Multicultural Discourse and Policies in Japan: An Assessment of *Tabunka Kyōsei*

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This article aims to provide a ground for a better understanding of the debate about tabunka kyōsei*, a Japanese version of multiculturalism. The term* tabunka kyōsei *is now widely recognized as a key idea in the discussion of the social integration of foreign residents and immigrants in Japan. Some practitioners have embraced it as a promising vision of society, while others are skeptical or critical of the concept. However, considering* tabunka kyōsei *on an abstract, ideational level alone is not useful in assessing its role and significance on the practical level. In this article, I make a distinction between the discursive aspect of* tabunka kyōsei*, on the one hand, and its application to policies and programs related with foreign residents and immigrants, on the other. I pay attention to the emergence and dissemination of* tabunka kyōsei *because the process is particularly important for the critical examination of the concept. The term* tabunka kyōsei *has come to be associated mainly with the provision of support for foreign residents, and this has implications for the potential and challenges in employing the term.*

1 Introduction

This article explores the concept of *tabunka kyōsei*（多文化共生）in Japan, a term translated in varied ways into English, including "multicultural co-existence" and "multicultural co-living."[1] *Tabunka kyōsei* may be regarded as a Japanese version of multiculturalism and is generally understood as a vision of community/society premised on diverse ethnic/cultural backgrounds among its members.[2] The term gained currency against the backdrop of the growth of newcomer immigrants in Japan in the 1990s. With its increased use arose criticism, targeting either the concept itself or the ways in which it

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1   Literal translation from the Chinese characters "多文化共生" would be "multi-cultural-together-living."
2   Comparisons with other East Asian societies offer fruitful perspectives on Japan's multiculturalism (Kim and Oh 2011; Nagy 2014).

is understood or employed in public policy. For example, *tabunka kyōsei* has been critiqued as an empty slogan with little difference from assimilation policy, or for the lack of attention to the problems of inequality and discrimination.[3]

The main concern here is neither to defend nor to discard *tabunka kyōsei* but rather to better understand the context in which the debate about it takes place. I will approach this topic in the following manner. First, on the assumption that the evolutionary process matters in the molding of a concept, this article examines the emergence and dissemination of *tabunka kyōsei*. Second, I make a distinction between two aspects of *tabunka kyōsei*: discourse and policy. The discursive aspect involves how social actors such as activists, volunteer organizations, and local governments employ *tabunka kyōsei* to address diversity issues. The policy aspect, on the other hand, refers to the policies and programs that have been either categorized as or came to be associated with the goal of *tabunka kyōsei*.[4] Although it is not always easy to separate out these two aspects, the analytical distinction should be useful in identifying both the potential and pitfalls of *tabunka kyōsei*.

By reviewing the discourse and policy of *tabunka kyōsei*, this article will demonstrate that its primary discursive potential lies in its power to challenge the axiom of mono-ethnic, homogeneous Japan, while as a policy framework it has generated some tangible benefits in supporting the lives of immigrants. On the other hand, the prevailing conceptualization of *tabunka kyōsei* is narrow in scope, and its pattern of development as part of "internationalization" policy can hamper the integration of immigrants based on equal membership in society. For a fruitful discussion on *tabunka kyōsei*, I would emphasize the importance of understanding the scope and structure of a given debate.

The rest of the article is divided into four parts. Section 2 traces the emergence of *tabunka kyōsei* in terms of both direct impetus and broader historical background. Section 3 discusses how various social actors have employed the term and surveys the development of *tabunka kyōsei* as a policy area. Section 4 begins by reviewing major lines of criticism against *tabunka kyōsei* and weighs them against the term's potential both as a slogan and as policy. Section 5 gives a summary and prospect.

2   The Emergence of *Tabunka Kyōsei*: Social, Historical, and Semantic Background

2.1   *Impetus: Support Activities in the Aftermath of the Mega-earthquake of 1995*

While the term *tabunka kyōsei* had been around since the early 1990s, its ascendance

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3   See for example Chapman (2006), Choi and Kato (2008), Iwabuchi (2010), and Higuchi (2010).
4   Although policy itself involves discourse, the intention here is to look mainly at the scope of programs or schemes.

as a popular slogan owes much to the grassroots activities to support foreign residents in the aftermath of the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake in January 1995. The hard-hit area of the Nagata district in Kobe City was home to many old-timer ethnic Koreans (zainichi Koreans) as well as newcomer immigrants such as Vietnamese refugees. "Multicultural" was a keyword in volunteer activities, as in the case of FMYY, an FM radio station with the concept of "multicultural and multilingual community broadcasting."[5]

Tabunka kyōsei was publicized in particular by Tabunka Kyōsei Center, which was also launched in response to the 1995 earthquake.[6] Building on its expertise in the provision of multilingual information and consultation services, the Center gradually expanded its operations by opening several branch offices in areas such as Kyoto and Tokyo. These community building and support activities after the Hanshin Awaji Earthquake helped raise awareness of the presence of immigrants or foreign residents in local communities. At the same time, they had the effect of strengthening the connotation of *tabunka kyōsei* with issues concerning people who are not native Japanese speakers.

2.2 Broader Background: Growth of Immigrant Population since the 1980s

The growth of an immigrant population in Japan provides a broader context in which *tabunka kyōsei* became a popular slogan. From the 1980s, the number of migrants arriving and settling in Japan increased sharply due to the combined effect of a severe labor shortage in Japan, a strong yen, and changes in the political and economic conditions in the countries of origin. In particular, the revision to the immigration control law in 1989 facilitated the migration of second- and third-generation South Americans of Japanese descent (*Nikkei*), most of whom found blue-collar factory jobs in industrial cities in the Tōkai, Chūbu and North Kantō regions (Sellek 2001, 73-75).[7] In addition, migrants from China, the Philippines, and other countries also increased, holding diverse visa statuses including spouse of a Japanese, student, entertainer, and engineer. The number of registered foreign nationals increased from fewer than 800,000 in 1980 to over one million in 1990 and then reached two million by 2010 (*Zairyū gaikokujin tōkei*, various years).

Ethnic diversification ensued in cities and towns where migrants arrived. The word *tabunka*（multicultural, 多文化）was fitting in addressing the new situation because newcomer immigrants brought with them obvious linguistic, cultural, and ethnic/racial differ-

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5   See the FMYY website: http://www.tcc117.org/fmyy/index.php. Their expertise subsequently benefited other localities which were hit by a major earthquake or other types of natural disasters.

6   The Center was renamed in October 1995 from its original name, "Gaikokujin Jishin Jōhō Sentā," or the earthquake information center for foreigners: http://www.tabunka.jp.

7   The new law allowed Nikkei South Americans to obtain a resident visa with no employment restrictions. The reform of immigration control was in part a response to the growth of undocumented immigrants (visa overstayers).

ences from the majority Japanese.[8] This point can be contrasted with the case of zainichi Koreans, or people with Korean ancestry whose settlement in Japan can be traced back to Japan's colonization of Korea (1910-1945).

2.3   Pre-existing Activism and Community Building: Zainichi Koreans and "Living Together"

Even though the vast majority of foreign residents in Japan up to the 1980s were zainichi Koreans,[9] their presence had not generated a multicultural discourse. Nevertheless, activism since the 1970s by younger generation zainichi Koreans and Japanese supporters comprised another "origin" of *tabunka kyōsei*. As native Japanese speakers who were socialized in Japanese society, language per se was not a barrier for the second- and third-generation zainichi Koreans. Major problems instead were social prejudice and discrimination, on the one hand, and inequality due to legal status, on the other.[10] Those involved in the social movements to fight against ethnic discrimination put forward the slogan "living together (*tomoni ikiru*, 共に生きる)", which consists of the same word as "co-existence (*kyōsei*, 共生)" but with the active voice of the verb *ikiru* (生きる).[11]

"Living together" became a slogan for overall community building, too. In a district with a concentration of zainichi Koreans in Kawasaki City, a forum of neighborhood organizations in 1991 chose "living together" as a keyword with an emphasis on social diversity. They envisaged an inclusive community where everyone—the elderly, children, and disabled people as well as zainichi Koreans—could participate fully (Kim Y. 2007, 122-123).

2.4   Semantics: Combining Kyōsei with Tabunka

The coupling of "living together" with "multicultural" makes for "*tabunka kyōsei*." It is differentiated from *tabunkashugi*, the standard Japanese translation of multiculturalism. Besides the general appeal of "living together" with its connotation of social inclusion, there are a few more possible reasons why *tabunka kyōsei* came to prevail over

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8   In contrast with the popular image of Nikkeijin as persons who look just like the majority Japanese, Nikkei South American communities included persons born of mixed marriages as well as non-Nikkei spouses, and thus exhibited significant linguistic and cultural differences from the local Japanese population.

9   Koreans and Taiwanese held Japanese nationality during the colonial period as Japanese imperial subjects but were declared foreign nationals after the war. As of 1984, Korean nationals accounted for 82% of foreign residents in Japan (Nyūkan tōkei kenkyūkai 1990, 17). The term *newcomers* was coined to contrast them with those old-timers.

10   For example, laws and regulations required Japanese nationality to access social security services such as the National Pension Plan, child allowance, and public housing. Many such restrictions were lifted by the early 1980s after the Japanese government ratified the International Covenants of Human Rights and joined the Refugee Convention.

11   The court battle in the Hitachi job discrimination case (1970-1973) was a watershed event that spurred such movement (Chung 2010, 97-100).

tabunkashugi (multiculturalism) in Japan.

For one thing, *tabunkashugi*, as a translation of multiculturalism in English, is strongly associated with multiculturalism as adopted and debated in classic countries of immigration such as Canada, Australia, and the United States (Kondo 2011, 7-8). There is an understanding that Japanese society is quite different from those countries where the main issue involves ethnic and racial diversity among their citizens rather than concerns for foreign residents. In addition, the ideologically loaded image of multiculturalism with a suffix *-ism* (*shugi*) seems to have discouraged academics and commentators from using the term.

Moreover, the word *kyōsei* was in vogue in the 1990s. Beginning with *kyōsei* between human beings and nature (*shizen tono kyōsei*), its use expanded to relations between social categories, as in *kyōsei* between non-disabled and disabled people, *kyōsei* between men and women, and then *kyōsei* between the Japanese and foreigners (Kim T. 1999, 31-38).

3 Dissemination of *Tabunka Kyōsei* and the Development of Policy

The term *tabunka kyōsei* was disseminated further in the late 1990s and 2000s as it became increasingly used by grassroots organizations, international exchange associations, local governments, and eventually by the central government as well. The following brief survey will show the variety in orientation in the usage of the term.

3.1 Support, Exchange, and Social Inclusion

Programs and activities to assist newcomer immigrants with their lives have been common arenas in which *tabunka* ("multicultural") is featured as a slogan. This is in accordance with the development of *tabunka kyōsei* as a keyword for provision of multilingual information and consultation services. Migrants from abroad face a number of problems as they settle in Japan, ranging from issues concerning housing, work, social security and welfare, child rearing, education of children, and the maintenance of ethnic culture. Volunteer groups, NPOs, and local governments have organized services such as multicultural child-rearing spaces or multicultural free schools.

Tabunka kyōsei, or either *tabunka* or *kyōsei* alone, has also appeared as a title or slogan of events and festivals. Their nature and content differ by locality, depending on which immigrant or minority groups have a major presence and who the organizer is. For example, in the regions where newcomer immigrants are concentrated, organizers have adopted the phrase *tabunka* (*kyōsei*) with the aim of facilitating exchanges between the Japanese and foreign residents. In such cases, the term *kokusai* (international) is also common and seems interchangeable with the term *tabunka*.

On the other hand, in districts with a sizable zainichi Korean population, the favored term tends to be *kyōsei* and *minzoku*（民族）.[12] For example, the organizers of the popular Higashikujō Madang（東九条マダン）in Kyoto have used *kyōsei no machizukuri*（共生の まちづくり, community building based on the idea of living together）as a slogan and project a vision of an inclusive community where diverse resident populations such as zainichi Koreans, disabled people, children, and the elderly can all take part fully.[13] Likewise, some multicultural and multiethnic events have featured the cultures of the Ainu and Okinawans, thereby incorporating non-immigrant ethnic groups into the concept of *tabunka kyōsei.*

3.2   Grassroots Activism and Advocacy

In social movements, zainichi Koreans and Japanese supporters adopted the popularized term *tabunka kyōsei* mainly to address the problem of inequality, human rights, and social discrimination. For example, in the movement to demand local voting rights for permanent resident foreigners, proponents argued that it would help build a *kyōsei shakai* (cohesive society, or a society in which Japanese and foreign residents live together).[14] Zainichi Korean intellectuals and citizens' groups have also argued that a true *kyōsei* could not be achieved unless the Japanese government acknowledges the past injustice of Japan's colonial rule and recognizes the rights of foreign residents (Suh 2000, 12-13). In this way, the historical legacy of colonialism comprises a major element in the discourse of "living together" for old-timer zainichi Koreans.

Although primary concerns may differ between old-timers and newcomers, and for that matter among sub-groups within them, activists and practitioners have come together in rights-based social movements to support and empower foreign residents. Since the early 2000s, for example, Ijūren (*Ijūsha to rentai suru zenkoku nettowāku*; Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan), a nationwide network of migrant-supporting organizations, has compiled comprehensive policy proposals which address the problems faced by both old-timers and newcomers, and called for a "multiethnic and multicultural society (*taminzoku, tabunka kyōsei shakai*)" as a preferred direction and vision of Japanese society (Ijūren 2006).

Despite diversity in orientation and scope among practitioners and activists, the plural term "cultures" (*tabunka*) has come to be understood to refer mainly to those of newcomer immigrant groups. One reason for this connotation can be found in the close relation-

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12   A pioneer project was Ikuno Minzoku Bunkasai（生野民族文化祭）, which was held annually from 1983 to 2002 in the heart of a district with a high concentration of zainichi Koreans in Osaka (Fujii 2010).

13   *Madang*, a Korean word, refers to an outdoor space where people gather. The festival started in 1993.

14   Such idea is captured in the title of a book, *Kyōsei shakai eno chihō sanseiken [Local Electoral Rights toward "Kyōsei" Society]* written by a zainichi Korean scholar (Suh 1995).

ship between *tabunka kyōsei* and *kokusaika* (internationalization), to which we now turn. As we shall see, the framework of internationalization is strongly reflected in the official versions of *tabunka kyōsei*.

3.3 Official Internationalization Policy and International Exchange Associations

In understanding the development of *tabunka kyōsei* in Japan, it is crucially important to recognize its relationship with *kokusaika*（国際化, internationalization）as both discourse and policy. Indeed, *kokusaika* since the 1980s provided a paradigm for dealing with immigrants and foreign residents in Japan and, rather than being replaced by *tabunka kyōsei*, it remains a popular slogan to this day (Kashiwazaki 2013).

Internationalization (*kokusaika*) is not only a buzzword amidst globalization but also a Japanese government policy. Since the 1980s, the central government has encouraged local governments to promote international activities in the policy framework of "local-level internationalization" (*chiiki no kokusaika*).[15] It was in conjunction with this official policy that the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (hereafter CLAIR) was established in 1988 as "a joint organization of local governments to promote their various international activities."[16]

Subsequently, international exchange associations sprang up across Japan and were integrated into the nationwide network coordinated by CLAIR. Their initial mainstay was sister city programs and cultural exchanges with foreign visitors. With increases in newcomer immigrants, however, these associations began to assume a role of facilitating the social integration of foreign residents into local communities. Services they offer include publications of guidebooks for daily living and provisions of Japanese language lessons, with a view to their settlement (Komai and Watado 1997).

A shift in perspective from "visitors" to "residents" coincided with the growing popularity of the term *tabunka kyōsei*. As a result, *tabunka kyōsei* came to be equated more or less with issues concerning foreign residents, or social integration of immigrants. CLAIR has engaged actively in and promoted *tabunka kyōsei*, and helped the term enter into the domain of the central government, as discussed below.

3.4 Tabunka Kyōsei *as a Policy Area: from Local to the Central Government*

3.4.1 Local Governments and Their Advocacy
Efforts to put together a policy package concerning foreign residents, which would

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15 While a number of ministries were involved in internationalization, this particular policy was developed by the former Ministry of Home Affairs (Jichishō), now the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (Sōmushō), which is responsible for local government administration.

16 CLAIR website, accessed September 28, 2015, http://www.clair.or.jp/e/clair/index.html.

then become *tabunka kyōsei* policy, began with initiatives at local levels. Local governments with previous experience in engaging with their foreign resident population took the lead in developing a comprehensive policy plan. For instance, Osaka City, which has a large zainichi Korean community, issued the Basic Plan for the Policy on Foreign Residents (*Gaikokuseki jūmin shisaku kihon shishin*) as early as 1998. A few years later, Kawasaki City in 2005 released the Promotion Plan for a Multicultural, Harmonious Society (*Tabunka kyōsei shakai suisin shishin*).[17] By that time, the term *tabunka kyōsei* was popular enough to be adopted for the main title of a policy plan.

Meanwhile, local governments where newcomer Nikkei Brazilians had a major presence, as in the Tōkai and Chūbu regions, established *Gaikokujin Shūjūtoshi Kaigi* (Conference of cities with a concentration of foreign residents) in 2001 with 13 member cities including Hamamatsu (Shizuoka prefecture), Toyota and Toyohashi (both in Aichi prefecture).[18] Featuring *tabunka kyōsei* as a keyword, the conference demanded that the central government take a proactive approach to the issue of social integration of newcomer immigrants. Thanks to media coverage, this conference communicated effectively the need for public policy to meet the challenges of immigrant integration.

3.4.2 *National Policy-making on* Tabunka Kyōsei

A further push for the incorporation of *tabunka kyōsei* into government policy came in the mid-2000s in the form of a ministerial directive. In response to the demand from the local level, and informed by research work by CLAIR, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) issued the "Plan for the promotion of *tabunka kyōsei* in the local community" in 2006 as a circular to local governments. By this the Ministry encouraged local governments to compile a policy plan so that they could systematically implement policy and programs in the area of *tabunka kyōsei*, or the social integration of foreign residents.

MIC's Plan defines *tabunka kyōsei* as follows:

a condition where people with different nationalities, ethnicities or other attributes live on together as fellow members of the local community, while respecting the differences in the cultural background of each other and striving to build relationships as equals.[19]

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17   Kawasaki City established the Assembly for the Representatives of Foreign Citizens in 1996 to hear the voices of foreign nationals living in the city and to facilitate their participation in local government. In the Kansai area, too, some local governments set up advisory committees to develop policies and programs concerning foreign residents.

18   The conference meets once a year, and every other year it is held in Tokyo where mayors exchange opinions directly with central government officials. There are a total of 26 member cities and towns as of 2015. Gaikokujin Shūjūtoshi Kaigi, accessed September 14, 2015, http://www.shujutoshi.jp.

19   The original Japanese reads as follows: "国籍や民族などの異なる人々が, 互いの文化的差異を認め合い, 対等な関係を築こうとしながら, 地域社会の構成員として共に生きていくこと"（MIC 2006）.

While this definition appears flexible enough in terms of the scope of *tabunka kyōsei*, the layout of the MIC plan gives the impression that it emphasizes linguistic assistance for non-Japanese speakers.[20] In fact, the introductory notes of the MIC plan explicitly state that its main target group is foreign residents who have difficulty communicating in Japanese.

The primary focus on foreign residents who lack Japanese language ability is compatible with the idea of internationalization and as such works to narrow the scope of *tabunka kyōsei*. MIC has situated the promotion of *tabunka kyōsei* within the policy of "local internationalization (*chiiki no kokusaika*)" and calls *tabunka kyōsei* its "third pillar," following "international exchange" and "international cooperation." Consequently, the term *tabunka kyōsei* is often mixed with, or regarded as an integral part of, the advancement of internationalization.

After the release of the MIC circular, prefectural and some municipal governments set out to draft their own *tabunka kyōsei* policy plans. Within just a couple of years, five prefectures (Gifu, Yamanashi, Gunma, Saitama, Aichi, Mie) along with several municipalities compiled and issued a policy plan with *tabunka kyōsei* in its main title. Some other local governments have opted to incorporate *tabunka kyōsei* components into their umbrella policy plan on internationalization.

4 Discourse and Policy of *Tabunka Kyōsei*: Critical Views and Practical Values

Increased references to *tabunka kyōsei* as a slogan or as a policy area have invited skepticism and critical views, such that it is either not enough to address societal challenges or that such an idea should not be pursued in the first place. The aforementioned observations on the evolution of *tabunka kyōsei* should help us understand the emerging pattern of *tabunka kyōsei* and its discontents.

4.1 Critical Perspectives

One set of criticisms comes from activists, scholars, and commentators on the progressive side, or those who share the basic assumption that minority rights and cultures should be recognized and respected. They warn that *tabunka kyōsei* as a buzzword is superficial or far from being true to its meaning.

Debate about multiculturalism elsewhere has informed critical views as follows. To begin with, even though plural cultures in multiculturalism may appear to carry equal

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20   MIC's *tabunka kyōsei* plan consists of four areas: communication support, support in daily lives (*seikatsu shien*), formation of *tabunka kyōsei* community, and the institutional arrangement to pursue *tabunka kyōsei*.

weight, it is argued that in practice the culture and the value system of the dominant group, the Japanese, continue to enjoy a privileged status. As a result, the celebration of diversity may not go beyond mere leisurely consumption of cultural differences in the form of the "three F's" – Food, Fashion, and Festivals (Takezawa 2009, 91). Worse still, the ostensible recognition of plural cultures would mask structural inequality experienced by marginalized groups.

Besides these common charges against multiculturalism, there are some distinct characteristics in the Japanese discussion of *tabunka kyōsei* arising from its social and historical contexts. One contentious point is about the alleged assimilationist tendency in *tabunka kyōsei*. Assimilation (*dōka*) is a heavily loaded term in Japan. Historically, minorities and colonial subjects including the Ainu people, Okinawans, and Taiwanese and Koreans were subject to harsh assimilation policy. In the postwar era, too, zainichi Koreans have been placed under social pressure to hide their ethnic background. Those who have struggled to provide zainichi Korean students with ethnic education at school have for a long time criticized the antagonistic attitude of the Japanese government toward minority culture.[21] Liberals are therefore alarmed when the acquisition of the Japanese language and culture only is emphasized in *tabunka kyōsei* policies and programs.

At the same time, *tabunka kyōsei* programs have been criticized for a narrow focus on multilingual provisions of information and for the tendency to regard immigrants mainly as recipients of administrative services rather than active participants in community building (Takezawa 2009, 92). This is apparently related to both the popular connotation of *tabunka kyōsei* with language-related assistance and the manner in which the official version developed as a project of internationalization.

Meanwhile, conservatives and right-wing groups hold different kinds of complaints against *tabunka kyōsei* or multicultural discourse in general. To the extent that the promotion of *tabunka kyōsei* is equated with a welcoming attitude toward immigrants or foreign residents, the idea is threatening for those who value ethnic and cultural homogeneity in Japanese society. They believe that immigration would increase the crime rate, raise the unemployment rate among the Japanese, and/or harm the native Japanese culture. Such perception has been reinforced by the media coverage of immigrant-related affairs (Tsuda and Cornelius 2004, 470). Mass media have played up "illegal" elements among immigrants in Japan, on the one hand, and conflict between immigrants and the native population in other parts of the world, on the other, with the effect of projecting ethnic and cultural diversity in a negative light.[22]

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21   One front of such struggle is Osaka, which is exceptional in that ethnic education programs for zainichi Korean children are offered in public school, albeit on a limited scope. It can be regarded as a form of multicultural education and has helped foster self-esteem among minority students (Tai 2007).

22   For instance, the remarks by German Prime Minister Angela Merkel in 2010 that Germany failed in multiculturalism and the social integration of immigrants have been cited to discredit multicultural approaches.

The negative attitude toward ethnic diversity in Japan, however, is associated not only with recent immigrants and their cultural differences but even more strongly with old-timer zainichi Koreans, as seen in the activities of internet-based rightwing groups in the 2000s. Zaitokukai (*Zainichi tokken o yurusanai kai*, an association against tolerating privileges enjoyed by zainichi Koreans) is particularly well known for its staging of hate-speech demonstrations in a number of cities. Such groups have taken advantage of deep-seated resentment among the majority Japanese population against ethnic Koreans and the Chinese, which has been exacerbated by deterioration in diplomatic relations between Japan and its neighboring countries (Higuchi 2014).

4.2   The Role and Significance of Tabunka Kyōsei

4.2.1   Discursive Aspect

While critics of *tabunka kyōsei* have presented some valid points, one cannot ignore the actual and potential changes being brought about by the introduction of the term in contemporary Japan. On the discursive level, one major significance of *tabunka kyōsei* is that it challenges the hitherto dominant notion of Japanese society as ethnically and culturally homogenous. "Mono-ethnic society (*tan'itsu minzoku shakai*)" is a typical characterization of Japan, often accompanied by the sentiment that ethnic homogeneity has had a positive effect on the country's economic growth and social stability (Lie 2000, 81-84). In sharp contrast, the term *tabunka kyōsei* presents diversity in a positive light rather than as a factor disturbing peace and stability. It could therefore not only facilitate the recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity that exists in society but also empower minority group members.[23]

Moreover, the use of *tabunka kyōsei* expresses the need for society to tackle diversity issues. This includes the need for relevant public policy and human resource development, such as culturally sensitive provisions of social services. Indeed, in recent years an increasing number of courses related to *tabunka kyōsei* have been offered in colleges, attesting to a greater recognition that the subject is relevant for contemporary Japanese society.

As a slogan, *tabunka kyōsei* also has an advantage over *kokusaika* (internationalization) thanks to its potentially wider scope. The concept of internationalization is premised on the binary of Japanese and foreigners, where "Japan(ese)" remains a mono-ethnic, mono-cultural entity (Kashiwazaki 2003). In contrast, *tabunka kyōsei*, having no literal reference to nation-to-nation relationships, could be molded and applied to relationships and interactions among the Japanese, including Japanese nationals with immigrant backgrounds.

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23   On this point, skeptical views abound; Ishiwata (2011) anticipates little change as the ethnocultural conception of Japanese national identity remains intact.

4.2.2 Policy and Programs

Tabunka kyōsei as policy, too, has produced some tangible benefits concerning the social integration of immigrant populations. For one thing, recognition as a policy area generates institutional response, such as the designation of a section in the city or prefectural government to oversee policies and programs on *tabunka kyōsei*. While it is common for the international section to assume such a role, in the 2000s some local governments began to set up or reorganize previous sections into an office in charge of *tabunka kyōsei*. A related administrative move is to compile an in-house policy plan. As mentioned above, after MIC announced the plan for the promotion of *tabunka kyōsei* in local communities in 2006, a growing number of local governments have drafted their own policy plan on *tabunka kyōsei*. Items laid out in such plans would also be incorporated into a local government's grand policy plan as well. This means that, albeit with all the limitations, budgets are made available to implement relevant programs. Typically, international associations and other NPOs are involved in the actual implementation by receiving funds or by becoming a program partner to the administration. The subsidy programs run by CLAIR have also been an important channel for fund allocation in the field of *tabunka kyōsei*.[24] As a result, we have seen a gradual development in such areas as the provision of preschool programs for immigrant children and training courses for Japanese language instructors, medical interpreters, and multicultural social workers.

This is not to say that the Japanese government is firmly moving toward the creation of a multicultural society. Rather, on the level of the central government, *tabunka kyōsei* programs have been somewhat downgraded, as "policy on long-term resident foreigners" was renamed "policy on long-term resident foreigners with Japanese ancestry" as if to suggest that the official government responsibility extends only to the descendants of Japanese emigrants.[25] The slow speed in the progress of policy related to *tabunka kyōsei* can be interpreted as reluctance on the part of governments to take a proactive stance on the social integration of immigrants and minorities.

5 Conclusion and Prospect

To better understand the debate about *tabunka kyōsei* in Japan, this article first identified several factors that contributed to its emergence in the 1990s. The term gained recognition thanks to multilingual support activities in the aftermath of the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake. In addition to this direct impetus, growth in newcomer immigrants with

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24 Initially, CLAIR mainly funded international exchange programs but gradually expanded its support for projects related with resident foreigners. In 2012, the organization added a new category *tabunka kyōsei no machizukuri* (multicultural community building) to its subsidy scheme: http://www.clair.or.jp/j/multiculture/kokusai/page_8.html, accessed September 28, 2015.

25 The actual implementation of policies and programs covers people other than "Nikkeijin." It is a matter more of an attitude/stance of the central government rather than of the content of the program.

distinctive languages and cultures provided a broader condition. Furthermore, prior zainichi Korean activism that upheld the idea of *tomoni ikiru* (living together) was another important source for the subsequent development of the idea and practice of *tabunka kyōsei*. Academics and practitioners preferred *kyōsei* to *-shugi* (-ism), thereby differentiating the newly emerging multicultural discourse in Japan from that used in classic countries of immigration.

The phrase *tabunka kyōsei* (or simply *kyōsei* or *tabunka* alone) came to be incorporated into grassroots activism, adopted by international exchange associations, and promoted by proactive local governments. Eventually it entered into the vocabulary of the central government policy, where the term was primarily applied to the challenges of accommodating and integrating newcomer immigrants with limited Japanese language ability into local communities.

The evolution of the concept suggests that there is no single, fixed meaning of *tabunka kyōsei* and that the term has been employed in different ways. Raising the banner of *tabunka kyōsei*, some practitioners on the grassroots level explore how best to support and empower people with immigrant backgrounds. Others emphasize the idea of social inclusion as they apply the concept of *tabunka kyōsei* in the area of community building. Some critics emphasize the negative impact of *tabunka kyōsei* and argue that the term masks prejudice and discrimination against ethnic minorities and shifts our attention away from the issue of structural inequality.

Meanwhile, foreigners or immigrants remain outside of the everyday lives of the majority of Japanese. Consequently, a productive debate on *tabunka kyōsei* would require an understanding of what is at issue in a given context. On one level, *tabunka kyōsei* represents a vision of society, namely a kind of society we should aim to realize. A debate at this level can be quite abstract and may differ in nature from another level of debate concerning the evaluation of specific *tabunka kyōsei* programs. Participants in a debate on *tabunka kyōsei* would have to navigate through such differences in level and scope. As Takezawa (2009, 93) points out, there is a need to prevent the growth of xenophobic movements while continuing with critical inquiry into multiculturalism.

Tabunka kyōsei has not become a major subject of public debate in Japan as of 2015. However, it is likely to be politicized more in the years to come, as a greater number of migrants are expected to arrive in Japan. It is not certain that the term *tabunka kyōsei* will turn out to be more or less effective in tackling diversity issues compared with other concepts or slogans. In its discursive aspect, one key would be whether the usage of the term can actually challenge a mono-ethnic conception of the Japanese nation and produce a vision of a society that goes beyond the promotion of internationalization. In part through interactions with the discursive aspect, *tabunka kyōsei* policies will likely be shaped by the ways in which specific programs and initiatives are promoted, institutionalized, or contested.

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