

Past and Present Situations of Chinese Schools in Yokohama*

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Abstract

This paper illustrates some crucial directional changes that have taken place in Chinese schools in Yokohama Chinatown in recent times. This precinct attracts more than 20 million tourists each year. It is a centre for the Chinese community where two of Japan's five Chinese schools are located: One is Yokohama Overseas Chinese School, a kindergarten to senior high school facility, located in the centre of Chinatown; the other is Yokohama Yamate Chinese School with a kindergarten, as well as primary and junior high schools on its premises. Both schools were established in the late 19th century in response to the policies advocated by Sun Yat-sen. For over a century these schools have had to respond to the immigration and educational policies of its host community, as well natural disasters, World War, the consequences of China's diplomatic policies and more besides. In recent years, both schools have become attractive to Japanese students due to China's increased involvement in global economic development with its massive resource potential. The popularity of the Chinese language education has gradually increased in the host community, and by accepting Japanese students they contribute to the host community. But graduates of Chinese senior high schools have faced certain disadvantages according to Japan's school regulation, and as a consequence students have shown a preference for Japanese high schools. These schools struggle to define and clarify their own goals, and that seems to be because they are in the transition period. This paper provides a basis for assessing some of the consequences of the schools' educational policies in a context of ongoing globalization.

1. Introduction

There are three major Chinatowns in Japan: Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki. All of these are port cities and the Chinatown districts have developed along with them over the last century. In particular, Yokohama Chinatown stands out among Japan's tourist destinations, with over 500 Chinese shops, including more than 200 Chinese restaurants, all concentrated

within a relatively small precinct and a perimeter of two kilometres. With its symbolic gates surrounding the area, visitors are given visible notification that they can be in no doubt that they are entering a Chinese precinct. In fact, four of the total of ten gates almost entirely enclose the area.

In the 1970s, there were the occasional revival of interest in Chinese culture with corresponding tourism potential, but the area is now no longer residential but predominantly a precinct of Chinese shopping malls. Since that time the area has developed according to commercial demands which emphasize the visible expressions of the district's Chinese culture or heritage. That was when the west gate was constructed; in 1973 the east gate was raised; in 1976 the north gate and in 1977 the south gate were reconstructed. With its symbolic gates and streets this is one of the most well-known dining spots in Japan. In addition to these features, it is surrounded by various other tourist attractions, such as the scenic port and parks, and all help to explain why the Yokohama Chinatown attracts more than 20 million tourists each year.

This paper focuses upon Chinese schools in Yokohama. Here two out of Japan's five Chinese schools are located: Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe have one Chinese school of each. One is named the Yokohama Overseas Chinese School. It is a downtown school and its campus is just behind the Kwan Tai Mausoleum. The other is Yokohama Yamate Chinese School, situated at the southwest corner of Chinatown. Both schools were established in the late 19th century by Sun Yat-sen's advocacy. These schools have been continually impacted by the immigration and educational policies of its host community. Furthermore, they have also experienced natural disasters, World War, and the impacts of China's diplomatic policies. In recent years, both schools have also become attractive to Japanese students due to China's increased involvement in global developments with its remarkable economic growth.

2. General History of the Chinese Schools and Social Backgrounds

Firstly, I would like to review some key turning points in the schools' history. Having done that, I will describe the contemporary situation by reference to my findings from interviews with the principals of these two schools.

In 1897 the Daido School, the predecessor of both of these schools, was established in Yokohama City upon the initiative of Sun Yat-sen (Wang 2009: 126). It was the first Chinese school in Japan. Its purpose was to introduce Chinese education to children of overseas Chinese families living in the Yokohama Chinatown. Three schools came subsequently to be located in the area, two for those speaking Cantonese, while the other was for the Ningbo dialect (Yokohama Yamate Chinese School 2004). All three schools were completely

destroyed by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. Just before the Earthquake, the population of overseas Chinese in Yokohama was 4,705, but in that disaster 1,541 died, and many of the survivors left to seek refuge in other cities, such as Kobe, or returned to China (Ikeda 2002: 129-130). As a consequence, the schools were amalgamated in 1924, re-organized as the Chinese Public School, offering the Cantonese language education. In 1937, due to the invasion of the Japanese military into China and the demands of Japan's Ministry of Education placed upon the school, many Chinese returned to their homeland. In 1945, school facilities were all burnt by American airstrikes. But the school was subsequently rebuilt with a new schoolhouse commencing primary school education in the Beijing language in 1946 (Yokohama Yamate Chinese School 2004). This "Yokohama Chinese school" also proceeded to launch Kindergarten and Junior High School divisions in 1947. When, in September 1948, they opened "adult classes" along with those for children, the number of students reached 800 (ibid.).

The teachers and students at Yokohama Chinese School divided after the political confrontation over the Taiwanese strait in 1952. Major Chinese organizations in Yokohama were split into two streams, those supportive of the People's Republic of China and those who remained loyal to the Republic of China (Taiwan). Since then, there have been two major centers of the organizational activities¹⁾. That is why the one school was divided into two schools. In September 1952 some remained in the schoolhouse, while the majority moved away and supported the schooling initiatives located outside Chinatown. Those who supported the People's Republic of China moved to residential areas, and school education was serviced in the houses of compatriots. They became independent, and established "Yokohama Yamate Chinese School" in September 1953, and almost 600 students enrolled at premises of the temporary school (ibid.).

Between 1952 and 1971, the number of Chinese residents who became naturalized was a mere 4,948, even though 52,333 Chinese were then living in Japan (Zhu 1993: 16). Clearly, changes in Japan's immigration policies can be detected in changes to the number of recorded naturalizations. Japan had successfully established diplomatic relations with China in 1972 by initiating active economic trade normalization. On 29 September 1972, the Joint Communiqué of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Japan was signed in Beijing. After the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, economic relations and cultural exchanges developed alongside the strengthening of diplomatic ties and as a consequence many Chinese persons became employed by Japanese enterprises. And naturalization among the Chinese community augmented. In 1971, some 249 Chinese were naturalized as Japanese and in 1972, the number had increased

to over one thousand (1,301), but by 1973 it had jumped to 7,338 (Zhu 1993: 20-21). From the mid-1970s, the number has stabilized, and from 1975 to 1980, the annual number has been between 1,000 and 2,000. At this point it should be noted that China's migration policy of 1980 strongly discouraged double nationality.

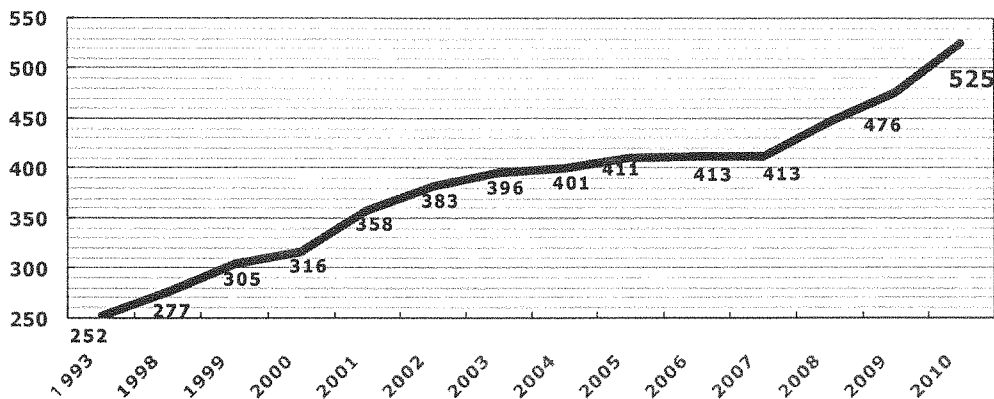
Until the 1985 Naturalization Act, Japan administered a blood-related naturalization policy which was effective only for fathers; thus under this patriarchal system, child (ren) from a Japanese mother and non-Japanese father could not obtain Japanese nationality. With the rapid increase of Chinese-Japanese marriages, naturalization had boomed amongst Chinese living in Japan. In recent years, there have been many visitors from Mainland China, while the numbers visiting from Taiwan has actually decreased.

3. Yokohama Yamate Chinese School

The school was renamed as "Yokohama Yamate Chinese School" in March 1957 and a new concrete schoolhouse was completed in May 1966. Then, in December 1966, it was granted authorization to function as a "miscellaneous educational institution" by Kanagawa prefecture. The senior high-school division was added in April 1967, but it ceased recruitment of new students in 1982 and was abolished in March 1984. Thus, now the school comprises kindergarten, which is authorized as "incorporated educational institution," and primary and junior high schools in the category of "miscellaneous educational institution," all housed on its premises. In respond to the increased numbers of students, a decision has been made to construct a new schoolhouse. In April 2010, the new schoolhouse



Yokohama Yamate Chinese School



Source: Unpublished data from Yokohama Yamate Chinese School.

Figure 1 The Number of Students in Yokohama Yamate Chinese School

was completed and this means that a total number of pupils in kindergarten, primary and junior high schools can double to 800.

The reason for closing the senior high school education arose from the increasing tendency of students to prefer Japanese schools. The overwhelming majority of the high school graduates go onto tertiary education. But graduates of Chinese senior high schools faced certain disadvantages according to Japan's school regulation, and as a consequence students have shown a preference for Japanese high schools.

The number of students in Yokohama Yamate Chinese School reached 300 in 1999, and increased to 400 midway through the millennium's first decade, exceeding 500 by 2010 (see Figure 1). It is often difficult to accommodate Japanese pupils wishing to enter the school, since the school's emphasis is upon Chinese education with Chinese families having priority. To put it proverbially, it is a narrow gate which stands in front of Japanese children who sit for the entrance examination. In fact, within the school most communication is in the Chinese language.

Language texts adopted by the staff are from the Beijing Chinese Language and Culture College which has been composed schoolbooks for overseas Chinese. Japanese texts that are used in Japanese schools are also used for learning Japanese. Besides Chinese teachers who have grown up in Japan, native Japanese teachers, China-born person recruited while staying in Japan, and native Chinese teachers coming from the Beijing Chinese Language and Culture College, work together in the program. The school introduced a student-based teaching style, simplifying teacher instruction requirements and intensifying the required

output of students. Almost half of the students are Japanese nationals, and one fifth of the students are native Japanese²⁾.

There is an ongoing stream of new Chinese arrivals. Therefore the demographic profile of the school is in constant flux. Some Chinese students are members of third or fourth generation families who have assimilated to a considerable extent with their Japanese neighbors. Since the 1980s the numbers of new immigrants has constantly increased, and meanwhile some students from the host Japanese society are also enrolling. In 1993, in accordance with the increasing variation of its students, the school started its own internal education reform with a very strong focus upon bilingual education (Yokohama Yamate Chinese School 2004). In fact, many students are bilingual, and as the principal indicated, the school had to look for bilingual teachers.

4. Yokohama Overseas Chinese School

Yokohama Overseas Chinese School is positioned in the center of the Chinatown just behind one of the most symbolic landmarks, the Kwan Tai Mausoleum³⁾. Its campus includes a nursery school and receives students to senior high school. Thus it covers children ranging from the newborn to eighteen years of age. In 1955, the Senior High School was



School gate is next to the Mausoleum



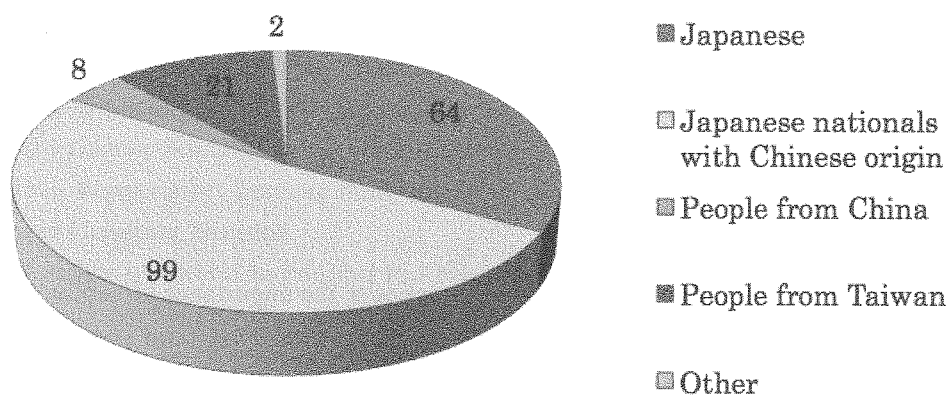
School playground is located behind the Mausoleum

established and in 1958 was authorized as a “miscellaneous educational institution” by Kanagawa prefecture.

Yokohama Overseas Chinese School has introduced a program of three-language teaching – Chinese, English and Japanese. This emphasis commences from kindergarten. Chinese is taught as the mother language. Textbooks are the same as used in Taiwan and written in old Chinese characters using phonetic symbols. Although the school does not offer phonetics alphabet (pinyin) classes, the pupils learn by computerization or any other opportunities. Textbooks of Japanese, Social Science, Geography and History, are the same as those adopted in Japanese schools for the same grade. There are more than ten native Japanese teachers.

In May 2010, there were 194 pupils at the primary school level. Of all pupils, just over half (99) were Japanese nationals with Chinese origin, the most being children of a Chinese and Japanese marriage. Only 15 percent (29) were overseas Chinese including 11 percent of Taiwanese background (21). This figure contrasts with the founding intention of the school to serve the families of overseas Chinese. In this group, most of them were expatriate families. The remaining one-third (66) were mostly Japanese. In the other school, non-Japanese nationals occupy almost 30 percent and the remaining 70 percent are Japanese nationals with Chinese origin and non-Chinese origin.

According to the Principal of the school, nearly 60 percent of the students are Taiwan-connected and that number also includes children from Taiwanese-Japanese parents⁴⁾. In terms of nationality, Japanese nationals constitute over 80 percent of the school’s population.



Source: Koshizuka (2010).

Figure 2 Proportions of the student background from students of Yokohama Overseas Chinese Primary School, May 2010.

Some graduates are expected to pursue further study in Taiwan, Europe, America but the vast majority of them go onto higher education in Japan. Graduates from the Junior High School can be found in the senior high school of the Kanagawa prefecture, and graduates from the Senior School can be found among the alumni of some prestigious Japanese Universities.

This school accepts overseas Chinese, and is not so concerned with a student's nationality for enrolment purposes. According to the Principal, the school has aimed to attract pupils of Chinese origin, but due to current social changes they also welcome Japanese students. It seems that numbers of Japanese pupils with no Chinese family background have increased. The school policy gives emphasis to the promotion of skills and abilities that will fit a person to participate in the global community. But the number of Japanese language courses also increases, as a student proceeds through high school. The time given to Japanese language in senior high school classes is greater than in junior high school so as to prepare students for entry into Japanese higher education. The school's policy is these days confirmed by the overwhelming majority of its graduates entering Japanese Universities, while a few may enter overseas tertiary educational institutions, including those in Taiwan.

As for the Japanese students, Japanese media has given attention to public concern about the way this kind of school acts as a lure to Chinese business interests. However, the principal said that some Japanese families who had experienced living in China, due to overseas assignments for some fathers, prefer to send their child (ren) to this school. That is also the case with Yokohama Yamate Chinese School whose principal concurred with this view. In fact, the expansion and maintenance of Japanese ties with China has been a strong inducement to various Japanese people, such as business expatriates, to work in Chinese metropolises. Now we see increased numbers of students in Japanese schools in China, and this then constitutes the largest share of all the Japanese schools around the globe. When these Japanese families return to Japan, however, they have little opportunity to use the Chinese language.

Conclusion

Both schools, in their curriculum and policy, emphasize the importance of coping with the demands of a global society and have thus introduced bilingual (and even trilingual) education. But, as they live in the society in which Japanese language dominates, they face a dilemma since many pupils will wish to go onto higher education in the host community. At the primary level of these schools, Chinese language is used and various classes are conducted in Chinese. When they go onto higher levels, they must shift their emphasis to the

teaching and learning of the Japanese language. In fact, some parents are set on their child (ren) entering prestigious Japanese Universities. At the same time, other parents would like to keep their Chinese identity. Thus the schools have to meet a variety of needs corresponding to different parental demands. When they maintain a bilingual policy, they face difficulty. However, that is the reason they are attracting an increase in host community enrolment, apart from among the population with Chinese origins. Since the 1990s, the increased enrolments from new streams of Chinese also make a significant influence upon these schools. The popularity of this Chinese language education has gradually increased in the host community, and by accepting Japanese pupils they respond to the host community needs to some extent.

These schools are part of developments in global migration. In Japan, a rate of intermarriage between Japanese and non-Japanese has increased so that now such intermarriages number one in 20 of all new marriages. In Tokyo the figure is actually more than ten percent. In addition, from Japan's current immigration trends we note that almost half of all new arrivals from foreign lands are Chinese. It is obvious that these schools have increased in their importance within the host Japanese society, but the Japanese government has not fully supported these ethnic-based schools. These schools do not easily clarify their own goals, and that seems to be because they are in the transition period. But from their history, we can see that they have confronted various hardships. This is the framework within which we can assess some of the wider consequences for the schools' educational goals and identifying shifts in their orientation to cope with the host community in the midst of a dynamic globalization process.

Notes

- * This paper is a revised edition from the oral presentation, "Directional Shifts in Yokohama City's Chinese Schools," at the International Symposium, "Urban Culture in the Process of Urban Regeneration: Learning from East Asian Experiences," on 24 November 2011, held at Tongji University, Shanghai.

The author is indebted to Principal Pan Minsheng of the Yokohama Yamate Chinese School, and Principal Shi Hui Zhen of Yokohama Overseas Chinese School, for their generosity in offering invaluable information.

- 1) As for the details of this dispute, see (Okawara 2011).
- 2) Interview was conducted with the Principal of the school, Mr Pan Minsheng, on 10 November 2011.
- 3) Kwan Tai Mausoleum was originally built in 1873. The Great Kanto earthquake in 1923

destroyed the building, and it was fired in 1945 by American airstrikes. In 1946 it was re-established. In 1986 it was destroyed by fire, but through both Chinese and Taiwanese co-operation a new dazzling temple was opened in 1990 (Sekido and Sen 2001: 160-161).

4) Interview with the Principal, Ms' Shi Hui Zhen, was conducted on 10 November 2011.

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