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## Open Educational Space : Multi-strata Class Inclusion in Japan's Chinese Schools

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## **Open Educational Space: Multi-strata Class Inclusion in Japan's Chinese Schools**

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The overall increase in the number of foreigners living in Japan has resulted in an increase in the number of accompanying children. Therefore, a dramatic change has occurred in schools. Presently, in addition to Brazilian and Filipino schools, there are more than 200 foreign schools in Japan, which include Korean, Chinese, Canadian, North American, German, and Indian schools. Initially, these schools mainly aimed to teach the native languages and educate the young generation of foreign residents about the cultures and histories of their home countries. They were not intended for students of Japanese and other nationalities. However, ethnic schools today have experienced dramatic changes caused by a rapid increase in the transnational flow of people, the growing number of international marriages, and the transition between generations in Japanese society. In addition, globalization has influenced many Japanese parents to send their children to ethnic schools for a multilingual education. During the last decade, the number of applicants in Japan's Chinese schools increased dramatically. Interestingly, this increase consisted of non-Chinese students.

This paper will examine the transitions in Chinese schools, based on participant observation and interviews, to analyze why parents prefer Chinese schools for their children and how such schools have become open educational spaces by including students from many ethnic backgrounds.

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## 1. Introduction

Ethnic schools (*minzoku gakkō*) in Japan were established due to the rapid increase in the number of foreign residents. These schools mainly aimed to teach their native languages and educate the young generation of foreign residents about the cultures and histories of their home countries. They were not originally intended for students of Japanese and other nationalities. However, ethnic schools today have experienced dramatic changes caused by several factors: a rapid increase in the transnational flow of people, the growing number of international marriages, and the transition between generations in Japanese society. In addition, globalization has influenced many Japanese parents to send their children to ethnic schools for a multilingual education.

In some Chinese schools, students of Chinese nationality have become a minority. The majority of students are now Japanese, with some having no ethnic Chinese background. In addition, there are students from other foreign backgrounds. As a result, students from multi-ethnic backgrounds are studying in the same classes, speaking a combination of languages, and even learning the Chinese “lion dance” after school. These Chinese schools function similarly to international schools that are more open to students of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Even the classification of students by ethnicity has become difficult because more children are coming from mixed parentages. Therefore, people's perceptions of minority ethnic groups as well as ethnic schools have also changed. Based on participant observation, this paper examines the transitions faced by Chinese schools and analyzes why parents choose these schools for their children. Furthermore, it shows how ethnic schools have become open educational spaces by including students from many ethnic backgrounds.

## 2. Increase in Transnational Migration in Japan

### 2.1 Changes in the Immigrant Population and Nationality

The transnational flow of people has increased rapidly in the past few decades. In Japan as well, the population of foreign residents has increased dramatically since the 1980s.

As seen in Table 1, the annual number of new entrants exceeded one million in 1980 and almost tripled in the next 10 years. The number of immigrants has increased 10 times in a period of just 30 years. On the other hand, Japanese emigration has increased almost 8 times.

Table 2 presents ratios of new immigrants in Japan according to their region of

**Table 1** Transnational flow of population in Japan (1975–2010)

Year	Foreigners Entering Japan		Japanese Exit	Ratio of Re-entry (%)	
	New Entry	Re-entry			
1975	780,298	653,247	127,051	2,466,326	16.3
1980	1,295,866	1,087,071	208,795	3,909,333	16.1
1985	2,259,894	1,987,905	271,989	4,948,366	12.0
1990	3,504,470	2,927,578	576,892	10,997,431	16.5
1995	3,732,450	2,934,428	798,022	15,239,708	21.4
2000	5,272,095	4,256,403	1,015,692	17,818,590	19.3
2005	7,450,103	6,120,709	1,329,394	17,403,565	17.8
2010	9,443,696	7,919,726	1,523,970	16,637,224	N/A

Source: Ministry of Justice. <http://www.moj.go.jp> (accessed 2011/12/31)

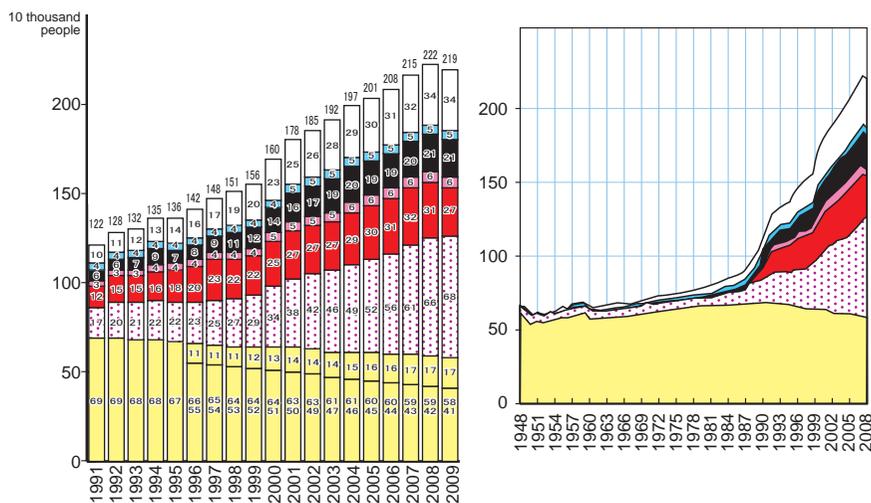
**Table 2** Ratios of new immigrants in Japan according to region of origin (%)

Year	Asia	North America	Europe	South America	Other
1975	30.6	40.3	21.3	2.2	5.6
1980	42.5	29.7	21.6	2.4	3.8
1985	48.2	26.8	19.4	1.2	4.4
1990	58.2	20.0	16.2	3.0	2.7
1995	59.7	19.1	15.5	2.6	3.1
2000	58.3	18.4	17.1	1.9	4.2
2005	67.7	14.8	12.5	1.1	4.0
2010	78.8	3.0	2.9	14.1	1.2

Source: Ministry of Justice. <http://www.moj.go.jp> (accessed 2011/12/31)

origin. In 1975, Europeans and North Americans accounted for 60 percent; however, by the end of the decade, this was surpassed by the percentage of Asians (mostly from Korea, China, and the Philippines), which had been increasing continuously. In addition, by 2005, the ratio had actually account with about 70 percent Asians and just 30 percent Europeans and North Americans. The number of Chinese, in particular, suddenly increased after the implementation of an open-door policy in 1979. The overall demography of foreign residents in Japan changed dramatically after 1980, primarily because of the sudden increase of entrants from Asia and South America.

As seen in Table 3, the rate of increase before the 1980s was relatively low, but since then, the number of incoming foreigners has grown rapidly. This decade was a turning point, as the ratio of newcomers who were non-permanent residents increased, while that of permanent residents from former colonies (such as Korea and Taiwan) actually decreased.

**Table 3** Changes in the number and nationality of foreigners registered in Japan (1948–2009)

[ yellow: North and South Korea (number above: non-special permanent residents, number below: special permanent residents), dotted pink: China, red: Brazil, pink: Peru, black: Philippines, blue: USA, white: others ]

	End of 1991	End of 2009	Changes	Magnification
Total	1,218,891	2,186,121	967,230	1.8%
North and South Korea	693,050	578,495	-114,555	0.8%
China	171,071	680,518	509,447	4.0%
Brazil	119,333	267,456	148,123	2.2%
Philippines	61,837	211,716	149,879	3.4%
Peru	26,281	57,464	31,183	2.2%
USA	42,498	52,149	9,651	1.2%
Other	104,821	338,323	233,502	3.2%

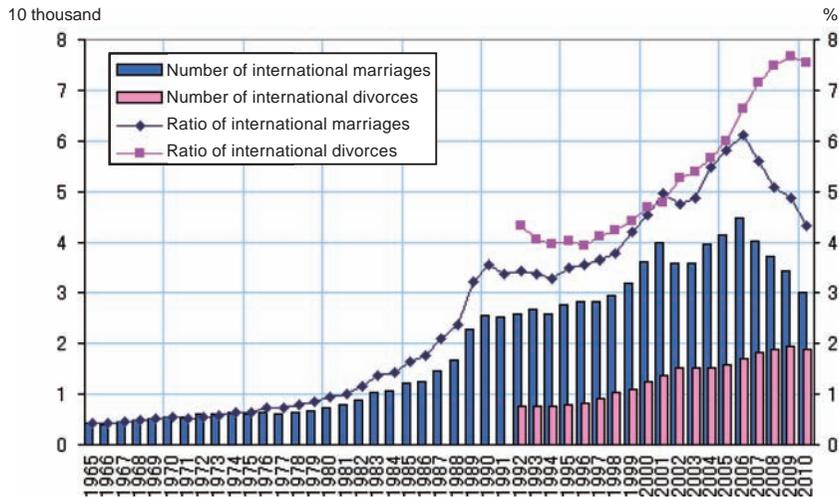
Source: Ministry of Justice, Statistics of Foreign Residents.  
<http://www.moj.go.jp> (accessed 2011/12/31)

Since 1952, the number of foreigners acquiring Japanese nationality has exceeded 400,000, at an annual average rate of approximately 15,000. These numbers are important, especially for the promotion of a multiethnic Japan.

## 2.2 International Marriage

Another important factor affecting ethnic schools in Japan is the growing number of international marriages. As seen in Table 4, in 1965, there were 4,156 mixed-nationality couples, which was only 0.4 percent of the population. However, this increased to 12,181 couples (1.7 percent) in 1985 and 41,481 couples (5.8 percent) in 2005. Furthermore, one out of every 20 marriages was an international one, and the number of couples consisting

**Table 4** Number and ratio of marriages and divorces if either member of the couple is a foreign citizen (1965–2010)



Source: <http://www2.ttcn.ne.jp/honkawa/1190.html> (accessed 2011/12/31)

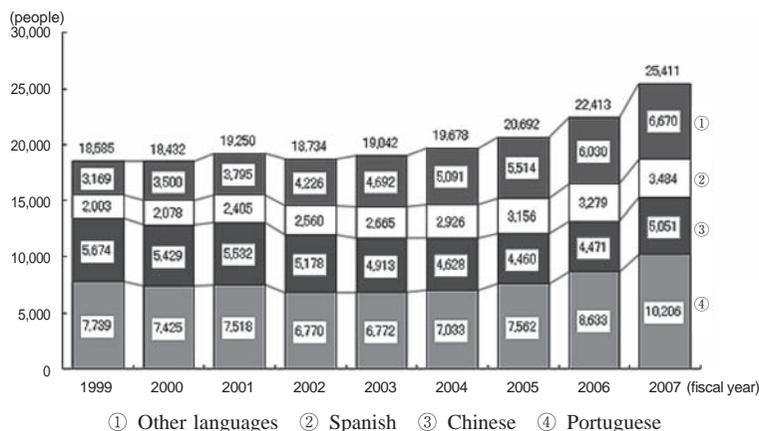
of a Japanese husband and a foreign wife increased dramatically. This increase in international marriages shows that multiethnicization is penetrating the basic social unit of the Japanese household. It poses an additional question: To which nation do the children born in international marriages belong? The answer to this question is not simple, because such people of mixed backgrounds usually seek out well-being for themselves, unlike the “Japanese” people.

### 3. Multiethnicization in Schools

#### 3.1 Foreign Students in Public Schools

The overall increase in the number of foreigners living in Japan has resulted in an increase in the number of accompanying children. Therefore, a dramatic change has occurred in schools. According to a 2007 investigation by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the number of “foreign students needing Japanese language guidance” included a total of 25,411 students registered at public elementary schools, junior high and high schools, secondary schools, and special schools for the blind and deaf (“School Basics Investigation [*gakkō kihon chōsa*]”).

A breakdown of the numbers, as presented in Table 5, shows that those needing Japanese language guidance in their native language include 10,206 Portuguese, 5,501 Chinese, and 3,434 Spanish students, in addition to those from the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, and English-speaking countries. Speakers of these seven languages comprise 94 percent of the total, with the remainder consisting of 54 different native languages.

**Table 5** Foreign students needing Japanese language guidance (1999–2007)

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.  
[http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/houdou/20/08/08073011/001.htm#a001](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/20/08/08073011/001.htm#a001)  
 (accessed 2011/12/31)

A greater number of four- to nine-year-olds appear in the foreign registration statistics than those registered at public schools. This might be because (1) some foreign children attend non-public schools, such as private or foreign-run schools, and (2) some return to their country of origin while being registered in Japan. Chinese children born to Chinese parents who reside in Japan, in particular, are usually sent back to be raised by relatives in China. These children are usually registered and keep their resident status in Japan. This trend is especially apparent among new Chinese migrants.

### 3.2 Foreign Schools in Japan

We can assume that with the increasing number of foreign children, the attendance rate also increases for both public and foreign schools. This was especially true for the Brazilian and Filipino schools during the 1980s. Presently, in addition to the Brazilian and Filipino schools, there are more than 200 foreign schools in Japan, which include Korean, Chinese, Canadian, North American, German, and Indian schools.

In the early 1980s, foreign schools such as Korean, Chinese, German, American, and Canadian were already established in Japan. These were roughly categorized as “Asian” and “Western.” Interestingly, while Korean and Chinese schools (especially the Korean ones) were called “*minzoku gakkō* (ethnic schools),” the English-speaking or European schools were often called “*intānashonaru sukūru* (international schools).” The Brazilian and Indian schools that were established subsequently were often called “*Burajirujin gakkō*” and “*Indojin gakkō*,” respectively. Thus, intentionally or unintentionally, foreign schools in Japan have been divided by ethnic background. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in Japan, “Western” is considered “international,” while Asian and other non-Western backgrounds are designated as “ethnic.”

These foreign schools were established simply to provide foreign children with education in their native languages. Students attending these schools were primarily of the same ethnic and cultural background; therefore, these schools also focused on strengthening the students' ethnic identity and their relation within their respective communities.

Some Japanese parents who wanted to educate their children in an “international” environment sent them to so-called “international schools,” primarily to master the English language. This trend emerged in the 1960s. However, tuition in these schools was expensive, at approximately two million Japanese yen per year, and hence only students from wealthy families could attend. On the other hand, few Japanese families sent their children to Asian schools because these were assumed to be “ethnic” and not “international.”

#### 4. Chinese Schools in Japan

During the last decade, the number of applicants to Japan's Chinese schools increased dramatically. Interestingly, this increase consisted of non-Chinese students. This is an



**Figure 1** “China Fever”—Owing to the increase of Japanese applicants, entrance examinations are required for Chinese schools

Source: *Sankei Shinbun (Sankei Newspaper)* 2005/01/11



Figure 2 Movie flyer for *Chūka gakkō no Kodomotachi* (*Children of Chinese Schools*)

important change, and hence this topic has been widely covered by the Japanese media (Figure 1). A documentary film was shot as well (Figure 2).

Here, I will examine the transitions in Chinese schools, based on my observation beginning in 2006 after sending my son to one of these schools. In addition, using interviews with both parents and teachers conducted in 2010 and 2011, I will analyze why parents prefer Chinese schools for their children, and how such schools have become open educational spaces by including students from many ethnic backgrounds.

#### 4.1 Background of Chinese Schools

At present, there are five full-time Chinese schools in Japan: one each in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe, and two in Yokohama. Chinese schools are generally located in the large cities where Chinese communities are mostly centered. Before World War II, Chinese schools were also located in Hokkaido, Shizuoka, Kyoto, Shimane, and Nagasaki. The oldest Chinese school was established more than 110 years ago in Yokohama (Figure 3). We can trace its history back to Dr. Sun Yat-sen<sup>1)</sup>, who arrived in Yokohama for his revolutionary activity in the late 19th century. Dr. Sun emphasized the importance of education for overseas Chinese<sup>2)</sup> children and suggested that Chinese schools should be established in the community.



**Figure 3** Chinese School in Yokohama (1912)

Source: *Yokohama Yamate chūka gakkō hyakunen kōkei* (A Commemorative Publication: The 100th Anniversary of the Foundation of Yokohama Yamate Chinese School).

The Chinese schools are called “*chūka gakkō*,” or “*kakyo gakkō*,” which means “Chinese school” or “overseas Chinese school.” The main purpose of the Chinese schools is to provide educational facilities for overseas Chinese children and teach a curriculum based on traditional Chinese culture and ethics, with a particular focus on Confucian philosophy. One example is Yokohama Overseas Chinese School, which provides education from nursery school to high school levels. Needless to say, Chinese is the primary language used in classes. First graders take nine Chinese classes, four Japanese classes, and two English classes per week. Mathematics and the sciences are usually taught in Chinese. Most children become bilingual in Chinese and Japanese and often mix them while speaking during their formative years.

Art instruction consists of Chinese traditional arts such as ink painting and calligraphy. For extracurricular activities, students also learn traditional martial arts such as the Chinese lion dance and dragon dance, in addition to other ethnic dances. Furthermore, Yokohama Overseas Chinese School is conveniently located next to Chinatown, and children from the school perform in many festive events organized there. Thus the students are heavily immersed in the Chinese cultural environment, even though they reside in Japan (Photos 1 and 2).

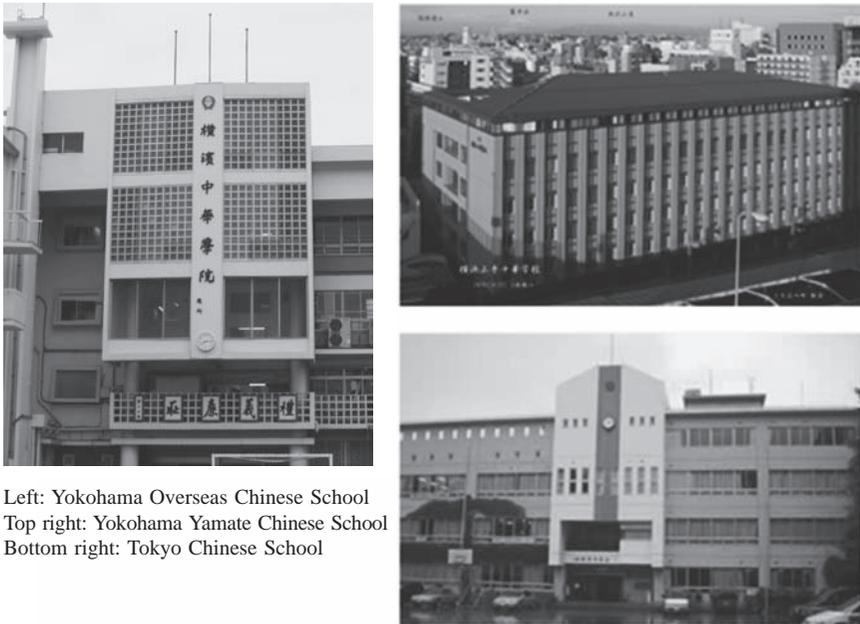
However, these full-time Chinese schools are categorized as “vocational schools” or



**Photo 1** Preschool students performing the dragon dance during a Christmas event (Photo taken by Tien-shi Chen)



**Photo 2** Classroom in the Osaka Chinese school (Photo taken by Tien-shi Chen)



Left: Yokohama Overseas Chinese School  
 Top right: Yokohama Yamate Chinese School  
 Bottom right: Tokyo Chinese School

**Figure 4** Chinese schools in Yokohama and Tokyo (2010)

(Source: Top right: Homepage of Yamate Chinese school (<http://www.yokohamayamate-chineseschool.ed.jp/>), Bottom right and Left: Photo taken by Tien-shi Chen)

“schools for non-academic subjects,” and are therefore not accredited as full-time schools by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. This is due to their curriculum, which does not meet the requirements of the Japanese educational system. Consequently, the students graduating from high school in these schools receive a certificate of graduation that was not recognized by any public university in Japan until recently.

#### 4.2 Increase of Applicants in Chinese Schools

Until a decade ago, the class sizes of Yokohama Overseas Chinese School were very small, with approximately 10 students in each class and just one class for each grade. Recently, the number of applicants to the school has increased to more than three times the quota, which is a maximum of 36 students per class. To cope with this situation, the school began conducting elementary school entrance examinations in 2005. Since then, the number of applicants has continued to increase, forcing the school to expand its first grade into two classes since the 2010 academic year. Other Chinese schools have also been affected by the increase in the number of applicants. In 2010, Yokohama Yamate Chinese School moved to a more spacious location, constructed a new school building (as seen on the upper right-hand side of Figure 4), and expanded to two classes per grade to meet the demand.

**Table 6** Number of students by nationality at Yokohama overseas Chinese school

Nationality	Year	2005	2006	2010
	Taiwan		14.7%	14.8%
China		17.8%	17.6%	13.8%
Ethnic Chinese*		39.4%	36.9%	43.5%
Japanese**		27.1%	30.1%	29.8%
Other***		1.0%	0.6%	1.1%
Total		100%	100%	100%

\*Ethnic Chinese refers to children with Japanese nationality but Chinese ethnic background.

\*\*Japanese refers to children with no Chinese ethnic background.

\*\*\*Other nationalities include British, American, Brazilian, Haitian, Malaysian, and South African.

**Table 7** Number of students by nationality at Yokohama Yamate Chinese school

Nationality	Year	1995		2000		2005		2010	
		Chinese	Old comers	88	36.0%	42	13.5%	18	4.4%
	Newcomers	63	25.6%	131	41.9%	132	32.1%	155	29.5%
Japanese	Ethnic Chinese	51	20.7%	84	26.9%	178	43.3%	327	62.3%
	Japanese	38	15.3%	47	15.0%	76	18.5%	28	5.3%
Other		6	2.5%	9	2.7%	7	1.7%	3	0.6%
Total		246	100%	313	100%	411	100%	525	100%

Other nationalities: UK, Singapore, Cambodia, etc.

However, all of this activity and interest has posed one question: Why has the number of applicants in Chinese schools increased even though the population of children in general has decreased? The increase of Chinese immigrants has a definite impact on this increase; however, as seen in Tables 6–8, the number of applicants is also increasing because more students of Japanese nationality are attending these schools. In fact, students of Japanese nationality now account for 60–70 percent of the total students in these schools.

Since students of Chinese nationality comprise only around 30–40 percent, those of Japanese nationality have actually become the majority. In addition, the number of Japanese children who are not ethnic Chinese has increased to 30 percent in the former school and 15–20 percent in the latter.

As shown in Table 8, students of Japanese nationality form the majority at Kobe Chinese School. This phenomenon is caused by three overall factors. First, the number of

**Table 8** Number of students by nationality at Kobe Chinese school

Nationality \ Year		2005		2010	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Chinese	Old comers	120	19%	89	13%
	Newcomers	90	14%	88	13%
Japanese	Ethnic Chinese	326	52%	415	61%
	Japanese	76	12%	72	11%
Other		18	3%	12	2%
Total		630	100%	676	100%

Other nationalities:

2005—US, Singapore, India, Canada, Portugal, Korea, Vietnam, UK

2010—Canada, Austria, US, UK, Korea, Singapore, Denmark

Chinese immigrants acquiring Japanese nationality has increased. Second, many international marriages are occurring between people of Japanese and overseas Chinese backgrounds. Therefore, the number of mixed-background children is steadily increasing. In most cases, children from these families tend to hold Japanese nationality. They are categorized as ethnic Chinese with Japanese nationality in Table 8. Third, children of various other nationalities (such as Malaysian, UK, US, Brazilian, South African, Canadian, and Korean) are also enrolling in the Chinese schools. In addition, the number of children having dual nationalities is increasing.

With regard to this situation, Mr. Chang, the former principal of Yokohama Overseas Chinese School, stated, “The Chinese school was aimed at the education of children of overseas Chinese, but it is remarkable that Japanese applicants have increased year by year for the past several years. Also, students from various other countries such as the UK, the USA, and South Africa have increased. Now our school is rather multinational.<sup>3)</sup>”

On the other hand, Mr. Pang, the principal of Yokohama Yamate Chinese School, stated, “Our school reluctantly has to set limits to the first phase and second phase admissions in order to limit the applicants. Also, we were obliged to limit Japanese students with no Chinese background under 10% of the school quota.<sup>4)</sup>” In response to this action, Mr. Jiang, a teacher at Osaka Chinese School (who prepared the questionnaire to collect the statistical data), commented, “It is worthless to divide students only on the basis of nationality anymore. Also, it is getting more and more difficult to categorize the ethnic background of every student.” Following the sudden growth of Japanese applicants beginning in 2003, Osaka Chinese School added a category called “pure Japanese.<sup>5)</sup>”

## 5. Why Chinese Schools Now?

The number and diversity of students is rapidly increasing in Chinese schools. What has caused the occurrence of this phenomenon? This section will examine various reasons.

### 5.1 China's Growing Significance

Since the late 1990s, China has seen a dramatic change in its economic growth. After the turn of the 21st century, China became wealthy enough to host the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the EXPO 2010 Shanghai China. The economic relationship between China and Japan is becoming increasingly closer, and therefore the flow of population has increased.

During an interview with a Brazilian mother who sent her son to a Chinese school in Yokohama, I asked, "Why did you send your child to a Chinese school?" She seemed rather surprised and answered, "It is the era of China from now on, and that is why I want my child to master the Chinese language rather than sending him to a Brazilian school. English is not enough anymore<sup>6)</sup>".

I also interviewed the parents of a six-year-old boy who will enter Yokohama Overseas Chinese School in April 2012. The father is third-generation Chinese, and the mother is Japanese. The mother mentioned that they decided to send their boy to a Chinese school so that he can master both the Chinese and Japanese languages. Mr. Sun, the father, expressed his regret as he explained, "Because I studied in a Japanese school, I understand only a little Chinese, which was spoken at home. When I was young, we used Japanese at home most of the time and my parents only spoke in Chinese if they wanted to keep an issue secret." After graduating from college, Mr. Sun began working for a trading company and was sent to Shanghai. As a necessity, he began studying Chinese. According to him, "It is very useful if you can speak Chinese and more than one language, so I wanted to give that chance to my son. Besides, he does have Chinese blood, so I think he better be aware of the language<sup>7)</sup>".

From my overall observations, I have realized that many third-generation Chinese who attended English-speaking international schools now send their children to Chinese schools. For example, Mr. Jo studied at one of the famous international missionary schools in Yokohama. He married a Japanese woman, and they now have three sons. The youngest son has been a classmate of my son's since 2008. Ms. Jo and I often meet when we take our children to class. Initially, her two older sons attended an English-speaking international school, but later, she and her husband decided to transfer them to a Chinese school. However, the Chinese school was full, and their sons were placed on a waiting list. She also mentioned that the oldest son (a third-grader) seemed somewhat reluctant at first, but after watching the "lion dance" during the Chinese school's events, the children had become interested in joining the school. Mr. Jo said, "Many people can speak English. English is not enough anymore. We want to educate them [the children] to become multilingual. Even I am learning Chinese for my business<sup>8)</sup>". In the summer of 2011, the Jos' two oldest sons transferred to the Chinese school, and the youngest son has passed the entrance exam. He will join the first grade in April 2012.

## 5.2 Japanese Students Studying in Chinese Schools

Much conversation can be witnessed on the internet among Japanese parents who are planning to send their children to Chinese schools<sup>9</sup>). For example, Mr. Kato has decided to send his children to a Chinese school because he worries about education methods in Japanese schools, which emphasize pressure-free education, even though globalization is leading to severe international competition. In addition, Japanese elementary school students attend school five days a week for a total of 28 hours, while Chinese school students attend six days a week for a total of 34 hours. These general aspects have attracted many Japanese parents who want their children to receive a bilingual and bicultural education. In some instances, parents have even relocated from one prefecture to another just to be close to the school of their choice.

Most parents seem to be aware of the rise in the Chinese economy and the usefulness of the Chinese language in the future. Following my interviews with both parents and schoolteachers, I realized that there are five overall reasons that the number of non-Chinese applicants has increased in Chinese schools:

(1) The popularity of learning the Chinese language is rapidly growing because of China's economic development. (2) The number of Japanese returnees who have previously resided in Chinese-speaking areas such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore has increased. (3) Along with the increase and diversification of foreign residents, there has been a significant change in the Japanese social consciousness about foreigners and the image of ethnic schools. (4) There is a growing dissatisfaction with Japanese school education. (5) Parents are transferring their children to Chinese schools in order to avoid bullying.

Although the educational purpose and curriculum of Chinese schools are aimed at the education of overseas Chinese children, Japanese parents still choose these schools, even against education regulations in Japan. I believe that this preference is mostly due to a change in the social consciousness of the Japanese caused by the progress of a multi-ethnic society in Japan. At some point, there was a huge gap between the images of the foreign schools affiliated with Europe and North America (international schools) and Asian schools (ethnic schools). In addition, "internationalization (*kokusaika*)" was apt to be recognized as "Westernization" in Japan. In contrast, today, the transnational migration of Asians into Japan has increased, and the Japanese people have adjusted to the diversity of foreign residents.

There is, however, one instance in which ethnic schools have not adjusted to change as quickly. Korean schools, in general, do not accept Japanese students who are not ethnically Korean. However, the number of students in Korean schools who have acquired Japanese nationality has also increased, and 60 percent of their enrolled students hold Japanese nationality (Shoji and Kim 2006). This is also the result of naturalization and mixed marriage, which is just another example of multiethnicization in Japan.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology decided to allow graduates from foreign schools to apply to public universities, but limited this allowance to only European and American—or the "international"—schools. Asian schools such as the Korean and Chinese ones were not included in the scheme. However,

after much public outcry, the Asian schools were eventually given the same allowance. Interestingly, even while the government discriminated against the Asian ethnic schools and debate about them continued, the number of Japanese applicants to these schools did not decrease. This shows that there are clear differences between the public opinion and that of the government about the image of Asian “ethnic” schools, in addition to the multiethnicization of society in general.

## 6. Conclusion

As progress toward multiethnicization in Japan continues, the number of non-Chinese students keeps on increasing in Chinese schools. In 2007, more than half of the new students enrolling in these schools were Japanese nationality, even including Japanese without Chinese ethnic background. This increase proves that the image of Chinese schools among the Japanese people is changing, and they now demand “the Chinese version of an international school” for their own well-being.

Under these circumstances, Chinese schools are facing a major transition. Schools have become forced to deal with more diverse students and provide an even more creative curriculum. According to Sugimura, Chinese schools declared their education as solely for the Chinese (Sugimura 2011). However, through my observation over the last few years, as well as in discussions during a symposium I organized in November 2010<sup>10)</sup>, it has become clear that while these schools started by emphasizing that they were basically for overseas Chinese students, non-Chinese students are also being welcomed now.

Today, teachers do not ask their students, “What is your nationality?” or “Where are you from?” All students in Chinese schools are learning Chinese, Japanese, and English equally. Through such education, the students develop the same abilities and do not care about their nationality or country of origin. Rather, they are more aware of how to cooperate with each other since everyone is uniquely different. Thus, while students in Chinese schools are trained to respect the Chinese tradition, they also learn to choose their own identity and appreciate the benefits of living in a diverse environment.

Finally, it seems that multiethnicization in Japan will continue to develop over time, and the number of Japanese students attending Chinese schools will also increase. Most importantly, future graduates of these schools will take their multicultural education and use it to play a unique role in a multi-ethnic society of the future.

## Notes

- 1) Sun Yat-Sen (1866–1925) is also known as Sun Wen in Mandarin Chinese, or Son Bun in Japanese. He organized and played a vital role in the 1911 Revolution that overthrew the Manchu Dynasty. He was the provisional President of the Republic of China from 1911 to 1912.
- 2) “Overseas Chinese” represents Chinese immigrants who have Chinese nationality but reside outside China. Many Chinese immigrants who have naturalized to the local nationality are

known as ethnic Chinese. An estimated 30–40 million Chinese immigrants are living outside China.

- 3) Interview conducted on 2007/5/10 at Yokohama Overseas Chinese school.
- 4) Interview conducted on 2010/11/20 at Yokohama Yamate Chinese school.
- 5) Interview conducted on 2010/9/15 at Osaka Chinese school.
- 6) Interview conducted on 2008/10/30 at Yokohama Overseas Chinese school.
- 7) Interview conducted on 2011/12/1 in Yokohama Chinatown.
- 8) Interview conducted on 2011/10/15 at Yokohama Overseas Chinese School.
- 9) For example, there are some web-page named “inter-edu” which provide people to exchange schools and education related information. There are information related to Chinese schools in Japan see [http://hamarepo.com/story.php?story\\_id=56&page\\_no=1](http://hamarepo.com/story.php?story_id=56&page_no=1) and <http://www.inter-edu.com/forum/read.php?26,1125566> (accessed 2012/01/06)
- 10) Symposium titled “Who is Chinese Overseas: Education and Identity,” at the conference of the Japan Society for the Studies of Chinese Overseas, held at Yokohama Yamate Chinese school on November 14th, 2010.

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