

The Tethered Fates of Japan's "Foreigner" Communities: Zainichi Koreans, Residency Provisions, and the COVID-19 Pandemic

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This article explores how the fates of Japan's "foreign" communities—both "oldcomer" Zainichi Korean residents and "newcomer" foreign residents—have, especially since the 1990s, become tethered to one another. The authors argue that the postwar Zainichi Korean campaigns for legal, social, economic, educational, ethnic, constitutional, and welfare benefits have laid a foundation of "residency provisions" that the contemporary newcomer foreign community have also come to heavily rely on. However, access to such residency provisions by non-Japanese has increasingly come under attack from nativist and xenophobic groups such as the *Zaitokukai* and political parties such as the Japan First Party. More recently, waves of COVID-19 pandemic border closures and "states of emergency" incited a cultural and political environment in which "foreigners" became inextricably linked to the virus as a threat. Political and public support for border closures and stricter immigration controls coalesced with divisive and xenophobic movements that had primarily targeted Zainichi Koreans. The authors maintain this resulted in a shift towards exclusionary discourses directed at Japan's "foreigner" communities more generally. As social outgroups in contemporary Japan, Zainichi Koreans and newcomer foreigners are semantically, socially, and—most importantly—politically excluded through the Japanese/foreigner divide that continues to permeate Japanese self-consciousness. In conclusion, the case study of "IKUNO Tabunka Flat" is introduced as a model of Zainichi Korean grass-roots multiculturalism that attempts to overcome social division and isolation in Ikuno's "foreign" communities and assist in the creation of a more substantive and meaningful multicultural community in contemporary Japan.

Keywords: Zainichi Koreans, Japan's foreign residents, residency provisions, nationality restrictions, xenophobia, COVID-19 pandemic

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