing grassroots social organizations, and Western masculinist systems (encapsulated in the postcolonial city) governing urban design and management in ways that exclude people’s survival strategies. The development of a new ‘commons’, one that connects people beyond the present wantok system, would carry great potential for overcoming
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Both masculinist systems and, in particular, the physical and economic violence that they normalize. Frazer (1992, 126) states that the idea of an egalitarian, multicultural society only makes sense if we suppose a plurality of public arenas in which diverse values and rhetoric participate. However, in urban Papua New Guinea, such socially interactive and inclusive public spaces have been hampered by necessarily exclusive hegemonic violent masculinities in parochialism that perpetuate antagonism and isolation. As a result, alternative public spaces—as well as alternative masculinities—that allow for the inclusion of more women and younger men in social arrangements are thus far absent, yet are as crucial as ever (Kumagai 2016).

Masculinity and the male body in rural Papua New Guinea

Rural Papua New Guinea also shows signs of continuation and change in men and masculinities, not unlike the cities. In coming of age ceremonies, for example, boys endure physically taxing rites of passage to manhood, as a parallel to the strength that women show during childbirth. These rites of passage in the Sepik River Basin of northern Papua New Guinea include skin cutting, one of the world’s most grueling rituals, which uses incisions and scarification to produce patterns similar to crocodile scales along the young men’s stomachs and backs (see Figure 5.1). While these rites were eliminated from many areas in and around the Sepik River Basin following the arrival of Christian missionaries, a few villages in the Black Water Basin that I have visited almost every year since 1986 continue these rites as the Catholic missionaries

Figure 5.1 Four young men on the morning after the skin-cutting ritual. Kaimbit village, Papua New Guinea, August 2018.
Photograph: K. Kumagai.
had been lenient over their practice. This rite has three cultural meanings: first, one is seen as becoming a man through a process of expelling the blood inherited from one’s mother; second, strength of manhood is achieved by enduring the ritual physical pain; third, one is transformed into a brave man and a warrior by carving into one’s body the scales of the crocodile, a symbol for the region.

When I observed this ritual in 2018, it was more than simply the performance of a traditional cultural ceremony exclusively for men. One neighbouring community has in recent years increasingly commercialized its traditions to earn income through tourism. Therefore, the re-enactment of the coming-of-age ceremony serves as affirmation of a collective identity and a source of pride for the community, as well as its authenticity. Not only men but the whole community gathers for the ceremony, to act as witnesses and to participate. On the day after the skin cutting, the expressions on the faces of the newly initiated men were most extraordinary: radiant and beaming with a quiet pride. The male elders who led the ritual, the relatives of the initiated and the community as a whole, including women and children, carried warm expressions of gratification. Here, in a region infiltrated by globalization and monetization of its economy, the ritual of masculinity serves as an opportunity for the local society to affirm and re-assert its own cultural fortitude and strength.

Cases of masculinities in urban and rural Papua New Guinea reveal that issues involving men and masculinities are necessarily produced at the intersections of culture, ethnicity, class, economy, society, (post-)coloniality and space and place, among other things, thereby under-scoring the importance of intersectionality in their consideration.

Shifting masculinities in Japan and East Asia: corporate masculinity as hegemonic masculinity and its transformation

Japan’s post-war economy experienced high rates of growth through the 1980s. During this era, Japanese men were expected to uphold both nation and economy through dedicated labour, with the paradigmatic example being the *kigyo-senshi*, the corporate warriors employed by large corporations. These employees spent most of their time away from families, working long hours and commuting long distances to and from suburban homes. The totality of men’s work was complemented by women’s sole responsibility as housewives, providing reproductive labour and unpaid domestic work. Men’s long hours of hard work were compensated for by a Japanese management system that promised stable lifetime employment and was promoted by a social order that advocated the ideological view of corporation as a family. Consequently, workplaces and *tsukiai* (socializing after work) were distinctively masculine places that have always been hostile to women and made their career advancement difficult. These types of ‘corporate masculinity’, ‘salaryman masculinity’ (Dasgupta 2003) and ‘salaryman doxa’ (Roberson and Suzuki 2003) shaped the everyday experiences of Japanese men and served as the foundation for Japan’s hegemonic masculinity at the time.

From the late-1990s, however, non-regular employment rose dramatically, predominantly affecting Japan’s youngest generations as they entered the labour force. Further, while women make up a greater proportion of non-regular employees across the whole of the Japanese workforce, the gap between women and men is narrowest in the youngest cohort. These young men in non-regular employment are, by definition, less financially secure than their counterparts in regular employment, and research shows that they are less likely to marry, as well (Fujimori 2010).

In 1999, the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society and the revised Equal Employment Opportunity Law were passed. These laws covered the scope of employment and increased women’s opportunities for promotion while reducing gender segregation in the labour market,
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which was a compromise between the femocrats who sought gender equality and neo-liberal labour policy (Ueno 2013). Ultimately, some frustrated young men who felt deprived of job and status entitlements responded by blaming the gender-equality movement for their hardships, such that the ‘feminist-phobic’ sentiment escalated (Kaizuma 2005). At the same time, gender norms are unchanged; men are still expected to maintain the overarching role of breadwinning to establish their masculinity. These changes have provoked conflict and frustration among the many young men who fail to satisfy the strict codes inherent to the hegemonic image of Japanese masculinity (Kumagai 2012). Hence, new masculinities are appearing, such as ikumen, soshokukei-danshi, otaku and neto-uyo, which I discuss further below.

Ikumen

Ikumen refers to men who enjoy childrearing, as well as seeking their own, independent growth. Such a recognition of fatherhood was captured in a project launched by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (June 2010) to promote men’s participation in childrearing and the use of childcare leave. In addition, it came about because of a critical turn against traditional masculinity during Japan’s period of high economic growth. In 1980, a movement advocating for paternity leave was established by Otoko mo Onna mo Ikuji Jikan o Renrakukai (Child Care Hours for Men and Women Network), known as Ikujiren. Ikujiren worked tirelessly to make its agenda known in the mass media and to influence government, thereby contributing to the creation of the 1992 Parental Leave Law, which was inclusive of paternity leave (Ishii-Kuntz 2003, 203). While Ikujiren members tend to be white-collar workers of high status, and thus not marginal men, they are not associated with hegemonic masculinity (Ishii-Kuntz 2003, 212). Resistance to their platform came from masculinist work environments, which value conformity and uniformity above all else, making it difficult for men to receive paternity leave. In addition, many young men have found that their precarious employment situation has complicated their ability to build partnerships.

Soshokukei danshi

The expression soshokukei danshi (literally ‘herbivorous boys’) first appeared in print in 2006 when columnist Maki Fukazawa coined it to refer young men who are ‘unconcerned with sex’ in an article on trends in youth culture. Since 2008, this concept has moved on from the pages of women’s magazines and gained popularity in a wide range of print and television media. The magazine Hanako for Men (published intermittently), launched in November 2009 for soshokukei danshi readers, offers key clues to how the media shape the images of these young men. The magazine pages contain numerous articles and photographs depicting life indoors and in Japan. Articles about and images of outdoors or exotic overseas destinations rarely make an appearance; instead, the feature articles are on how to decorate with greenery, such as bonsai, and how to best clean and polish a kitchen, subjects that had never appeared in men’s magazines before. In my interview with the magazine’s chief editor, he remarked that the word soshokukei typically carries negative connotations but, to him, it simply encapsulates the gentleness and grace of Japanese culture. Soshokukei are, in fact, a majority among young men at present, and the number of men who consider cleaning, cooking and bonsai to be their hobbies is on the rise. Men are incorporating activities that are considered feminine into their interests.

To illustrate the experiences of young men known as soshokukei danshi, I offer the story of ‘A’. ‘A’ is 29 years old (in 2010), single and working as a hairdresser. He said that, should he ever marry, he would like to be with someone who has a good relationship with their family. He
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explains that, by doing this, he wishes to give back to his own family, which has provided him with support and understanding over the years. He describes himself as footloose and fancy-free:

We (soshokukei danshi) are unable to be commanding. We might actually be closer to women's ideal men. The kinds of men that declare to women, ‘I'll support you’ are already a minority.

Otaku

The term *otaku* is used to describe youth (commonly men) and the world that they create through their obsession with virtual images from manga, animation and computer games. Although the word *otaku* is generally associated with men, due to the prominence of young female characters in animation and computer games, its cultural universe has spread in recent years to include women and international fans interested in Japanese subcultures.

An *otaku*’s place or home is their own private room, where they keep collections of their favourite products or items. One of their regular gathering places is Akihabara, which has recently been transformed from a shopping district for electronic goods to the holy land for *otaku*, with a heavy concentration of computer goods and game software. Akihabara’s very first ‘maid café’ opened in 2001. One defining characteristic of these cafes is how customers are greeted upon entering: *Okaerinasai goshujin-sama* (‘Welcome home, master/husband’). For the *otaku*, they represent a home substitute in which traditional (colonialist) gender relations are played out with flourish in the exaggerated exchanges. However, these maids, who elicit feelings of *moe* (affection) in the *otaku*, appear to be nothing more than real-life portrayals of the popular two-dimensional images of women.

I interviewed a self-proclaimed maid-café *otaku*, ‘B’, in Akihabara. ‘B’ was in his thirties (as of 2010) and unmarried. He said that he had worked as an analyst, commuting to work in Marunouchi, Tokyo’s central business district, while living with his parents in Saitama prefecture. He entered his current job after unsuccessfully applying to work at a games-software company. According to ‘B’, there is a difference between *otaku* of the 1980s and *otaku* today:

Men in their fifties are the first generation of *otaku*. Those of us in our late twenties and early thirties are the third generation. We are interested in animation, PC games, music and anything computer related. The games we play are computer-based and tend to feature pretty young girls. College students today are the newest generation. The greatest difference is that they have no reservations about engaging in the *otaku* culture. Their interests revolve around animation, computer games, figurines and dolls, among other things. These dolls are made to look like women, with movable parts, and can be carried around. Whether these dolls are replacements (for women) or not, I think maybe fifty-fifty. Men clearly have sexual feelings. And they crave things with more realism, which is why their desires shift from two-dimensional to three-dimensional objects. Yet, I assume *otaku* women would cynically counter that ‘fiction is fiction’ and ‘reality is reality’.

‘B’ also participates in gatherings where he can practise speaking in a woman’s voice.

When I like a girl it is not so much because I want to have her, but because I want to be like her. Rather than possess her, I wish I could become her. Actual girls aren’t perfect. They have pores and split ends. And their feet aren’t so slender. I can’t become
an actual, realistic girl, but when it comes to voice, I can become more like them. This is not real; I’m not saying that I want to become a girl in reality. And this is not a fetish where I want to have their things. This is (creating) a woman of myth. I’m often asked my type, but if I were to pursue my ideal, she would not exist in the real world. In the future, I would like to marry and have children. I’d like to make a family. However, I don’t feel like women excite me. As dull as it is, the reality is that I don’t have a choice.

Neto-uyo/Petit (neo)nationalists

Neto-uyo, formed from the words netto (internet) and uyoku (right-wing), refers to people who use the internet to circulate discriminatory, far-right discourse. Owing to the anonymity provided by online spaces, it is difficult to identify who the users really are but, judging from the language they use and the subjects they project, it is conceivable that the majority are relatively young men.

In recent years, and especially since 2000, support for neo-nationalist discourse has spread, owing in part to a string of neoliberal policies and political shows unrolled under the Liberal Democratic Party government of Prime Ministers Koizumi (2001–2006) and Abe (2006–2007; 2012–present). The neto-uyo movement has links to numerous outside groups and ideological orientations. These include media that stir up animosity against China and Korea; historical revisionists such as the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, who criticize ‘self-hating’ views of history; neo-fundamentalist politicians who enthusiastically bash ‘gender-free’ and gender-equality movements; and racists such as the Zainichi Tokken wo Yurusanai Simin no Kai (Association of Citizens against the Special Privileges of the Korean in Japan), popularly known as Zaitokukai, who take to the streets with hate speech. It is impossible to cover the full range of trends and groups proliferating via the internet, and the word neto-uyo is used here as a general term.

At the foundation of the neto-uyo ideology is ethno-supremacism and a desire to bring it to bear on reality. This typically links to revisions of history, as well as the romanticization and embrace of wartime Japan, as fanaticly expressed in Yoshinori Kobayashi’s manga Gomanism Sengen (Declaration of Arrogance-ism). In his book, the young first-time author, Akagi (2007), yearns for war and violence as he anticipates that these will bring better opportunities to lower-class youn men through class and generational reshuffling.

Oguma and Ueno (2003) use interviews and participant observation to glimpse into the lives of youth (mostly male) who congregate at the Kanagawa Office of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform. At the Society, words such as ‘sensible’, ‘common sense’, ‘healthy nationalism’, ‘common people’, ‘beacon of the Japanese’ and ‘tradition’ are often heard. These youths see themselves not as adherents to a right-wing ideology but as simply embracing a ‘healthy common sense’ or realism (Oguma and Ueno 2003, 89–91). What is interesting is the gap between the generation of those who experienced World War II and the youths in their teens or twenties. While the older generation seeks a place to talk of their experiences of war, the younger generation gathers to seek a place to relieve their anxiety over not having a core identity (204).

According to Koichi Yasuda, participants in the Zaitokukai see themselves as marginalized and embrace anti-elitist sentiments (Yasuda 2012). As in Oguma and Ueno’s observations, Yasuda points out that youths involved in Zaitokukai wish to find a place of their own or a home. Yasuda elaborates that, as youths struggle with isolation amid rising labour exploitation, inequality and social division, some find that they can claim identity and belonging through the
category of being ‘Japanese’ (Yasuda 2012, 353). While neto-uyo emphasize Japanese strength and the central importance of preserving national integrity, what is required for inclusion in this category of ‘Japanese’ is not obvious, neither now nor ever. The discourse claiming that Japan is a homogenous country is a fiction created after Japan lost World War II and its colonial territories such as Korea and Taiwan (Oguma 1995). Moreover, the boundaries defining who is Japanese are shifting as international marriages increase.5

One may say that the reality of this growing diversity, along with the shifting boundaries of ‘being Japanese’, has given rise to a reactionary movement of people seeking to reconstruct the Japanese people and reserve the space of Japan as home to, and a place for, exclusively ‘pure’ Japanese. Because the neto-uyo see Japan as their home, they seek and strike out at people whom they believe should be expelled, such as the political left, feminists, foreigners, Koreans and Chinese. Here, they demonstrate fear and anxiety related to mixing and fluidity.

East Asian masculinities and their changes

At present, political and international relations between the East Asian countries (namely China, North Korea, South Korea and Japan) are imbued with hegemonic masculinity. People inherently develop a sense of belonging to certain places, but actively tying such belonging to a nationalist territoriality triggers violence and exclusion. As seen with Japan’s neto-uyo, feelings of frustration among middle- and lower-class youth in Korea and China, who are sidelined by advancing globalization, have convened with nationalist sentiment and spurred on ‘anti-Japanese’ movements (Takahara 2006).

Nevertheless, in reality, Japanese, Chinese and Korean societies have been continually gaining more in the way of shared resources linking the countries, as seen in international marriages or popular culture such as Japanese manga, kanryu (Korean-style) culture, shown in television dramas, and K-pop (Korean pop music). Interestingly, in each of Japan, Korea and China, today’s young generation has a greater interest in ‘beautiful’ and ‘gentle’ men. In Korea, where there is universal male conscription and high value is placed on macho men, nevertheless a Korean equivalent of soshokukei danshi exists, known as choi-sik-nam. Moreover, the handsome young men of K-pop are gaining popularity with Chinese and Japanese women. In China, men known as nua nán (暖男) are admired for their gentle nature in relation to not just women but all people.6

There is a hope that macro-level politics in East Asia, infused as it is with a ‘hard’ and hegemonic masculinity and the pursuit of dominance over land and soldiers, is being eroded and redirected by the micro-level emergence of such ‘soft’ and alternative masculinities.

Conclusion

Masculinities, as situated in society, are multiple and shifting, in line with socio-economic and cultural transformation. In Papua New Guinea, masculinities have served as crucial cultural resources for group cohesion and personal power among men competing for leadership. This is visible in many aspects of urban multicultural society, where the lack of national integration is pronounced. For example, ‘hard’ masculinity, expressed in part through violence based on wantok solidarity, tends to heighten hostilities and acts of ‘othering’ among ethnic groups, while women are often rendered victims of violence and urban crime. The ideas prop up a hegemonic masculinity that defies the construction of an urban commons or space for mutual interaction have been passed down for generations through (post-)colonial urban planning and have produced today’s discrete urban communities.
This hegemonic masculinity shapes a space suited to crime, together with social frustration, especially among the unmarried men who form the majority of criminal offenders and who should have been the key agents in the development of a new urban way of life. On the other hand, in Papua New Guinea’s marginalized rural villages, physical bodies and strength have acquired alternative meanings. Masculinity, as recreated through traditional initiation rituals, has enhanced community solidarity not by using violence or hostility but rather by fulfilling self-confidence and resisting marginalization to amplify the community’s collective sense of autonomy under globalization.

In Japan, drastic economic transformations under globalization have made it difficult for young men to attain the ideals of hegemonic masculinity through becoming breadwinners. New types of masculinities are emerging, such as *ikumen*, *soshokukei-danshi*, *otaku* and *neto-uyo*, of which the first three reveal a reconsideration of – or distancing from – the hegemonic masculinity of older generations. However, with the exception of *ikumen*, who seek equal partnership with women regarding childcare, these new masculinities lack avenues for personal growth and positive social interaction. Instead, they are characterized by tendencies to remain confined in limited places or home spaces, such as private rooms, houses and nations like Japan, actively excluding others (Kumagai 2015). Interestingly, soft masculinities such as *soshokukei-danshi* are appearing and gaining popularity in both Korea and China. While foreign relations between Japan, Korea and China are confrontational, the popular cultures of these East Asian countries are infiltrating each other and increasing sympathies.

Masculinities, as well as their meanings and contexts, vary and change over time in both Papua New Guinea and Japan. The (re)construction of new masculinities for overcoming hegemonic masculinities is closely related to space and place, as well as time. Competition, domination and emotional suppression (hooks 2004) were once characteristic qualities of masculinity and, as such, must be addressed.

The ideas of economic rationalism underlying global market capitalism are a masculine fiction that presumes that all individuals are self-reliant, thereby disregarding the critical importance of care. In the neoliberal era, ‘care’ is once again being increasingly transferred to families. If gender norms do not change, care work will continue to be thrust onto women and a minority of men, who may be compelled to leave the waged labour force to fulfill these roles (Fineman 2004), or female migrant workers, who sacrifice caring for their own families to serve wealthier families in the Global North. Care, and the socialization of care, are seen as extensions of ‘women’s work’ and are, therefore, undervalued and disproportionately pushed onto feminized labour forces. Remedying this involves improving the status of care workers and ensuring that men actively participate in care work. This is not only for the purpose of achieving gender equality in the cost of care but also to enable us – by making child and elderly care universal – to collectively reclaim the ‘right to care’ (Cornell 2002; Muta 2006), which has been simultaneously diminished and made more onerous through its unequal distribution. Doing so would bolster the public’s awareness surrounding the importance of our affective and, thus, ethical attunement (Cornell 2002, 67) to one another. By looking within ourselves, we can collectively reckon with the limitations imposed by binary gender and discover possibilities apart from a social order founded on male domination and female care.

It is incumbent on all people to resist masculine constructions that perpetuate exclusion and domination and, instead, to enhance mutual interaction and collaboration. Modern Western logocentrism, which is also masculine, tends to obscure diverse realities through the use of monolithic categories (Ito 1993). As Ito, a pioneer scholar of Japanese men’s studies, has suggested, we ought to resist classifying others or allowing ourselves to be classified as such (Ito
1993, 197). Instead, men and masculinities should be reconstructed as agentic actors in a diverse, fluid movement to ‘multiply’ (multiply and diversify) gender – and masculinity and femininity.

Notes

1 *Ikumen* is a compound formed from *ikuji* (childcare) and men, and is a play on the expression *ikemen* (good-looking men).

2 The word *otaku* is a formal term meaning ‘you’, and is used regularly within the community. The term was first used by Akio Nakamori in 1983 when referring to the mania surrounding the comic market.

3 The Japanese word *goshujin-sama*, or *shujin*, which means master, is also traditionally used to refer to one’s husband with respect.

4 While Koizumi advanced privatization and labour deregulation, the younger generation enthusiastically supported his government because of his overt assertions that he would destroy vested rights, including those of public servants. Koizumi also promoted Japanese nationalism by visiting the Yasukuni shrine (a religious symbol of World War II), despite Korean and Chinese disapproval.

5 The percentage of international marriages of all marriages rose to 6.1% in 2006. Many of those couples were of Japanese men and Asian (particularly Chinese) women.

6 Masculinity in China once held as its ideal men who possessed both literary (文 *wen*) and martial (武 *wu*) accomplishments. Also, as found in traditions of Chinese imperial exams, the ideals of masculinity encompassed both the spirituality of literary endeavours and the physicality of martial endeavours, unlike Japanese masculinity formed from a heavy focus on the martial. Greater examination would be required to determine whether or not these historical masculinities have been carried into the present.

Key readings


References


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