

**“Living Together” in Kasugai City: Community Life of Filipino Residents and
their Participation in the *Tabunka Kyosei* Plan**

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**Beyond Otherness and Marginalization: Repositioning Filipino Transnational
Migrants in “Multicultural Japan”**

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Summary

I wanted to understand how Filipino migrants as transnationals are positioned within “multicultural Japan” and how, as marginalized subjects, they have repositioned themselves. My research perspective developed from my own positioning as a Filipino migrant living in Japan for twenty years, as a spouse of Japanese national, as a mother of three cross-cultural children, and as an advocate of human rights.

Filipinos in Japan have been stereotyped with pejoratives that are linked to those working in the entertainment industry, the so-called “*Japayuki*” and the rural brides, called the “*Hanayome*”. These are status-specific and gender-specific ascriptions that manifest the gendered and racialized objectification of Filipino women in Japan. These stereotypes also reveal how Filipino migrant women are positioned in Japanese society, pejoratively as “bad mothers”, as “unfaithful wives”, as “urban whores”, and/or as “run-away rural brides”.

I have found that the Filipino migrants undertake multiple actions to alter their positioning in society as individuals and as a collective. The outcomes of Filipino migrants’ individual and collective actions are lined to the interplay of structures and agency. There are certain changes manifested in the local structure and in the micro institutions resulting from the Filipino migrants’ collective actions.

In recent years, the imaginings of a “multicultural Japan” manifests the thinning layers of the Japanese collective imaginary as a “homogeneous people”. In the conception of *tabunka kyosei*, the heterogeneity and multiplicity of Japan (in actuality)

has been revitalized with new meanings. In Kasugai city, I found that *tabunka kyosei* is not a central framework of governance. Rather, *tabunka kyosei* is a strategy that has certain ambiguities and is used by the government to deter any occurrence of an “alarming social problem” arising from the presence of foreign residents in many communities across Japan. As a new government initiative which is implemented locally, it has also benefited foreign migrants in some localities such as Kasugai City, Nagoya City, and other neighboring cities in Aichi Prefecture. Hence, *the Tabunka Kyosei* Plan cannot be totally dismissed because through this plan some local governments have made concrete steps to respond to the concerns of foreign migrants.

Another important factor in the process of achieving a multicultural society is through the participation of foreign migrants in community life. Filipino migrants themselves have made some parallel programs such as the Japanese language courses, counseling, translation and other advocacy endeavors. The actions Filipino migrants have undertaken are part of the attempts to integrate and reposition themselves within the Japanese society. The Filipino migrant organizations and the Japanese civic groups (Japanese NGOs and NPOs that are partaking in the *Kokusai Koryu* Network) are also equally important in creating a multicultural society. This broad network of civic organizations practices affirmative action by working together with the local government and the foreign migrants in the locality.

Finally, I have found that segregation, racism, and sexism have remained pervasive in some neighborhood communities where Filipino migrants live. In others, some Filipino migrants have received recognition and acceptance by their conscious participation in the community life and by being responsible members of their respective communities as the case studies of Filipino migrants in Sakae District, Nagoya City (cf. Takahata 2007), and in Kozoji Newtown, Kasugai City have illustrated.