Discourses of Homogeneity in a Rapidly Globalizing Japan

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Abstract

This paper looks at the ideological tools that maintain the idea of Japan as mono-cultural, homogeneous, and "unique". In examining what I call the "pull" of identity, the paper investigates the various Discourses that maintain the coherence of nation and national identity in the face of the serious challenges posed by the presence of growing numbers of migrant settlers. The first part of the paper presents an analytical framework for understanding identity. The second part of the paper gives a short overview of Nihonjinron, the overall term that describes the Discourse on Japanese identity. The third part of the paper highlights four contemporary terms - *kokusaika*, *ibunka*, *kyōsei*, and *tabunka* - which form a sophisticated vocabulary that function to maintain the idea of a unique, homogeneous Japanese (national) identity. The paper finishes by addressing the prospects for a "multicultural" Japan.

Introduction

In the migration literature, Japan is often viewed as an exceptional or 'negative' case (Bartram 2000). Japan is one of the few industrialised countries not to have experienced the tremendous inflow of international migrants. However, in a rapidly globalising Japan, migration is, belatedly, becoming an issue. International migration2 presents growing challenges for Japan, opening up the prospect of profound social change in a country not traditionally thought of as a destination for migration. As local agents who develop their practices and representations in global contexts (Befu 2000; Mato 1996: 69), migrants are not only products of global change but also a powerful force for further change. Through their everyday experiences and (re)constructions of individual identity, migrants can plant the 'seeds of social change' at the grassroots level3.

It is increasingly common for migrants to be portrayed as the harbingers of a 'new' multicultural Japan. Much of this is framed in terms of re-constructions of systems of identity. For example, Graburn et al.'s (2008) edited volume argues that there are already signs of dramatic changes in the nature of these Japanese/non-Japanese boundaries within Japan. Goodman et al.'s (2003) work argues that migrant communities have begun to affect social reality in Japan, particularly Japanese people's view of themselves as a nation. Clearly, the re-construction of individual identity can have profound and real consequences for national identity. As Keith (1993: 31) argues, the push and pull of identity is not "some sort of surface froth that floats around on top of more important social processes". Rather, as Harvey (2000: 119) puts it, the way individuals negotiate representations of Self and Other "constitutes an important mapping of the basic contours of politics and struggle within the social body." Japan as a fairly homogeneous and stable society, commonly

cited for its conservatism and cultural uniqueness, provides an interesting case study for examining how powerful regimes of representation respond to increasing numbers of newcomers challenging the notion of Japan(ese) as homogeneous.

This paper looks at the ideological tools that maintain the idea of Japan as mono-cultural, homogeneous, and 'unique'. In examining what I call the 'pull' of identity, I investigate the various discourses that maintain the coherence of nation and national identity in the face of the serious challenges posed by the presence of growing numbers of migrant settlers. The paper proceeds as follows. First, I present an analytical framework for understanding identity. Second, I present a short overview of Nihonjinron, the overall term that describes the Discourse on Japanese identity. Third, I highlight four contemporary terms which form a sophisticated vocabulary that function to maintain the idea of a unique, homogeneous Japanese (national) identity. The paper finishes by addressing the prospects for a 'multicultural' Japan.

The Push and Pull of Identity

For Foucault (1983: 212), modern day power-plays revolve around the question, 'Who are we?'. As the pace of globalisation increases, these questions of identity become even more pressing. According to Foucault (1983: 212-3), contemporary power-plays are less likely to be 'struggles' against forms of domination or exploitation and more likely to be attempts to loosen and transform the ties that attach individuals to their own identities in constraining ways and make them subject to someone else by control and dependence. In the context of Japan, migrants and others 'push' against conventional representations of Japan(ese) as homogeneous, while various ideologies 'pull' them back into conventional subject positions. This notion of a 'push and pull' is central to the idea of globalisation as a symbolic process which involves both a loosening and the maintenance of national identity. There is a loosening of the extent individuals identify with the nation which, according to Stuart Hall (1992: 302), results in stronger and new identities 'above and below the level of the nation-state'. On the other hand, these processes of detachment are often counter-acted by 'tradition' (Robins 1991) or 'Discourses of place', parallel processes that attempt to "solidify porous borders, bolster breached containments, arrest the erosion of identities, and revitalize faded essences" (Luke and Tuathail 1998: 73).

Hall (1996) presents an analytical framework which theorises this push and pull of identity. Identity, according to Hall, is constructed at the point of intersection ('suture') between external Discourses and practices and the internal psychic processes that produce subjectivities. For Hall (1996:6), identity (or more accurately identities) is/are simply "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us." The subject can choose (within certain parameters) to identify partly, wholly, or not at all with the 'positions to which they are summoned' (Hall 1996: 14). "[T]he question, and the theorisation, of identity", Hall (1996: 16) concludes, "... is only likely to be advanced when ... the suturing of the psychic and the discursive in their constitution, are fully and unambiguously acknowledged."

The work of Penny Kinnear (2001) illustrates how Hall's framework may be applied

in practice. Using oral and written material, Kinnear has analysed how individuals growing up as a child of one Japanese and one non-Japanese in Japan talk about who they are and how they became that person. She concludes that identity is not a question of either/or but constructed in dialogue. Much of the tension in the experiences of her subjects, she concludes, was not between 'two' cultures but between the individual's own experiences, the meanings attached to, and the tools used for interpreting those experiences (that is, subjectivity) and the stereotypical experiences he or she is supposed to undergo (that is, Discourse). One of her key findings concerns the importance for her participants of constructing a 'new place' for themselves in society.

"[I]dentities can function as points of identification and attachment", writes Hall (1996: 4/5), "only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside'." As Said (1978) has argued, Self is defined less by what one is and more by what one is not, through a process of 'Othering'. Both Derrida's 'violent hierarchy' (such as man vs. woman) and Foucault's 'dividing practices' (such as the mad vs. the sane) depend on the idea that one's identity is based on negating or excluding something. "The subject is either divided inside himself [sic] or divided from others", writes Foucault (1983: 208), "[t]his process objectivizes him [sic]." As Butler (1993: 22) argues, all identities operate through exclusion – through the construction of marginalised subjects. In the case of Japan, a key hierarchy or binary is that of Japanese vs. foreigner. The marginalisation and exclusion of the latter is crucial to the self-identity of the former (Creighton 1997: 212).

Since identities are not unified or fixed but constantly in the process of change and transformation, individuals push against and attempt to disturb such binaries while at the same time being pulled back into place. There is a dynamic and ongoing power-play. Hall (1996: 5), drawing on Laclau, notes how 'the constitution of a social identity is an act of power' since 'if an objectivity manages to partially affirm itself it is only by repressing that which threatens it.' Representations of difference are central to the exercise of power. The concept of insider (Self) – and their position in the social hierarchy that gives access to wealth and power – can only continue to exist by maintaining a strict definition of who is an outsider (Other) (Breger and Hill 1998: 7/8; Johnson and Warren 1994: 3/7).

Even so-called 'multicultural' societies like Australia take care (perhaps even more care) to construct categories and draw clear boundaries around people (Hage 1999). Those subject to such categorisation are to greater or lesser extents able to displace the stereotypes and mobilise and accumulate power. The power plays are full of contradictions, something particularly apparent in contemporary Japan. For example, in Japan the widespread acceptance at many levels for 'internationalisation', 'out' marriage, and 'difference' appears to conflict with established notions of Japanese identity based as it is on 'blood' and the importance of assimilation (Nakamatsu 2002: 148/53). Central government policy guidelines to local ward offices encouraging the 'importation' of foreign brides as a crucial element of 'village revitalisation' (mura okoshi) contrast with a national policy which does not welcome and only reluctantly recognises the settlement of foreign migrants in Japan. In order to understand such contradictions, it is useful to briefly consider the theories of Japanese (national) identity which underlie contemporary regimes of representation.

Nihonjinron

The nationalistic ideologies of race that developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries formed the basis for the contemporary Discourse on national identity known today as Nihonjinron. Thus, although Nihonjinron is often written about as a post-war phenomenon (Oguma 1995), many of its major themes can be traced back to the Tokugawa period (Kawamura 1980: 44). With the period of nation-building following the Meiji Restoration (1868), discussions of Japanese identity acquired both a new Other – the West – and a new urgency (Pyle 1969).

For a short period following end of the war, discussions of Japanese identity were more subdued. But with the new-found economic prosperity in the 1960s attention again shifted to the positive dimensions of that identity (Lie 2001: 132). As Japan's economy became stronger in the 1970s and 1980s, so Nihonjinron-related publications increased (Yamawaki 2000: 48). These post-war discussions resembled pre-war ideologies in all but two respects: lack of mention of the emperor and the low level of state involvement (Befu 2001: 140). Thus, at least until relatively recently, post-war discussions on identity in Japan tended not to mobilise common symbols of national unity, such as flag, anthem, and monarchy. Such symbols were largely discredited post-1945 due to their wartime connections. Befu (2001: chapter 5) argues that because Japan was no longer able to exploit such national symbols effectively, there emerged a kind of identity or symbolic vacuum which was filled by Nihonjinron. The term Nihonjinron thus describes pre-war Discourses of identity shorn of their imperialistic and war-time symbolism. Mouer and Sugimoto (1986: 406) note that the Nihonjinron Discourse has two central tenets: Japanese society is 'uniquely' unique and group orientation is the dominant cultural pattern which shapes behaviour. A central premise of Nihonjinron is that the Japanese are a homogeneous people (tan'itsu minzoku) which constitute a racially unified nation (tan'itsu minzoku kokka).

Compared with the period up until the end of the war, the role of the state in directly creating and propagating ideologies of identity is much less. There is no secret police, Imperial Rescript on Education, nor morality texts in schools. The level of state involvement and coercion is less overt and more subtle and indirect (Befu 2001: 140). But what Anderson (1983: 104) calls 'official nationalism' – "a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth" – has not disappeared. Mouer and Sugimoto (1986: 170) note that Nihonjinron has become a major point of reference in justifying the conservative policies of the LDP. Occasionally, the government takes a direct role in deliberately introducing and officially sanctioning Nihonjinron as an ideology. For example, the Japanese government and affiliated organisations, such as the Japan Foundation, expend much energy in propagating Nihonjinron abroad (Befu 2001: 82; Mouer and Sugimoto 1986: 177-81). And, as we will soon see, Prime Minister Nakasone played an important role in the promulgation of the *kokusaika* (internationalisation) Discourse.

Most of the time, however, maintenance of ideologies of homogeneity is not a project of the state. Rather, it is a project of a varied and disparate group of individual power-

holders for whom the support of a particular national identity is a way of maintaining their own power-base. Much of the Nihonjinron material is produced by intellectuals and others in books, magazines, newspapers, TV, public lectures, and even college courses (Befu 2001: 46). However, governments and other official organisations turn it into a dominant ideology (Befu 2001: 81), sponsoring, maintaining, and supporting it via the corporate establishment. There have been detailed analyses (for example, Oguma 1995; Yoshino 1992) of how academic, business, labour and other elites play a central role in systematizing, endorsing, and diffusing these ideas and ideals of identity to the general population. "Given the importance of national identity as a cultural glue binding them to society", writes Pak (1998: 32), "state actors clearly have a vested interest in managing its construction." As Mouer and Sugimoto (1986: 169) put it, Nihonjinron has been used as an ideology to enhance the interests of those in control within Japan.

Identity is at the core of Nihonjinron (Befu 2001: 119). Dale (1986: 119) defines Nihonjinron as 'discussions of Japanese identity'. As a discourse on national identity, Nihonjinron is not unique. Befu (2001: 14) characterises it as a species of cultural nationalism which is found everywhere4. As with other species of cultural nationalism, the printed word is central, making it possible to 'think' the kind of imagined community that is the nation (Anderson 1983: 28-31). Nihonjinron has much in common with those forms of nationalism that are adopted by regions or states previously dominated by the West as a means of reclaiming their own identities (Clammer 2000: 205; Moeran 1989: 183-4). Working within the same ideological framework that is the Asian Values discourse (Hill 2000), Nihonjinron is an indigenous Occidentalism that takes the form of a self, auto, or inverse Orientalism (Aoki 1990: 149-50; Iwabuchi 1994; Moeran 1990: 3).

In the 1990s, perhaps partly due to the recession, interest in Nihonjinron subsided somewhat. With the passing of the anthem and flag bills in 1999 and a rise in rhetoric reminiscent of the pre-war era, the symbolic vacuum described by Befu as Nihonjinron's raison d'être may be filling. Yet, despite reports of its demise, Nihonjinron appears remarkably resilient. Sugimoto (1997: ix) argues that the view that Japan comprises an extremely homogeneous culture is still 'dominant and pervasive'. Befu (2001: 14) notes that important Nihonjinron publications continue to be published: for example, Fujiwara's (2005) *Kokka no Hinkaku*, which advertised itself as *kakkiteki* (epoch-making) *nihonron*, sold over 2 million copies in its first two years alone. Perhaps, as Befu (2001: 140) suggests, present-day Nihonjinron is a 'stronger, more firmly rooted' ideology than wartime Nihonjinron because it gains its support not centrally from the state apparatus but emanates from the grass-roots5.

The strength of Nihonjinron ideologies is being (or will soon be) tested in a Japan which may have reached (or be reaching) a critical mass in terms of numbers of international migrant settlers. Those investing their future in the country will find it hard to tolerate a national identity based on ethnic homogeneity which "automatically excludes other ethnic groups from citizenship in a cultural sense and ignores their contributions" (Befu 2001: 84). As with identity in general, Japanese identity is reconstituted through a process of ethnic 'Othering' which places non-Japanese in diametric opposition to the Japanese in terms of class, culture, and ethnicity (Lie 2000). Befu's (2001: 44) observation that there is a total absence of a

women's perspective in the Nihonjinron literature may provide further incentive for female settlers in particular to challenge this 'hegemonic' ideology of Japanese (national) identity.

Contemporary Maintainers of Japanese (National) Identity

Because it is no longer tenable to maintain (national) identities through processes of overt exclusion, the maintenance of Japanese identity often manifests itself in rather sophisticated forms which at first glance seem to promote inclusion over exclusion. Hage (1999: 134-8) refers to this as the 'dialectic of inclusion and exclusion'. Nakamatsu (2002: 152/3), drawing on Ang (1996), sees Discourses like *kokusaika* as examples of a process of 'Othering' not by exclusion but by inclusion. Similarly, Suzuki (2000: 156) sees the 'pervasive political rhetoric' of *kokusaika* and its offshoots as attempts to incorporate, isolate, and control alien entities. Discourses such as *kokusaika* can act as powerful signifiers which 'include' foreigners by locking them into a particular category of difference. With stereotypical forms of difference as the basis for inclusion, subjects are sometimes marginalised and denied access to mainstream sites of power and full participation in the community. The use of difference as a tool of inclusion disguises similarities, explaining why, for example, foreign brides are rarely treated as the 'ordinary wives' of Japanese (Piper 1997: 322).

Mackie (1998: 45/58; 2002: 181/191) has noted that recent patterns of labour and marriage migration have meant that those 'Others' who are so crucial to the construction of Japanese identity are no longer safely displaced or externalised but are within the boundaries of Japan itself. "It is thus necessary", she (2002: 191) argues, "to displace these 'others' through discursive means." The sections below cover four of the most powerful discourses of displacement. The first two are the familiar *kokusaika* (internationalisation) and *ibunka* (different culture) discourses. The third is the increasingly popular (and even more sophisticated) discourse of 'co-existence' (*kyōsei*). The fourth is the emerging discourse of *tabunka* (multiculturalism). These discourses can be said to be sophisticated because they give the impression of 'an ideological shift from an ideology of homogeneity to an ideology of difference, while in actuality maintaining and reinforcing the former.

Kokusaika

In English, 'internationalisation' implies both a physical and psychological opening up. In this sense, Japan's rush to modernise (*kindaika*) and 'catch-up' with the West post-1868 can be seen as a form of internationalisation. In terms of military strength and international status, the race to catch up was complete by the end of World War One. Post-1945, the race to catch up was largely run by the 1970s. It was also during the 1970s that the term *kokusaika* emerged, mainly in response to the impact of international trade and other economic developments on Japanese society (Pak 1998: 81). *Kokusaika* became firmly rooted in popular currency following the establishment of the Nakasone cabinet in 1982 and closer ties with conservative governments in Europe and America (Asahi Dictionary of Current Terminology 2002: 334). Hook (1992: 1) identifies Nakasone's 1984 pledge to transform Japan into

an 'international country' as a seminal moment in the development of the term *kokusaika*.

In one Japanese dictionary (Kōjien 1996), *kokusaika* is simply defined as 'broadening out on an international scale' (*kokusai-teki na kibo ni hirogaru koto*). But although *kokusaika* is usually translated as 'internationalisation', *kokusaika* appears somewhat different to the English term. As IMIDAS (1990: 444) notes, one of the biggest problems with *kokusaika* is that it reinforces the idea of a mono-ethnic nation (*tan'itsu minzoku kokka*) through the control and possession of others. "In this way", it (1990: 444) concludes, "the idea and the system that focuses on one's own culture is expanded as it is throughout the world." In other words, *kokusaika* is characterised less with an opening up – as had been the case with the modernisation process – and more with a defensive turning in:

> Japan embarked on *kokusaika* in the 1980's primarily to alleviate the foreign pressure to open up its markets to foreign goods and services. Former prime-minister Yasuhiro Nakasone made *kokusaika* an official policy when he declared the creation of a *kokusai kokka nihon* ('an international country Japan') at the ninety-seventh session of the Japanese Parliament in 1984 (Itoh 1998: 6).

As government policy, *kokusaika* was a kind of defensive reaction to foreign pressure, a process in which Japan attempted to exercise some control over her own fate. According to the Asahi Dictionary of Current Terminology (1997: 306), the term entered the vernacular in the 1980s in response to the 'problems' stemming from the huge increase in traffic across borders facing Japan. In other words, as Toru Yano observes in a Japan Times article (1986a), external events, such as the managed decline in the value of the dollar by 40% in 1985, obliged Japan to take up *kokusaika* as a way of diffusing growing foreign criticism.

The Japanese sociolinguist Takao Suzuki makes it very clear that *kokusaika* is very different to 'internationalisation'. According to Suzuki (1995: 162-4), *kokusaika* is about adding a Japanese perspective to the international order, spreading Japanese culture, values, and history, and helping people see the world through Japanese eyes. *Kokusaika* is, in Suzuki's words, a rather 'unpleasant, tough, and dirty job' that Japan would be happier not to be involved in; nevertheless, in order to preserve Japan's interests and promote the 'correct understanding of Japan' it is something that must be done (Suzuki 1995: 163/64/70). In other words, *kokusaika* is less about transcending cultural barriers and more about protecting them:

> [*Kokusaika*] is a conservative policy that reflects the other side of a renewed sense of Japanese national pride, if not nationalism ... instead of opening up Japan to the struggle of different nationalities and ethnicities, the policy of internationalization implies the opposite: the thorough domestication of the foreign and the dissemination of Japanese culture throughout the world (Ivy 1995: 3).

Ivy identifies two strands to the *kokusaika* Discourse: the Japanisation of the foreign in the world (as elaborated upon by Suzuki) and Japanisation of the foreign in Japan. Both concern themselves with the maintenance of mono-ethnic ideologies and national identity: as Johnson (1983: 32) puts it *kokusaika* "is merely the latest code

word or jargon expression for a much longer standing tradition of intellectual discourse [Nihonjinron] about Japan." There is a vast literature (for example, Befu 1983; Itoh 1998: 12; Iwabuchi 1994; McCormack 1996a; McVeigh 1997: 65ff; Mouer and Sugimoto 1986: 377-404; Russel 1995: 92; Smith 1997: 32/3; Susser 1998: 65) which supports Johnson's argument, a literature that cannot possibly be covered here. It is probably sufficient to note that it is hardly a coincidence that the architect of the *kokusaika* slogan was also the figure most closely associated with the promulgation of Nihonjinron-type ideologies.

In 1986, Nakasone made public pronouncements on Japan's ethnic purity and homogeneity, attributing Japan's economic success (and America's failure) to its identity as a *tan'itsu minzoku kokka* (Japan Times 1986b; 1986c; 1986d; 1986e; 1986f). Nakasone was also instrumental in setting up the controversial International Research Centre for Japanese Studies in Kyoto in 1988 (Sugimoto and Mouer 1989: 24-6). Finally, it was Nakasone who put forth the 1983 plan to host 100,000 foreign students and who was involved in setting up the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme which began in 1987. Both programmes undoubtedly were and still are important in increasing face-to-face interaction at the grass-roots level; however, as well-funded flagships of a *kokusaika* often driven by "a nationalist agenda designed to promote Japan as a model society" (Koschmann 1993: 493), their role in exposing young foreign graduates to Japanese culture and fostering the spread of that culture cannot be overlooked. As Befu (1983) concludes, only by understanding the relationship between Nihonjinron and *kokusaika* is it possible to understand how Nakasone could be an 'internationalist' and a 'cultural nationalist' at the same time (Befu 1993).

Of more relevance here is the second element of *kokusaika* identified by Ivy: the domestication of the foreign within Japan. This kind of *kokusaika* is sometimes referred to as 'inward' (*uchi naru*) *kokusaika* and is typically used to describe local government foreigner support programmes (Pak 2000: 249). While 'inward' *kokusaika* is not overtly assimilationist, usually aiming to create a 'liveable' (*sumiyasui*) environment for non-Japanese residents, it is a complex term. Earlier, it was noted that in the context of migrants in Japan the idea of 'internationalisation' contains within it seemingly contradictory notions of the assimilation, suppression, and celebration of difference. Inward *kokusaika* contains difference by reifying the divide between Japanese and foreigners, thereby working to maintain the idea of a nation-state composed of only Japanese citizens (Russel 1995). As Nakamatsu (2002: 148/53) points out, the idea of 'internationalising' communities contains within it an instrumental aspect that stresses the importance of making newcomers 'blend in' and adapt to 'Japanese culture'. In a case study of the Mogami Region in Yamagata Prefecture, Nakamatsu (2002: 151) argues that the extensive use of the term 'international' – as in kokusai kazoku (international family), *kokusaiji* (international child/ren)6, and *kyōshitsu no kokusaika* (internationalisation of the classroom) – has the effect of homogenising cultural differences, confining subjects to a narrow, stereotypical, and superficial identity.

The most visible manifestation of inward *kokusaika* are *kokusai kōryū* (international cultural exchange) events. At such community events, foreigners are invited to demonstrate aspects of their culture, such as songs, dance, customs, or food.

Nakamatsu (2002: 224/6) details how the repeated staging of stereotypical *kokusai kōryū* events can make foreigners feel as if they are being 'shown off' and used to promote the 'exoticness' of the town while being excluded from mainstream citizen held community events. Suzuki (2000: 165) suggests that *kokusai kōryū* events allow Japanese to create an aura of consuming the 'international'. The 'international' becomes a product which is exotic and external to everyday life. *Kokusai kōryū* events illustrate how *kokusai* related Discourses can act as powerful signifiers which 'include' foreigners by locking them into a particular category of difference. Roces (2003: 93) makes a similar point in the context of Filipina folk dancing in Australia, arguing that such cultural displays are enthusiastically accepted not because the society is open and multicultural but rather because they reinforce perceptions of the migrants as Other and keep them in their cultural category of Filipino. That *kokusai kōryū* events do sometimes offer a venue for negotiating and challenging stereotypes may be more due to the creativity and enthusiasm of the foreign participants than the intentions of the Japanese organisers.

Not all authors (for example, Dougill 1995; Steffanson 1994) have analysed *kokusaika* as a conservative defence of national identity. As Pak (1998: 81-6) points out, some proponents of *kokusaika* do stress how increasing global interactions result in a loosening of Japanese boundaries and a society more opening and accommodating of difference. Some authors (for example, Gurowitz 1999: 443) have argued that 'internationalisation' has "empowered actors to contest and challenge state identity and policy with an arsenal of international norms." However, as Yeoh et al. (2002: 2) point out, while some projects have clear engagements with global frameworks, "there are myriad others which emerge in spaces somewhat disconnected to, or dislocated from, the 'global' or even 'public' platform ... fragmentary, less-than-completely articulated, and possibly unintended, struggles written into the interstitial spaces of everyday life." Certainly, it is difficult to see how international law has empowered individual migrant actors at the grassroots level in Japan. This is not to say that global and trans-national forces have not provided standards of comparison for international migrants to make use of. But this is rather different from *kokusaika*, at least the dominant conservative manifestation of *kokusaika* that has tended to flourish with financial support from government and business leaders.

The *kokusaika* discourse is still around. A fairly recent publication (Anon 1997) stemming from a series of seminars on internationalisation in Yamagata observed that "the term '*kokusaika*' used to grate on the ears, but now that period has passed. *Kokusaika* is something that directly and painfully touches all us Japanese." Nevertheless, since its heyday in the 1980s, *kokusaika* does appear to be on the decline. The term *gurōbaruka* (globalisation) has become much more common (Burgess, et al., 2010: Figure 1), though this pretty much parallels the English term and is no kind of replacement for *kokusaika*. Instead, *kokusaika*'s function as a powerful signifier that 'Others' not by exclusion but by inclusion has not been abandoned but simply superseded by other, perhaps more sophisticated, discourses.

Ibunka

Ibunka, combining the Chinese characters for 'difference' and 'culture', literally

means 'different culture'. According to Oda (1997), the term *ibunka* emerged during the mid-1980s during the *kokusaika*/kokusai kōryū boom as a way of referring to the culture of others (aite no bunka). Whereas the *kokusaika* discourse has been in decline in recent years on the back of a hugely critical literature, *ibunka* has received very little critical analysis7 and is still fairly ubiquitous both in popular and official writings. For example, entering *ibunka* into the Japanese government's e-Gov search engine throws up thousands of hits. From the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Science to the Cabinet Office the emphasis is on the necessity of cultivating an 'international sense' (*kokusaisei*) by experiencing (*taiken*) and understanding (*rikai*) *ibunka*. On top of its dominant meaning of the cultures of other peoples, *ibunka* carries the associated meaning of interactions between cultures. Thus, there is *ibunka (kan) komyunikēshon* (inter or cross-cultural communication) (for example, Ikeda et al. 2002); *ibunka rikai kyōiku* (training in cross-cultural understanding and communication) (IMIDAS 1990: 1270); and *ibunka kan kaunseringu* (cross-cultural counselling) (IMIDAS 2003: 930).

The twin elements of 'difference' and 'culture' demand separate attention. Raymond Williams (1976: 76) called the latter 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language'. Although the English and Japanese are not identical, both culture and *bunka* have two distinct aspects: what Eagleton (2000: 112) calls culture as 'civility' (artistic and intellectual progress) and culture as 'solidarity' (the way of life of national groups). In English, this latter, anthropological sense, emerged in the nineteenth century. In comparison, *bunka* in the sense of *nihon bunka* began to be widely used in public debate only around the 1920s (Morris-Suzuki 1998: 61/2). Culture in this recent, anthropological sense of distinctive or whole (popular) ways of life contains a number of problems. Keesing (1991) gives a fairly exhaustive list of such problems: it overemphasises sharedness, consensuality, and harmony while at the same time disguising the role of power, ideology, and the political process; it exaggerates homogeneity and downplays variation; it over-simplifies, filtering out elements of social complexity and hybridity; it ignores the permeable, unstable, and shifting nature of boundaries; and it is deeply essentialist. It is no coincidence that 'culture' in its recent anthropological sense emerged (or, perhaps more accurately, was mobilised) in Japan at a time when questions of nationalism, national character, and nationhood were being vigorously debated (Morris-Suzuki 1998: chapter 4). The way 'culture' is used today virtually as a synonym of 'national culture' supports the contention that 'culture' is a tool of nationalism. Thus, one of the central premises of Nihonjinron – 'a species of nationalism' (Befu 1993: 125) – is that Japan is culturally homogeneous.

The second element of the *ibunka* compound is 'difference'. Because difference is a social or cultural construction differences which are considered salient in one society may not be considered so in another (for some examples see Befu 1980: 38; van Bremen 1986: 22). As with culture, difference is central to the constructions of (Japanese) identity. Earlier, identity was argued to be defined in a hierarchy of exclusion or negation, Self being defined through a process of Othering (what one is not). On one level, identity is thus a simple binary of alike/unlike that emphasises difference by creating a strong contrast. For example, the Meiji word for foreigner (*ijin* – literally different person) tended to refer most clearly to White foreigners8 since those were the most visibly different to Japanese. Similarly, *ibunka* refers most

commonly to White culture. This is clear from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Science's project to encourage co-existence with people of different cultures (*ibunka o motsu hitobito to kyōsei shiteiku*) through the promotion of two-week home-stays in America9. But identity is not just a simple binary; it is a hierarchy that contrasts a superior Self with an inferior Other. An analysis of the i in *ibunka* reveals this. The character used in the *ibunka* compound for 'difference' goes beyond the neutral meaning of unlike or not the same:10 according to Oda (1997: 37) it suggests something that is *ayashii* (dubious), *myōna* (curious, queer, funny, odd), *ibukashii* (doubtful), and even *wazawai* (disastrous, calamitous).

As suggested earlier, Nihonjinron is formulated on the basis of evaluative comparison (Befu 1993: 113). It aims to demonstrate not only that Japan (and Japanese language, culture, people) is different (uniquely unique) from the rest of the world but also that it is superior or better. Difference – a stark and evaluative comparison – is central to the maintenance of identity. In Japan, this manifests itself in a sharp distinction between what it means to be a Japanese and what it means to be a foreigner. The maintenance of this difference is crucial to notions of a mono-ethnic Japan and a homogeneous Japanese identity. While one may overstate the power of individual words, one cannot ignore the everyday effects of ubiquitous terms such as *kokusaika* and *ibunka*. As McMahill (2000: 56) notes, people are not born into their identities but construct, negotiate, or have them imposed upon them through societal Discourses. When new terms rapidly emerge and spread it is important to consider their discursive significance.

Kyōsei

Kyōsei often occurs in the same context as *kokusaika* and *ibunka*. For example, in the MEXT project to 'internationalise' Japanese children mentioned above, the aim was to encourage 'co-existence with people of different cultures' (*ibunka o motsu hitobito to kyōsei shiteiku*). Formed from the characters 'together' and 'life', *kyōsei* is defined (Kōjien 1996) simply as 'living alike together in a particular place'. The term *kyōsei* was originally used in biology to refer to co-existence (or even physiological interdependence) between different species. It can also refer to humans and nature co-existing. In the early 1990s, *kyōsei* took a central place in the debate over improving economic relations between (Asian) countries (McCormack 1996c: 83). This meaning later widened to include relations in general between Japan and 'Asian' countries (for example, Kaminaga 2001). Since the mid-1990s *kyōsei* has come to refer to 'Japanese' and 'foreigners' living harmoniously together within Japan (Takezawa, 2008).

As the MEXT example illustrates, *kyōsei* is frequently deployed by public bodies "to create an aura of harmonious social co-existence with people of difference" (Suzuki 2000: 156). Pak (2000: 245) notes that the idea of 'a new community in symbiosis with foreigners' (*gaikokujin to no kyōsei shakai*) underlies local government initiatives on foreign residents. In Yamagata City, for example, the purpose of the latest survey of foreign residents was 'to create a society where Japanese and foreigners co-exist' (*nihonjin to gaikokujin to no kyōsei shakai zukuri*) (Yamagata Shimbun 2003).

Today, *kyōsei* is not only deployed by government. Citizen and volunteer groups also appear to have embraced the concept. While I was on fieldwork in Yamagata, a *Chikyū Shimin Gakushū* (World Citizen Study) seminar (8/9.12.01) held in Fukushima identified as its goal the smooth transition to a *tabunka kyōsei shakai* (multicultural co-existing society). A year earlier, the one-day conference held at Chiba University (25.11.00) under the auspices of the Network of Volunteer Japanese Teachers (*Bōsōnihongo Borantia Nettowāku*) focused on the problems faced in teaching and co-existing with long-term foreign residents. One session was entitled '*Tabunka Kyōsei' to Nihongo Borantia* (Multicultural Co-existence and Japanese Language Volunteers). The Japanese name of the Kōbe *Tabunka Kyōsei Sentā* (Centre for Multicultural Information and Assistance) proves a further example of a citizen/volunteer group embracing the concept of *kyōsei*. According to their homepage, the centre was formed following the Great Kobe Earthquake to provide help, advice, and information for foreign residents. These varied examples suggest that Shimizu and Shimizu (2001: 3) may be right when they argue that *tabunka kyōsei shakai* is becoming a central keyword for conceptualising Japanese society in the twenty-first century11.

Kyōsei, in the sense of co-existence between Japanese and foreigners within Japan, has only recently risen to prominence, perhaps partly to replace the embattled Discourse of *kokusaika* (Suzuki 2000: 157). Like *kokusaika* (in its conventional sense) and *ibunka*, *kyōsei* did not figure in the narratives of those migrants I spoke to during fieldwork. Whether this is because of its newness or because of its ideological baggage is not clear. Certainly, *kyōsei* does appear to share some of the same functions as *kokusaika* and *ibunka*. In theory, terms like *tabunka kyōsei* portray both foreign residents and Japanese as 'equal partners' (Takezawa 2002; 2008). However, in practice a hierarchy is again at work. *Kyōsei* is almost exclusively used by a dominant group (that is, the Japanese) to describe relations with a subordinate group (that is, foreigners). In using the term, the dominant group affirms its own distinctness and separateness. The danger of phrases like 'co-existent citizenship' (Hirowatari 1998) is that, while well meaning, they construct a two-tier hierarchy of citizenship which maintains the sharp Japanese/foreigner distinction, thereby denying non-Japanese access to power. The dichotomous nature of this hierarchy sees cultural and ethnic differences between non-Japanese eradicated, with the result that 'foreigners' become an undifferentiated mass (Suzuki 2000: 158). Parallels can be made with the colonial period when the ideology was of multiethnic harmony (*minzoku kyōwa*) within a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Dai Tōa Kyōei Ken*). Here too 'co-existence' translated into a superior dominating and controlling an inferior.

In biology, *sōri* (two-way) *kyōsei* – an equal relationship where both actors benefit – is typically distinguished from *henri* (one-way) *kyōsei*, where only one actor benefits from the relationship (Asahi Dictionary of Current Terminology 2002: 909). *Kyōsei*, as it is used in Japan today, at face value appears closer to the former definition. In actuality, it may be closer to the latter. The emphasis on harmony present in compounds like *kyōsei shakai* – translated as 'the convivial society' in IMIDAS (1992: 382) – may be more prescriptive than descriptive, denying the existence of disagreement and conflict. Suzuki (2000: 160) suggests that *kyōsei* (re)produces boundaries that reaffirm foreigners' non-membership in Japanese society. The argument that *kyōsei* is much more complex – and insidious – than first meets the

eye is supported by an examination of the closely-related and recently popular term *tabunka* (as in *tabunka kyōsei shakai*), a term whose English equivalent has garnered much critical attention outside of Japan.

Tabunka

Tabunka, comprised of the characters for 'many' and 'culture', is generally translated as multicultural. *Tabunka-shugi* is multiculturalism. As with *kyōsei*, *tabunka* was occasionally used to describe relations between Japan and other (mainly Asian) countries during the period of economic internationalisation when Japanese companies expanded abroad. However, in describing different cultures within Japan it is a concept that is still in its infancy. Compared to *ibunka*, *kokusaika*, and even *kyōsei*, *tabunka* is still not particularly visible in print media. Various dictionaries of current terminology mention *tabunka* only in the context of Australia, Canada, and America. Multiculturalism emerged in these immigrant societies at a time when overtly assimilationist Discourses, grounded in strictly regulated and often racist immigration policies, became increasingly untenable or 'dysfunctional' (Jupp 1995: 209).

The growing numbers of migrants coming to and settling down in Japan suggests that *tabunka* may soon become the latest buzzword in Japan too. Initially, local governments took the lead in formulating 'multicultural' policies, known as 'multicultural community building' (*tabunka kyōsei*) (Pak, 2000). For example, in 2001 13 municipalities formed the Committee for Localities with a Concentrated Foreign Population (*Gaikokujin Shuju Toshi Kaigi*); thereafter, starting with the 'Hamamatsu Declaration' of October the same year, the group – currently consisting of 28 cities and towns – repeatedly called on the central government to develop a coordinated and coherent integration policy (Yamawaki, 2002). By 2009, despite some discussions and the creation of a 2006 document entitled 'Comprehensive Measures Concerning Foreign Residents', the municipalities called again for the central government to set up a new agency aimed at improving the livelihoods of foreign residents (Daily Yomiuri, 2009). Prompted by rising employment amongst Nikkeijin in particular, the Cabinet Office did set up an office in charge of policies for resident foreigners in January 2009, with a website in April of the same year (Cabinet Office, 2009). However, it is important (as the website makes clear) to place this move in the context of an unprecedented economic downturn, raising serious doubts whether it will remain and transform itself into an integration agency once the economy picks up. Ultimately, it is difficult not to agree with Tessa Morris-Suzuki's (2002) characterisation of the 'shift' in official presentation of national identity as a move towards 'cosmetic multiculturalism', a vision of national identity in which diversity is celebrated "but only under certain tightly prescribed conditions" (see also Burgess, 2008a). In this way, Japanese style multiculturalism (*tabunka* shugi), at least at the national level, can be seen as a successor to *kokusaika*, the latest ideological tool to maintain a homogeneous discourse of national identity.

The *tabunka* philosophy does have a precedent: during the colonial period multiethnic conceptions of national identity dominated. Interestingly, competing multiethnic and mono-ethnic ideologies were both characterised by a policy of

assimilation (*dōka*), underpinned by a belief in superiority (Lie 2001: 122). It is too early to know whether the decline of assimilationist Discourses in Japan will be accompanied by a dissolution of racial hierarchies. If the experience of other immigrant countries is anything to go by, distinctions of superiority and inferiority will be maintained not through policies of assimilation but through a 'celebration' (and locking in) of difference.

Earlier, Befu (2001: 103) argued that Nihonjinron prevails by default. *Tabunka* might be thought of as offering an alternative worldview, cultural model, or ideology. However, as Japan begins to enthusiastically embrace ideologies of multiculturalism, the criticism directed at the term by those from countries where it has been popular for many years suggests that it will reinforce rather than replace Nihonjinron ideologies. The critical argument is that multiculturalism as a policy is a strategy for containment that reinforces the marginality and isolation of minority communities (Venn 1999: 60). In America, for example, commentators have pointed out that behind the veneer of diversity lies limited choice. There, individuals are forced to locate themselves within one (and only one) of a fixed number of racial categories such as 'Asian-American' (Espiritu 1992; Hollinger 1995). This is already evident in Japan, where 'progressive' labels like *daburu* actually serve to limit personal choice by implying that people of mixed ancestries should value and express their ethnicities, ignoring the fact that many may prefer to find their identity in other ways (Murphy-Shigematsu 2000: 214). In the Australian context, Hage (1999) goes even further by arguing that multiculturalism is merely a more sophisticated version of White supremacy12, a Discourse that, while claiming to transcend, actually maintains and reproduces the dominance of White culture and nationalism. For Reimer too, the chief disadvantage of encouraging people to 'retain' their 'heritage' is the danger of locking people into various enclaves:

> I grew convinced that the narrow and static definition of diversity almost universally accepted by the promoters of multiculturalism can only retard the emergence of a tolerant and embracing society in which individuals may exploit opportunities beyond those offered by their particular environments ... it is vital, I think, to look beyond the categories of the contemporary discussion and debate. (Reimer 1999: 8)

Appiah is yet another who has pointed out how 'life-scripts' (notions of how a person of a certain kind behaves) associated with various collective identities, while of strategic importance, risk tying individuals too tightly to norms over which they have little control. "Nowadays there is a widespread agreement", he (1994:161) notes, "that the insults to their dignity and the limitations of their autonomy imposed in the name of these collective identities are seriously wrong."

Arguments that multiculturalism actually contains and reinforces the marginality and isolation of communities become clearer when the notion of mixture is addressed. Discourses of assimilation and multiculturalism both function effectively to exclude the notion of hybridisation (Reimer 1999: 8; Venn 1999: 60). This point is illustrated by Moldenhawer in a study of 'multicultural' schooling of immigrants in Denmark, a country which has a number of parallels with the situation in Japan. Moldenhawer (1995: 71/2) argues that although the assimilatory and multicultural models are 'fundamentally different' in their conception of migrant role, they agree in

taking 'migrant-as-problem' as their point of departure. For Moldenhawer, it is the concept of a single, homogeneous 'culture' unaccepting of difference that is most problematic. In Singapore's case, it is not the concept of a single 'authentic' national identity that entraps, but three such categories:

In the Singaporean context, Chineseness, Malayness, and Indianness are constructed as sites of authentic Asianness designed to invest the national culture with substance and originary solidity, what in Singaporean discourse is called 'cultural ballast'. As Benjamin astutely puts it, 'Singapore's Multiracialism puts Chinese people under pressure to become more Chinese, Indians more Indian, and Malays more Malay, in their behaviour' (Ang and Stratton 1996: 186).

In Japan's case, *tabunka* is the latest ideological tool to put Japanese under pressure to become 'more Japanese' and foreign residents under pressure to become 'more ethnic'. It does not matter that Japan has long been 'multicultural' in the sense of being home to a range of ethnic variation and diversity (McCormack 1996b: 3, 12; Oguma 1995). To recognise that "culture is 'multi', or rather 'inter', by its very nature" (Bahlouol, quoted in Morris-Suzuki 1998: 192) does not negate the impact of discourses of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism represents a particularly sophisticated discourse that defines, contains, reifies, locks in, and reinforces difference thereby limiting access to social resources and maintaining the power of the dominant group. Evidence that the Japanese brand of multiculturalism is exclusionary and essentialising rather than accepting of difference comes from Nagayoshi (2011) who demonstrates a strong statistical correlation between Japanese people's ethno-nationalistic feelings and endorsement of 'multiculturalism'; she concludes that Japanese regard their own brand of multiculturalism not as conflicting with but rather as strengthening homogeneity. As Morris-Suzuki (1998: 197-200) notes, the *tabunka* discourse can be seen as a response to the growing global portfolio of identity positions available to agents in Japan and represents the latest in a series of power struggles to define, manage, and maintain (control of) boundaries and categories.

Conclusion: The Changing Face(s) of Japan

Fukuzawa Yukichi (quoted in Sakamoto 2001: 141) noted that the idea of 'nation' does not come naturally but has to be created and then maintained, 'in all people's brains'. The loosening of identifications with national culture that is characteristic of globalisation has meant that the "imagined communities called 'nations' [now] require constant, often violent, maintenance" (Clifford 1997: 9). One reason words like *kokusaika*, *ibunka*, *kyōsei*, and *tabunka* have become increasingly visible is undoubtedly because traditional notions of Japanese identity are increasingly threatened. This is what Anderson referred to earlier as 'official nationalism', a kind of conservative reaction or response by power groups threatened by marginalisation. To date this maintenance of identities has been rather successful. Elsewhere, I (2010) have argued that, contrary to recent academic writings on 'multicultural Japan', perceptions of Japan as homogeneous continue to have a key role in structuring both national identity and social reality for many Japanese.

History tells us that the ideological maintenance of (national) identities is usually

unable to keep up with the pace of change. The shifts in systems of representation occurring under the surface in Japan today are likely creating conditions ripe for change that will enable future newcomers to have a louder voice in determining how Japanese society might evolve in the coming years. Elsewhere (2004; 2008b), I discuss these important but largely invisible processes occurring in Japanese society at the local level and show how migrants have perceived their presence and actions will change (or have changed) Japanese people and national identity. While it is too early to claim, as some have (for example, Douglass and Roberts 2000), that the multicultural age has already come to Japan, it is possible to say, as Yamanaka (2002: 2, 22) does, that "Japan stands at the crossroads of becoming a multicultural society... the dawn of becoming a multi-ethnic society." The question is not whether but how long contemporary discourses can maintain the illusion of homogeneity.

Notes

1. This paper was first published at this URL in 2004, but was revised and re-posted in 2012. It is adapted from a larger work (Burgess 2003). I would like to acknowledge the support received from the Monash University Postgraduate Publications Award in the preparation of the manuscript. I am indebted to Ross Mouer, Robyn Spence-Brown, Peter Matanle, and the three anonymous reviewers for comments made on earlier drafts of this manuscript.

2. Since the paper focuses on identity issues, it inevitably simplifies the migration movement in contemporary Japan. Elsewhere (Burgess 2003), I argue that it is the growing number of newcomers from various countries who are settling down in Japan that is one of the most significant aspects of migration in the context of studies on identity, globalisation, and of contemporary Japanese Studies in general.

3. The phrase 'seeds of social change' comes from the two-day conference on 'Gender, Migration, and Governance in Asia', held at the Australian National University on 5-6 December 2002. A key argument was that female migrants constitute a new force for 'civil activism, democratic governance, and increasing multiculturalism'. Using a similar metaphor, Nelson Graburn (personal communication) has suggested that the 'seeding' of migrants in local communities is an important yet under-researched area of work.

4. Most countries have cultural models or systems of ideas about what it means (and, even more importantly, what it does not mean) to be a national. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which was active until 1975, is probably the most obvious example. A more recent example is the use of terms like 'un-American' or 'un-Australian' to describe anti-globalisation or anti-war protestors.

5. This echoes the argument by Herman and Chomsky (1994: xiv) that in advanced modern societies there exists "a propaganda system that is far more credible and effective in putting over a patriotic agenda than one with official censorship." In response to criticisms that they are constructing a 'conspiracy theory', they (1994: xii) argue that 'natural processes' such as self-censorship and internalised constraints are far more common than deliberate distortion and suppression. One is reminded of Foucault's (1977: 227-8) discussion on the rise of a '(self) disciplinary society' where norms are no longer prescribed from above but instituted and enforced from below. For Foucault (1983: 213-15), the modern state exercises 'pastoral' power, a historically unprecedented form of power which is both individualising (making individuals subjects) and totalising.

6. The use of *kokusaiji* is reserved for children with (a) non-Japanese parent(s), so that children of two Japanese parents cannot be 'international' (Ōshiro 1984). See McVeigh's

(1997: 66) argument that *nihonjin* cannot really be *kokusaijin* (international people), the two terms being mutually exclusive.

7. In contrast to the many deconstructions of *kokusaika*, the only critical analysis of the term *ibunka* I have found was in a reference to an obscure newsletter (Bunkyō Nyūsu, 29.7.96: 2) of a 'government affiliated organisation', quoted extensively in Oda (1997: 36). The paper was entitled "Let's Stop Using the Term '*ibunka*': Keeping a Watchful Eye on the Japanese We Use" ('*Ibunka' to iu Kotaba no Shiyō o Yameyō: Nihongo no Kotoba Tsukai e no Kokoro Kubari*). It suggested a number of alternatives to *ibunka*, such *ashoka no bunka* (another culture), *betsu no bunka* (another or separate culture), and *gaikoku bunka* (foreign culture).

8. Hence, the historical tourist area known as ijinkan in Kobe refers to the housing previously occupied by Westerners resident during Meiji.

9. The full document was accessed 13.2.03 by typing kodomo no kokusai kōryū jigyō into theMinistry of Justice's homepage.

10. The other common character for difference – that used for chigai – is usually more of a simple negation, generally meaning unlike, not the same, or wrong. The most widely used compounds are perhaps ihan (a violation or breach), ihō (something illegal), and iwakan (feelings of discomfort). Nevertheless, chigai is still used to refer to cultural difference. This is particularly clear at the local grass-roots level. For example, the Yamagata Chikyū Shimin Gakushū (World Citizen Study) seminar (10/11.11.01) carried the slogan Chigai o Yutaka ni Tsunageru Tameni (To Turn Differences into Riches) and constantly emphasised difference, particularly national 'cultural' difference. The following seminar in Fukushima (8/9.12.01) carried the slogan *Chigai o Mitomeai* (Acknowledging Difference).

11. One of the anonymous readers also pointed out that *kyōsei* is very much the buzzword for the mainstream Ainu movement and their vision of multiculturalism. '*Kyōsei* e no Michi' is a major publication of the Utari Kyōkai.

12. In this sense, Hage is arguing that there really is very little difference between 'multiculturalists' and right-wing racist critics, like Blainey and Hanson, who typically attack multiculturalism for dividing the nation into separate 'tribes' or ethnic groups (Collins 1999: 388/9).

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