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ARTICLE



Thinking through Community Spirit: Zainichi Koreans in Post-Korean Wave Japanese Communities

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the notion of ‘community spirit’ as it occurs in the discourse of community development (*machizukuri*) in the context of a society characterised by multicultural coexistence (*tabunka kyōsei*). It does so by examining multigenerational Korean residents’ integration in post-Korean Wave Japan. Despite the recognised deficiencies in Japan’s attempt to accommodate ethnic diversity in line with the government’s vision of multicultural coexistence, some long-term Korean and Japanese residents have begun to foster a shared sense of community as Japanese consumers of mainstream culture have familiarised themselves with Korean culture in recent years. Inspired by the existing gap between community spirit embodied among residents and the Japanese government’s sustained rhetoric aimed at maintaining the existing social order by juxtaposing Japanese and non-Japanese residents, this article aims to identify the keys to fostering an effective vision of an inclusive society in Japan. I argue that informal networks, personal engagement, and active participation would complement the current top-down policy that is implemented to negotiate Japan’s increasing diversity. Based on data gathered during ethnographic work that included participation in community initiatives and council discussions in western Japan’s Hanshin area, I shed light on the competing forces of inclusion and exclusion in contemporary Japanese society.

Introduction – Lost in Translation?

In this article, I contemplate whether the notion of a ‘sense of community’ that is exemplified in community development (*machizukuri*) discourse is applicable in the context of a ‘multicultural coexistence’ society (*tabunka kyōsei shakai*) from the perspective of Zainichi Koreans integration in post-Korean-Wave western Japan.¹ The concept of community development in terms of post-disaster recovery and neighbourhood reconstruction has recently attracted scholarly attention in the wake of the Fukushima 3.11 triple disaster of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake (see Edington, 2017; Klien, 2016; Littlejohn, 2020; Posio, 2019). Among the more notable characteristics of existing community development discourse is that a sense of community is accepted as the central component of various community development projects in Japan (Mavrodieva, Daramita, Arsono, Luo & Shaw, 2019; Posio, 2019). Throughout modernity, community development has been a commonly wielded instrument in Japan, where the municipal

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¹In this article, I use the term ‘Zainichi Koreans’ (*zainichi korian*) to refer to Japan’s multigenerational Korean diaspora (Lie, 2008: 103), residents of Japan who have roots in the Korean Peninsula, indicating a politically neutral or unaffiliated position with respect to North or South Korean. Zainichi Koreans may or may not have naturalised. The Zainichi Koreans who appear in this article believe that their public display of their own ethnicity is important regardless of their nationalities. They referred to themselves as ‘Zainichi Koreans’ or ‘Zainichi’.

government ‘feels it must step in and create institutions that will foster a sense of community and citizenship appropriate to a [...] society’ (Bestor, 1992: 29). However, such ideas as a sense of community and community spirit are scarcely invoked when Japanese authorities – both the national and local governments – consider their efforts in building a ‘multicultural coexistence’ society. The governments’ acute awareness of the increasing diversity that has continued since the 2000s and the need to reconfigure Japanese society only stand within a context of top-down management of foreign residents while assuming local Japanese residents will remain unchanged. Meanwhile, an undivided sense of community has been articulated in expressions used by both Japanese and non-Japanese residents, who refer to ‘our community’ and ‘our society’, to indicate an intrinsic inclusivity across multiple moments of the residents’ everyday realities. More importantly, some examples offered in the present research attest the amity between communities’ residents, despite the shortcomings of Japan’s multicultural coexistence framework (Befu, 2006; Chiavacci, 2014; Demelius, 2020; Kim & Streich, 2020; Liu-Farrer, 2020; Nagy, 2015; Vogt, 2014). Inspired by existing discrepancies between the Japanese government’s rhetoric of homogeneous ideology, the policy on multicultural coexistence, and residents’ voices that suggest inclusivity, I shed light on community spirit with respect to inclusivity and sensitivity among Japan’s residents and aim to identify the key to fostering an effective vision for an inclusive society in Japan.

In an article about informal networks, Horak, Afiouni, Bian, Ledeneva, Muratbekova-Touron, and Fey discuss that informal social networks ‘have [...] utility in handling formal constraints (2020: 4)’. The elements of informal networks, personal contacts, spontaneous cooperation, and camaraderie (Horak et al. 2020) would complement the current top-down orientation of municipalities’ reactionary approach to problem-solving in dealing with diversity (Kim & Streich, 2020). I argue that foreign and Japanese residents’ personal engagement and active participation in community affairs can foster strong community cohesion in the process of building a ‘multicultural coexistence’ society. Based on interviews and participant observation of community initiatives involving Zainichi Koreans in multiple municipalities in the Hanshin area, this article analyses existing community spirit from the perspective of Zainichi Koreans’ integration in post-Korean-Wave Japan. First, I will describe my methodology and give an outline of the field in which I worked to contextualise and frame the Zainichi Korean community. I then discuss the limitations of the current multicultural coexistence policy followed by the case of a survey that was circulated by a city government as an example of a city administration’s attempt to adhere to Japan’s multicultural coexistence policy. After that I discuss the usefulness of ‘community’ as an analytical framework for exploring the concepts of exclusion and inclusion. Finally, I analyse the effects of the Korean Wave on Japanese perceptions of Zainichi Koreans and how this plays out in the community.

Methodology and Context

In this article, I adopt embodied community spirit among ethnic Korean and Japanese residents as a vantage point from which to identify an effective route towards a ‘multicultural coexistence’ society. The ‘field’ in which I conducted my research through involvement in community activities and council discussions spread over five municipalities in the Hanshin area, a populated industrial urban stretch that

encompasses Osaka and Hyogo prefectures in the Kansai region.² The Kansai region has the largest population of Special Permanent Resident Visa holders with Korean ethnic backgrounds (Park, 2014: 7). The examples included in this article were collected from individuals who are conscious of Japan's challenges and progress in accommodating ethnic diversity in both their work and personal lives. I accessed the intermeshed field with three overlapping sub-fields through three entry points. The first entry point was a council for foreign teachers that was active in promoting the rights of non-Japanese teachers and in holding periodic meetings to provide foreign teachers with mutual support. This organisation exchanges information on the various challenges that non-Japanese teachers face in their work environments in multiple municipalities in the Hanshin area. The second entry point was via the recipients of the survey from the city of Miyama's administration.³ School teachers who work in Miyama's public schools, who may or may not be residents in the municipality, held periodic meetings with concerned citizens of Miyama to discuss the municipality's policies on multicultural coexistence. This group also included former and current members of the city parliament. The third entry point came via my contacts with individuals who were active in community initiatives in various municipalities in the Hanshin area. The groups described above were overlapped and intermeshed, and the members constantly exchanged information on activities and news related to the promotion of diversity, ethnic education, support for foreign residents, and political matters in the Hanshin area. Many individuals had rich personal networks (*jinmyaku*) in the Hanshin area and were actively involved in council discussions with municipality governments to promote matters related to the advancement of an inclusive society.

The ways in which Zainichi Koreans have struggled to integrate themselves into the dominant majority offer a particularly striking image of a minority's attempts at integration in Japan. Before the Chinese minority overtook the Korean minority with respect to size in the 2000s (Chiavacci 2017: 234), Zainichi Koreans constituted Japan's largest immigrant group.⁴ Owing to Japan's occupation of the Korean Peninsula (1910–1945), its long history of complicated relations with Korea (Suzuki 2019) and Korean migrants and its unresolved postcolonial entanglement, the ways in which Japan – both the government and society – relates to its Korean minority and Koreanness are complex. In Lie's work on Zainichi Koreans' diasporic identity formation in post-war Japan, the author demonstrated the economic integration of Zainichi Koreans and the narrowing educational and employment gaps between ethnic Japanese and Koreans in contemporary Japan (2008: 153). He argued, 'In spite of remnant poverty and discrimination, we can no longer produce facile generalizations about the impoverished and oppressed Zainichi' (Lie, 2008: 134). As my ethnographic data will show, social capital, which is correlated with financial capital, influences an individual's ability to enhance the impact of his or her voice and to choose the 'right' path along which to direct his or her advocacy. However,

²The Kansai region's population was approximately 20 million in 2019 based on data from Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2019).

³I use pseudonyms for all individuals, organisations, and institutions, including the municipality's name, to protect the identity of research participants.

⁴Descendants of pre-Pacific War immigrants and colonial subjects possess the Special Permanent Resident status, and Koreans are still the largest group in the visa category of the Special Permanent Resident (see Chiavacci, 2017: 234). The surge in Chinese immigrants consists of those who enter the country with the status of foreign student or foreign trainee (Chiavacci, 2017: 234).

the lifetime cumulative salaries and responsibilities of non-naturalised Zainichi Koreans in the public sector, such as public-school teachers and municipality employees, are significantly limited as a result of their differentiated contracts in comparison to Japanese nationals (Nakajima, 2017; Osler 2018). This clearly indicates the presence of an inequality – for equally qualified minority employees, compensations and opportunities to apply their skills are curtailed. Although Kondo perceives non-naturalised Zainichi Koreans as possessing almost identical legal rights to their Japanese counterparts (2001: 9), their limited access to the national pension scheme and educational institutions, along with municipalities' recent conservative decisions to delay the granting of suffrage, demonstrate the inequality experienced by non-naturalised Zainichi Koreans. Although many of the Zainichi Koreans with whom I spoke continued to experience exclusion and discrimination in various social circumstances, they were able to feel a sense of community with ethnic Japanese residents in many aspects of their social reality. This enhances the value of this article's examination of community spirit in such contexts.

Recent comprehensive analyses of Zainichi Koreans, such as those by Chapman (2008) and Lie (2008), have approached the ethnic minority within the broader context of contemporary Japan from various socio-cultural perspectives. Both authors demonstrated Zainichi Koreans' heterogeneous characteristics with respect to their political orientations and socio-economic statuses (Chapman 2008; Lie, 2008). In his book on Zainichi Koreans from the perspective of discursively constructed identity, Chapman argues that the very act of essentialisation through the use of exclusivist binaries, such as Korea/Japan and North/South Korea – particularly by Zainichi Korean intellectuals – negatively impacted the minority population (2008: 5). This position differs significantly from those adopted in earlier works in English, such as that by Lee and De Vos (1981), from the perspectives of social and legal injustice, which strongly characterised a Japanese/Korean divide and portrayed Koreans as victimised. Ryang's fascinating work on North Koreans in Japan was for a long time the only ethnographic work on the North Korean organisation Sōren (the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan),⁵ its ideology, and the process of identity formation among North Korean-affiliated exiles in Japan (1997: 11). However, her positionality in the field, as a native anthropologist with strong authority, afforded little space to the heterogeneity of the community she described. Her representation of the insular North Korean community scarcely dealt with the influences of various external factors in wider Japanese society on Sōren's members in the post-Cold War context (Ryang, 1997: 167). The rigid framing of the North Korean community as adherent to the Sōren ideology and North Korean doctrine, as illustrated by Ryang (1997), no longer holds (see Bell, 2019), and Sōren members' pragmatic use of their organisational affiliations became evident in my ethnographic work between 2017 and 2019. Some Zainichi Koreans were part of the two main organisations – Mindan (the Korean Residents Union in Japan)⁶ and Sōren – for the purposes of commercial activities, social networking, and existential benefits. In addition, these organisations catered for a variety of nationalities, not only Koreans. The two

⁵Sōren's mission is to unite Korean compatriots in Japan around the government and leadership of North Korea and to work for Korea's reunification (Ryang 1997: 2, 4). It raises funds to recruit members, run ceremonies, and circulates publications (Ryang 1997: 4). Since North Korea and Japan do not have diplomatic relations, the organization has acted as a de facto embassy for North Koreans in Japan.

⁶Mindan is Sōren's rival South Korean organisation.

political organisations stand theoretically in opposition to each other, since they are financed and supported by their respective homeland North and South Korean governments. Contradictions such as holding membership in both organisations are ubiquitous among contemporary Zainichi Korean communities, and they may be the outcome of the notable trend of weakened homeland-oriented ethnonationalism (Lie, 2008: 156–57). As one of my informants commented, regarding her Sören affiliation, she was ‘grateful (*kansha shiteiru*) to the networks that the North Korean school gave [her]’ as she relied on them – as a person,⁷ but *not* exclusively as a North Korean – when she faced difficulties in her personal life. She distinguished the North Korean doctrine that she learned during her school years as ‘stories’ that were neither particularly influential on her personal outlook nor memorable for her, but she now enjoys reminiscing with her fellow North Korean affiliates, sharing memories of her typical student life, with last-minute cramming of the doctrine before exams and ‘funny’ (*kimyōna*) stories of Kim Il-sung. This seemingly transformational intent towards affiliations to traditional political organisations was also reflected in a comment made by Mindan’s main office in spring of 2020 when I contacted the organisation on a personal matter. Personnel at organisations in Japan are expected to be ambassadors for the organisation as a whole when dealing with individuals who are outside of the organisation in the context of work or business interactions. When I called Mindan, the person on the other end of the telephone stated, ‘Thank you for supporting the idea of a “multicultural coexistence” society’, based on the assumption that I was sympathetic to the idea of multicultural coexistence, despite the fact that the idea is not technically integral to Mindan’s ideology. The point I intend to make here is the fluidity of *social boundedness* of those whose ethnic origin lies in the Korean Peninsula but who live in contemporary Japan.

This article does not seek to define Zainichi Korean communities. Hitherto, scholarship on Zainichi Koreans has focused primarily on Zainichi Koreans as a broad category of the ethnic minority population from various analytical angles. In other words, it has relied on the framing of Zainichi Koreans as an ethnic minority group based on the label applied to them from an external or authoritative standpoint, whether by Japanese mainstream society, or the Japanese national government, or by first- and second-generation Zainichi Korean intellectuals (Kim, 1979; Kang, 1988; Pak, 1999). However, scholarly attention to ethnically conscious Zainichi Koreans who collaborate *with* and as *part of* Japanese mainstream community members, working cooperatively towards an inclusive society, has been scarce. My framing of Zainichi Koreans with whom I worked in the field resonates with Yon’s (2000) concept of identity in terms of negotiation processes of ethnic and racial backgrounds among youth in a cosmopolitan setting in Canada that is complex, contradictory, and ambivalent. Individuals’ senses of belonging are nuanced, and the cultural phenomena or ethnic origins with which they identify can be elusive (Yon, 2000: 144, 149) and situational according to different contexts (Kurzweily, 2019). Negotiations in Zainichi Koreans’ everyday encounters have attracted little attention hitherto, including those among ‘ordinary’ citizens and women, who contribute significantly to the fabric of a community rooted in multicultural coexistence. I intend to fill the scholarly gap on Zainichi Koreans who are deeply involved in Japanese

⁷Sören operates North Korean schools in Japan and the organisation is in charge of the school curriculum (see Ryang 1997).

society while maintaining awareness of their ethnicity and positions within the broader framework of ethnic minorities in Japan.

From the late 1970s to the 1980s, the ‘Third Way’ (*daisan no michi*) in Zainichi ideology – ‘a way to live in Japan as home, without being totally Korean or totally Japanese but instead being “Zainichi”’ (Chapman, 2008: 44) – emerged among Zainichi Korean intellectuals in opposition to the growing Japanese ethnonationalist homogenous ideology. However, this dogma itself was as essentialist as the first-generation homeland-oriented ethnonationalism, and it left younger generations in the precarious position of having to find their place in Japanese society as Zainichi Koreans while maintaining their Korean nationality without the safety net of legal rights as Japanese citizens (Chapman, 2008: 47–50, 60–61). As the debate surrounding the option of naturalisation emerged in the 1990s, Zainichi Koreans’ long-term resistance to naturalisation also began to subside (Chapman, 2008: 115; Lie, 2008: 157). The adoption of an ethnic Korean name in public rather than ‘passing’ as Japanese (Fukuoka 1998)⁸ has become an ethnic marker in Japan (Lie, 2008: 110–111; Lim, 2009). If Zainichi Koreans are as diverse today as Chapman (2008) and Lie (2008) claim, then they are surely also as preoccupied with Japanese social matters as Japan’s residents and citizens, rather than with homeland nationalism, as in the past. As some of my informants expressed, their immediate everyday concerns in Japanese society carry greater weight for them than socio-political goings-on in the Korean Peninsula from where their ancestors came. Regardless of nationality, for the Zainichi Koreans with whom I spoke, their overriding interest in improving where they lived – Japanese society and their communities – dominated, and they shared their beliefs with one another that Japan’s potential sensitivity to inclusivity in society would go hand in hand with a slow but sure means of improving minorities’ rights. Therefore, their need to exhibit Korean ethnic markers – such as by using an ethnic name – was an important element in demonstrating their place in Japanese society as respectable and responsible citizens.

The Hanshin area survived two incidents that influenced the mindsets of participants in my field. One concerned the field of education, with which many of my participants were associated in their professional and private domains. Tai argues that Korean ethnic education has played a critical role in preserving Korean ethnic identity (2007: 6), and educators and the Korean minority population in the Hanshin area have advocated the importance of ethnic education. Memories of the 1948 Hanshin Education Incident (*hanshin kyōiku tōsō*, also known as *yonnīyon jiken*) still lingered in the area. In this post-war incident, a 16-year-old Korean boy was shot by the Japanese police during a violent protest after the post-war US Occupation authorities and the Japanese government had decided to ban Korean ethnic education (Ghadimi, 2018: 193; Lee, 1981: 80). Many educators in the Hanshin area pay tribute to the incident by promoting positive outcomes of ethnic educational programs. The importance of native language education (*bogo kyōiku*) beyond the Korean language has also been debated more recently (Kim 2006; Matsuda, Nozu, & Ochiai, 2017; Sohn-Katada 2018), and in terms of Korean ethnic education, Osaka, Hyogo, and Kyoto prefectures have implemented extracurricular ethnic classes (*minzoku gakkū*) (see Hester, 2000; Osler, 2018). Some debates

⁸Japanese aliases (*tsūmei*) have been commonly used among Zainichi Koreans to avoid awkward social situations. Some naturalised Zainichi Koreans whose official papers indicate Japanised names may adopt their original Korean names or Korean pronunciations of their Japanese names for a public display of Korean ethnicity.

concerning ethnic education include pupils' benefits and needs, the essentialisation of ethnic groups, egalitarian opportunities, pro- and counter-assimilation, and the preservation of mother tongues for short- to medium-term residents,⁹ among others. The groups with which I was involved during my fieldwork consisted of many educators who not only taught pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds but also had faced the realities of students who suffered from discrimination (*sabetsu*), poverty (*hinkon*), 'gap society' (*kakusa shakai*) with increasing socio-economic gaps, isolation (*koritsu*), and violence (*bōryoku*) to varying degrees. Owing to the nature of the community-embeddedness of the issues in question, many women also took part in the actual implementation of community initiatives by utilising personal networks for voluntary work, which is often perceived as a good way for women to become involved in communities and neighbourhoods in Japan (LeBlanc, 1999; Yamanaka, 2006). The groups that I approached for my research maintained close contact with their communities. Among the volunteers and active participants in council discussions and community initiatives were parents whose children were guided by active local teachers in school initiatives that were intended to promote multicultural awareness and interethnic cooperation.

The other event that exerted its influence over my research site was a natural disaster. Many residents in the Hanshin area have intense memories of the Hanshin Great Earthquake of 1995, which killed 6,000 people. The earthquake also triggered an emerging consciousness of the volunteerism (*borantia kazudō*) on which many community initiatives were being recast (Rausch, 1998: 2–3). The term 'volunteering spirit' (*borantia seishin*) also encompassed many community activities that transcended ethnicity-, class-, and political orientation-divides. The concept of interethnic cooperation also surfaced in the prospect of finding comfort, security, and normalcy among fellow residents and victims after the disaster (Takezawa, 2008). The actors in the community initiatives in which I was involved and the individuals who participated in this article often referred to the volunteering spirit that was borne out of the disaster that hit the region in 1995. In this sense, many actors conceptualise their community contributions as an extension of the cooperation that was realised 25 years ago.

Government Plans for Multicultural Coexistence

In 2006, the Multicultural Coexistence (*tabunka kyōsei*) Promotion Plan (the Plan) was initiated by *Sōmushō*, or the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), to promote the idea of a multicultural society as a possible cornerstone of Japan's future while maintaining community order during a period of increasing diversity in Japanese society. The MIC defines multicultural coexistence as 'people of various ethnicities or nationalities living alongside one another as members of a community on equal terms by understanding and respecting each other's differences' (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications [MIC], 2006). The Ministry's Plan focuses mainly on communication assistance, lifestyle support, and community initiatives to endorse multicultural coexistence (MIC, 2006).

⁹Under the new policy, the Japanese government's low-skilled labour immigrants are issued limited visas, and Menju (2017: 147, 211) criticises the fact that the Japanese policy is not an immigration policy as such, and the workers' entries to the country are designed to allow only a temporary stay.

Several fundamental problems impede attempts to provide services according to the Plan's guidelines. The concept of multicultural coexistence remains highly ambiguous (Demelius, 2020; Nagy, 2015). The Japanese government has not established a clear immigration policy and treats migrant labourers as a disposable work force; such workers' presence in the country is considered temporary (Liu-Farrer, 2020; Menju, 2017). Japan's immigration policy discourse alludes strongly to the threat that immigration is believed to pose to Japanese national and public security (Chiavacci, 2014; Vogt, 2014). More specifically with respect to the MIC's Plan, criticisms range from the plan's insufficient coordination with the direction of immigration policy (Kim & Streich, 2020), its lack of implementation at the national level (Chung, 2010), and its absence of specified roles for Japanese and foreign residents (Befu, 2006; Nagy, 2008).

Despite the shortcomings indicated above, local governments have long dealt with issues related to foreign residents without clear policies from the central government regarding immigrants' statuses and rights. In the 1980s, Japan witnessed a surge in both legal and illegal immigration.¹⁰ Pressured by local governments and the international community with respect to the controversial Technical Intern Training Program (*ginō jissshū seido*), which continuously imported low-waged labour while maintaining a stringent immigration policy, the national government finally introduced the Plan in 2006 to compel local governments to provide services for foreign residents and thereby maintain social order.

Regarding the actual operations of services that municipalities are supposed to offer, the central government provided no guidelines as to how they might achieve their objectives nor who should be included in their main foreign resident target categories (Kim & Streich, 2020: 8). Kim and Streich's article on the role of international exchange centres (*kokusai kōryū centā*) as intermediaries between the local governments and foreign residents in various municipalities (2020) remarked upon the absence of a nation-wide monitoring system to oversee and coordinate foreign residents' needs as well as the lack of integration program implementation processes.

In November 2019, the city of Miyama – a municipality in the Hanshin area – conducted a survey targeting educational institutions, organisations, and selected residents who are active participants in community initiatives. According to the description provided by the city's administration, the survey's purpose was both to identify the situations currently concerning foreign residents in Miyama and to clarify the objectives of the MIC's Plan by reviewing the city's efforts to implement it. In April 2019, Japanese immigration legislation was further adjusted to permit the immigration of an additional 345,000 low- and semi-skilled workers over the ensuing five years. The Miyama survey appears to constitute a direct response to the recent immigration policy adjustment, which is expected to increase the city's foreign residents.

Although the vision of multicultural coexistence is supported by city administration, invoked on the city's online homepage and posters, the survey questions induced the common perception in Japan that an increased number of foreign residents would create discord in Japanese society (Chiavacci, 2014: 130). While the survey claimed to serve the purpose of building a multiculturally coexistent society, the words 'collaboration'

¹⁰Organisations that help illegal visa-overstayers in Japan can be perceived by mainstream society as 'accomplices' to illegal activities (Shipper, 2008: 89). In addition, an ethnic group's social institution sometimes reproduces a social hierarchy within its structure that resembles that of the home country (84). Vulnerable residents' lack of social capital and their isolation from Japanese mainstream society hinder the establishment of an inclusive society.

(*kyōdō*), ‘mutual exchange’ (*kōryū*), ‘sharing’ (*wakachiai*), or ‘cooperation’ (*kyōryoku*) were deliberately omitted in the questionnaire. Anxiety about communication barriers with foreign residents was another notable concept that emerged repeatedly in the list of inquiries in the survey. It contained questions that included:

Do you feel that the number of foreign residents has increased in your neighbourhood?

Have you ever experienced a problem with foreign residents in your neighbourhood?

How do you feel about increasing foreign residents in your community?

What are your biggest worries when foreign residents move into your neighbourhood?

The questionnaire was not only filled with leading questions, but the frequent use of certain terms such as, ‘insecurity’ (*fuan*), ‘worries’ (*shinpai*), ‘be troubled’ (*komaru*), and ‘problems’ (*mondai*) also indicated that foreign residents were categorically associated with these ideas. The use of these words demonstrates that the purpose of distributing the questionnaire was to elicit certain types of answers.

A categorical division between ‘Japanese’ and ‘non-Japanese’ – the process of ‘othering’ (Burgess, 2012; Lie, 2001: 28; Weiner, 2009: xvi) – was also prominent in the language used by the government administration. Questions such as ‘What must foreign residents do to build a multicultural society?’ and ‘Please indicate if you have opinions and suggestions from your own experience in having contact with foreign residents’ indicated a movement away from the vision of an international Japan, let alone a ‘multicultural coexistence’ society.

Community as an Analytical Framework

The notion of community offers a useful analytical framework within which to explore ideas of belonging in Japan. As highlighted in the example of Miyama’s survey, the city administration’s categorical standpoint – both Japanese and non-Japanese (Burgess, 2012; Lie, 2001; Weiner, 2009) – enforces a structure upon the ‘multicultural coexistence’ community in which the majority-minority dynamics is intended to continue on the basis of assimilation. At the same time, assimilation in the Japanese context appears to bear the meanings of ‘fitting in’ and uniformity, and it is aligned with the idea of a collective expectation that should be met in community life. An administrator of a semi-urban city in the Hanshin area once explained, ‘The biggest source of trouble between foreign residents and Japanese residents in our neighbourhood is waste disposal and pickup’ (*gomi dashi kaishū*). The collection points for waste, days of the week, time, sorting, the correct placement of waste, and the use of appropriate litter bags are relatively complex in Japanese communities, and each municipal administration produces its own handbook on waste disposal. As part of their responsibility as good citizens, housewives¹¹ often take turns coordinating neighbourhood waste disposal. In the city in

¹¹See Gelb and Estevez-Abe (1998) and Seikatsu Club Consumers’ Cooperative (2016) for women’s use of their personal networks to mobilise in the political arenas that have traditionally been considered to be women’s matters in Japan, such as nurturing, food safety, and community well-being.

which I interviewed the above-mentioned administrator, a waste-coordinator for a given week must ensure that no spills and discharge are left behind and must protect the neighbourhood's waste from cats and crows by covering the waste with a container and then removing it from the collection point of a street corner after collection. Any new foreign or Japanese residents who are unfamiliar with local practices would likely be unaware of the correct procedure, and residents are expected to study the handbook carefully. Based on the MIC's guidelines, most municipalities now offer lifestyle support for foreign residents, and waste disposal is one of the first subjects in which they receive coaching from the municipal office. The overall qualifier of Japaneseness (see Chapman, 2006: 91–92) – the appearance, language skills, and behavioural conducts – determines the basis of harmonious community life and residents' ability to live without threat of disturbing community order. On a similar note, Lie (2008) situates Koreans' passing and invisibility during Japan's rapid economic growth within 'the reality of modern Japan that mandated cultural assimilation, such as dropping regional dialects' (23) and Japan's 'dominant mode of urban interaction operated under the mantra of "not bothering others" [*meiwaku o kakenai*]' (27). This also echoes the self-censoring of the term *Chōsenjin* (Korean) in the Japanese media 'because it was used in a derogatory way in conjunction with ethnic discrimination against Koreans' (Iwabuchi, 2000: 57). Japan's strong inclination towards the avoidance of disturbance and discordance would also explain Japanese mainstream society's 'darkest decades of disrecognition' (Lie, 2008: 165) of Korean residents who remained in Japan after Japan's defeat in the Pacific War (1941–1945). The othering process also extends to naturalised Japanese. Even when multigenerational residents, such as Zainichi Koreans, naturalise, the assimilatory nature of Japanese society is not conducive to free expression of Korean ethnicity and culture (Chapman, 2006: 93–4). In fact, for many Zainichi Koreans, this cultural vacuum is often the reason for resisting naturalisation, although many of them live permanently in Japan and speak only Japanese as their native language.

To approach the concept of inclusion and exclusion in Japan, I would like to invoke the concept of community that is argued by the anthropologist Vered Amit (2015) as an analytical framework. Drawing from Kenneth Burke's (1955: xiii) interpretation of *ambiguity* Amit argues that the ambiguity of concepts such as *community* as a framework allows us to analyse particular workings of sociality, networks, and relatedness and 'encourages us to focus our attention on the similarities, transformations and discrepancies arising amongst a diverse range of more or less overlapping situations or issues' (2015: 7). Therefore, community is 'good to think with' (Amit, 2010: 362). In light of the harmony or discordance dualism, variances prevail in the use of the terms 'community' and 'society'. The community and society that the Japanese national government envisions as a conscious framework with which to manage its society according to its multicultural coexistence discourse (see Burgess, 2012) deviates from the use of 'community' in community development discourse to denote the sense of connection that is affectively charged and represents a process of sociation with a particular sense of commitment (Amit, 2010: 359–360; 2020: 51–52) to positively influence the broader society.

Burgess (2007: 5; 2010) observes that neither the discourse of multiculturalism, which symbolises diversity, nor *Nihonjinron*, which seeks to characterise Japan's unique qualities, is at stake. Rather, the construction of Japan's social reality depends on how the

national identity is maintained and kept distinct from the government's concept of multicultural coexistence (Burgess, 2007: 14). Whether it is a political ideal (Burgess, 2007: 4) or a policy (Nagy, 2015), the most obvious angle from which such discourses are analysed is that of authority and 'power-holders' (Burgess, 2012), including local governments. These governments' use of 'Japanese' and 'non-Japanese' as categorical terms continuously creates 'differentialism' (Nagy, 2015: 9) in Japanese mainstream society, even within the framework of multicultural coexistence (Burgess, 2012).

Lie observes that contemporary Zainichi Koreans show 'very weak ethnic solidarity' (2008: 191). However, this very assumption – that solidarity should exist within an ethnically bounded framework – deviates from the sense of community that multicultural coexistence requires – the type of solidarity that some Zainichi Koreans may attain with their Japanese neighbours in various aspects of Japanese community life. As I observed in my field site, which encompassed three sub-fields, the Zainichi Koreans with whom I worked utilised their connectivity and affiliations with their own 'Zainichi networks' (*zainichi no nettowāku*) and others to accomplish their duties in the personal, professional, and social spheres.

The fact that the sense of community has yet to become central to the Japanese national government's framework of multicultural coexistence may indicate the government's lack of commitment or scepticism towards the redefinition of its national ideology of homogeneity. At the same time, the sense of community experienced by some residents may yield insights as to what would be required for Japan to officially embrace its diversity. The tension between Japan's inclusionary and exclusionary standpoints is reminiscent of a dichotomy between the informal relations among people or a 'discursive tool to describe human beings' primordial sociality' (Jansen, 2020: 7), which is inclusionary, and the structural formality, such as 'state' or 'purpose-driven connections typical of society' (Jansen, 2020: 7), or the political apparatus of the Japanese government (Burgess, 2007: 4), which is exclusionary. Thus, analysis of the negotiations between the formal and informal aspects of Japan's stance on diversity and inclusiveness benefits our understanding of how community spirit has flourished in various interethnic facets of Japanese society despite the Japanese state's current approach to diversity.

'Koreanness' as a Tool of Dialogue in Post-Korean-Wave Japan

The commonly accepted notion of Japan's homogeneity (Burgess, 2007) is coupled with the public's general lack of knowledge about the countries and regions of East and Southeast Asia in the modern historical context. Japan's history textbooks do not sufficiently cover the history of the Pacific War or Japan's aggressions in the country's neighbouring regions in the twentieth century (Nelson, 2002; Tawara, 2015). The general public's lack of knowledge about Korea (Lie, 2008: 148; Mōri, 2008) and the history of Japanese occupation may be extended to the history of Zainichi Koreans and their communities in Japan. One of Japan's most notable recent breakthroughs in this regard was the Japanese public's vigorous consumption of South Korean media products – television dramas, films, and music – through a cultural phenomenon that has been termed the 'Korean Wave' (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008). The most important aspect of this phenomenon has been its impact on Japan's consumers, who have acquired a new, different way of relating to Korea and Koreanness (Kim, Agrusa, Lee, & Chon, 2007).

This familiarisation extends to North Korean culture to a certain extent, particularly through events such as ‘One Korea’ festivals and forums (Iida, 2006; Son 2017).

‘Koreanness’ in this article signifies a concept similar to that represented in ethnic education in the Hanshin area (Hester, 2000; Osler, 2018). In the context of Japan’s homogeneous national identity, Koreanness represents the ‘origin’ and whatever signals Korean heritage, such as Korean language proficiency, the use of some Korean words in Japanese, an ethnic name, Korean pronunciation of Japanese names’ Chinese characters, personal stories of families, family traditions, food culture, and cultural artefacts ‘in a sort of “self-essentialization” toward the creation of an historical subject referencing a politically agentive Korean nation’ (Hester, 2000: 193). In the context of Japan’s previous ‘extermination of all visible “Koreanness”’ (Iwabuchi, 2000: 69), the demonstration of ‘difference’ itself is perceived as political agency in a community in which differences may be recognised as a ‘disturbance’.

These new ways of relating to Korea and Koreanness, which transformed from uneasiness to appreciation, have also affected Zainichi Koreans’ lives. Jung-ho, a Zainichi Korean man in his 40s, who teaches at a public school, believes that the Korean Wave changed the ways in which Japanese teachers relate to him at the school. The airing of Korean dramas, in his view, symbolises the deterioration of the taboo that once existed when Japanese people spoke of or interacted with Zainichi Koreans: ‘It’s nice to hear [at the workplace] that other teachers are more and more interested in learning about Korea and its culture. I casually get asked questions about my heritage. If it wasn’t for the Korean Wave, I don’t believe that would have been the case’.

By recognising the socio-political obstacles that he faces in Japan, Jung-ho’s colleagues have become aware of his school duties regarding adherence to Japanese nationalist ideology:

It is a bizarre picture that somebody like me (a person of an ethnic minority origin) teaches in a Japanese school that still enforces the idea of racial and ethnic homogeneity in its teaching curriculum. Since 2014 (when the historical revisionist view gained more influence in teaching material), the pressure from the prefectural education board has grown even bigger. But I am quite lucky [. . .]: my colleagues support me [. . .] during school ceremonies, I’m usually assigned to a parking lot to guide visitors’ cars, so I don’t have to sing the Japanese national anthem.¹²

In light of multicultural coexistence, Jung-ho’s comment above exemplifies the gap between the Japanese national government’s discourse of homogeneity and how residents cope with the dichotomised situation they face. As familiarity with an ethnic minority grows, residents will find a way to circumvent these embodied shortcomings and adversarial situations through informal means (Horak et al. 2020).¹³

While it is critical to assess superficial multicultural consumption (Kühne, 2012; Morris-Suzuki, 2002: 154–55), it is this *superficiality* that allows Koreanness to blend in various multicultural symbols that are imported and appropriated into Japanese society. This ‘blending-in’ was, in the case of Koreanness, an easier way to (re)position itself

¹²Teachers’ refusal to sing the national anthem and rise for the national flag has continuously been the subject of nationwide debate (see Asahi shinbun, 2010).

¹³The author is not ignorant of situations in which many individuals still face poverty and marginalised situations. The main theme of this article is community residents’ awareness and familiarity, which have normalised and promoted the sentiment of inclusivity and generosity.

within mainstream Japanese society by using various cultural symbols that became available to Japan due to the mainstream interest in other cultures.

The Japanese public's openness to Korean culture through the consumption of South Korean media commodities has, to a significant degree, developed since the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988 and the co-hosting of the Japan–South Korea FIFA World Cup in 2002. Conducting a study among middle-aged women fans of South Korean television dramas, which were broadcast in the early 2000s in Japan and subsequently triggered the Korean Wave, Mōri (2008) demonstrated the significance of the cultural phenomenon, revealing its contribution to the positive transformation of the Japanese public's perceptions of Korea. While acknowledging that the Korean Wave radically transformed Japan's gaze from imperialist to acquisitive (Hirata, 2008), the female gender vulnerability encountered in the study of Korean female hostesses in Osaka (Chung, 2012)¹⁴ is reminiscent of Japan's sexual dominance during the colonial period (Clammer, 2001: 117–118). Thus, contributions by Zainichi Korean women in enacting community spirit in Japan are particularly noteworthy from the perspective of fostering the new 'personalised and realistic' vocabularies used in discussing Korea (Mōri, 2008: 139) and Koreanness in Japan.

A detailed exploration of community activities lies beyond the scope of this article; however, familiarity with Korean culture is visibly present in contemporary Japanese communities, as opposed to 'silenced' (Lie, 2008: 17, 27–28) Koreanness as in the past. In this sense, the new vocabularies – and opportunities – to discuss Korea (Mōri, 2008: 139) and Koreanness represent a new tool with which to assert the presence of Korean ethnicity in Japanese communities. Mōri (2008: 131) pointed out that middle-aged women were relatively invisible as cultural agents before the Korean Wave. As women have attracted attention as major consumers of Korean cultural products, some Zainichi Koreans – mostly women – have also responded to existing demands by teaching workshop activities. These are intended to signal Korean ethnic markers, such as Korean dance, drumming, cooking, language, and handicrafts in Japanese public community centres and the private domain. A kimchi-making event, organised collaboratively by a Japanese public school and a Zainichi Korean women's association, is just one of many attempts to validate the history of kimchi – 'long regarded as the paradigmatic characteristic of Koreanness' (Lie, 2008: 18) in Japan and which was almost exclusively consumed in segregated Korean neighbourhoods until the 1980s.

Clammer observes that ethnicity is not only socially constructed, but is also formed, performed, reproduced, and modified in the process of doing (2017: 30). In this respect, the enjoyment of various Korean cultural artefacts by Japanese mainstream society is Zainichi Koreans' *performance* of their ethnicity in the context of Japan's growing accommodation of diversity. A participant in a kimchi-making-event stated:

Back in the old days, kimchi used to mean something negative, and even we [Zainichi Korean children] started to think that we were eating 'dirty' food and that we were 'dirty' people. Because of the history, it's important to use kimchi for our community activities (*chi-iki katsudō*).

¹⁴As Japanese women who were willing to work in the entertainment sector declined, Japan imported hostesses from diverse countries. Newcomer Korean hostesses also 'filled the gap of supply and demand of hostesses in Japan' and this resulted in the concentration of Korean female migrant workers in the stigmatised sector in Japan (Chung 2012: 195).

As the above narrative suggests, the seemingly essentialist use of kimchi represents a tool to interact with the local community and to gain recognition. Nowadays, events articulating the aim of intercultural exchange tend to be sponsored by a local municipality as part of initiatives prompted by the MIC's Plan; however, several privately organised events are held to raise political awareness, including music events, intercultural parades, and private film screenings with some political content.¹⁵

I do not mean to state here that anti-minority sentiment is no longer present in Japanese society. However, everyday instances of interethnic realities are forming, regardless of the government's intent that assumes the Japanese/non-Japanese divide as if residents do not relate to one another by essentialising the characteristics of Japanese and non-Japanese residents. The following example of interethnic camaraderie and amity represents a glimpse of yet another facet of a future-generation community. A Japanese educator who worked closely with Korean communities recounted that, one year, a North Korean school's annual cultural event was lacking student dance performers to put onstage:

I was always thinking of opportunities for cultural interaction between Japanese and Korean kids. We [grownups] tend to think in terms of teaching kids to embrace diversity and to respect minorities. But it could be the wrong approach. Then something happened. A bunch of Japanese kids wanted to learn a K-pop [South Korean popular music] dance, and the Korean school wanted to find more performers on stage for their cultural fair. So, I talked to them, and the school decided to invite the Japanese kids to perform at the Korean school's festival. And it was a bit funny. Japanese parents see their children performing side by side with Korean kids at the North Korean school. At the beginning, I thought, it was a bit different from what I originally imagined as our aim of a 'cultural exchange', but then I thought, 'why not?'. Nobody opposed it, and the kids were mixing well with each other, they didn't think anything odd or wrong. They had a good time. Maybe that's really our future . . .

The above narrative suggested that the students were indifferent to embodied political tensions between North and South Korea and Japan. A purposeful labelling of the interaction as a 'cultural exchange' would likely have spoiled the spontaneity of the interethnic effort, which, in the end, had an ideal outcome.

Conclusion – Informal Everyday Lives Versus Policymaking

As implied in the anecdotal example of the local government's questionnaire, the ways in which Japanese immigration policies are being codified may transmute the differences between the Japanese majority and 'foreign' minorities into economic, social, health, education, and information disparities. It is often individuals' personal experiences that motivate them to engage in community activities in the search for a new societal norm. One of the participants in this study stated, 'We know, it's simply wrong when you see kids going malnourished as soon as school goes on holidays' to point out that children in poverty are left unfed as they lose access to the school lunch services during the school's

¹⁵ I call these activities in social platforms 'soft activism'. Soft activism raises awareness and creates political momentum and applies methods of sharing, experiencing, evoking, and involving. It differentiates itself from the confrontational and unilateral communication often found in conventional forms of activism.

non-operational time. It is such simple awareness – a small element of knowledge, information, or communication – that may transform into political mobilisation.

Even after multiple generations, Zainichi Koreans' rights remain limited in various areas, including political and educational representation. However, we cannot overlook the visible signs of social readiness to perceive Japanese and minorities as equal among community residents. The MIC's current approach focuses on maintaining society's superficial order and harmony; however, it does not question the necessary steps to cultivate cohesion among residents and to promote a sense of community among foreign and Japanese residents. Many useful hints can be found when examining community spirit among residents who work on the frontlines of community initiatives to promote an inclusive society. I demonstrated cases that indicate a high degree of relatedness, sociality, and amity among residents of Korean and Japanese ethnic origins. As was the case for the Korean minority, 'disrecognition' (Lie, 2008: 165) and self-silencing of Koreanness in mainstream Japanese society until the 1980s resulted in the isolation and invisibility of the minority. Despite Korean residents' social and linguistic competence, having lived through multiple generations in Japan, their invisibility impeded the presence and recognition of Koreanness in Japanese society. This suggests that linguistic skills alone would not secure the solidarity of the community. The Korean Wave was one of the turning points in mainstream Japanese society's accommodation of perceived Koreanness. Although it was limited to the stylised form of Koreanness, accessibility to Koreanness via popular culture, media products, and food offered an opportunity to invite Koreanness into the discursive space in Japanese mainstream.

Considering the low rate of political representation enjoyed by women in Japan (Stünkel, 2019), the gendered domain of policymaking tends to dismiss the importance of women's socio-political participation, which entails an alternative style. In the analysis of policies regarding the national government's multicultural coexistence in Japan, Nagy disapproves of local governments' current implementation of programs for foreign residents, stating that they are 'staffed by amateur teachers, event managers, and monolingual and mono-cultural representatives that do not have the education, experience, or background to successfully manage ethnic and racial diversity' (2015: 13). In his perception, the programs' shortcomings call for better qualification and professionalism for service providers and assured quality of such services. This top-down approach to policy implementation in this instance assumes the service recipients to be almost exclusively foreign residents. I would argue, rather, that the dominant majority would equally benefit from various services if a top-down approach is implemented. The focus should be on informal personal engagement, networks, and active participation by citizens who are nurtured in communities through redistribution of social capital among the participants. As we learned from examples of the post-Korean Wave community spirit, genuine curiosity and interest among ethnic Japanese residents contributed to the process of making a space to accommodate perceived Koreanness in Japan. Efforts to make the *contexts* of minority populations' situations visible and known to a wider public are essential. Such efforts would likely promote the consciousness of responsibilities among the dominant majority that would lead to adapting diversity. It is noticeable that a lack of social capital directly contributes to making vulnerable populations even more exposed to dire situations. As many educators and inspired residents in contemporary Japan's communities concur, initiatives at the community level that personalise the interactions

among residents would steadily foster community spirit to recognise and respect minorities' aspirations, stories, histories, and challenges. Although they tend to become trivialised during the policymaking process, at this stage, sociality among active community residents, including women, foreign residents, and the youth, who contribute a range of perspectives in decision-making processes, offers a reliable foundation on which an inclusive vision may develop. This would also remind us that community is a processual phenomenon.

As Amit argues, the ambiguity of the notion of community allows us 'to think with' it (Amit, 2010: 362) and to treat it as a lens through which we may affirm the basis of our belonging. In this article, I have discussed the notion of community that is shared among residents in Japan, including minorities, through their narratives of everyday moments. Residents in Japan are developing a process for defining their communities from the perspective of multicultural coexistence (Hara, 2010: 43–54; Menju, 2017: 162–166). In developing this process, we should be questioning the meaning of 'culture' (Hara, 2010). As a growing number of individuals with expertise and experience are involved in the process of making a multicultural society, the visibility of everyday realities increases. When policymakers examine such realities in an inclusive community in the works more closely, Japan may finally imagine the outcome of a diverse community.

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