

From Temporary Migrant to Integrated Resident: Local Government Approaches to Migrant Integration in the Tokyo Metropolis

Stephen Robert Nagy

Summary

In January 2011, the Tokyo Metropolis (TM) was home to more than 420,000 registered migrants, or 3.24 percent of the total metropolitan population. At the micro level, local governments in the TM such as Shinjuku have populations of migrants representing eleven percent of the population or more, implying that parts of Tokyo are becoming significant migrant abodes in a city and country known for its ethnic homogeneity. Local governments in the TM play prominent roles in integrating migrants into the local communities because of their proximity to local residents, legal responsibilities for residents in connection with the Local Government Law, and the absence of a state-led integration program. This paper comparatively examines the integration practices of two wards in the TM—Shinjuku and Adachi—using a policy approach. Specifically, using Esser's model of social integration, the paper investigates the degree to which current Japanese local government integration practices in the TM overlap with traditional ideas of social integration. Employing Esser's concepts of acculturation integration, interactive integration, and identificational and placement integration, the author argues that current integration policies are primarily service-based and not truly integrative in nature. The implications of these findings are that migrants will continue to remain in a peripheral position in the TM and indeed Japan in general, as existing policies do not create a bridge enabling migrants to make a transition from being temporary migrants to an accepted, integrated minority.

Keywords: Japan, Tokyo, local government, multicultural coexistence, social integration, migrants

1. Introduction¹

Economic development imbalances in East Asia contribute to migration from less developed countries to more developed countries for a multitude of reasons. Stephen Castles and Mark Miller (2003: 22) describe this movement of people employing push-pull dynamics in which domestic economic conditions push people into more

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