

論文の内容の要旨

日本定住ビルマ人の変容：
少数民族と多数派バマーのエスニシティを超えた連帯
Transformations in minority-majority ties of
people from Burma residing in Japan

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This is a study on the ethnic relationship of the people from Burma residing in Tokyo, Japan, from 1988 to 2013. More specifically, the study attempts an analysis of minority-majority relationship through delineation of the self-perception of their ethnic identity held by Burma's minorities in this community. Unlike most previous studies that label all people from Burma under a single designation of "Burmese," the present study separates Burma's ethnic minorities from its majority Bama. Such distinction, needless-to-say, is a prerequisite for an inquiry, by this study, into the ramification of new minority-majority ties on Burma's ethnic relationship.

Presented below is a brief summary of its chapters on the subject of this study: In the Chapter One an attempt is made to explain how people from Burma made their way into Japan initially as undocumented low-wage labourers in the 1990's and subsequently in the 2000's as holders of formal refugee status or of temporary stay; and the Chapter Two points out that, despite the commonly held notion that the main cause for the exile of people from Burma in Japan was fear of arrest for their participation in the 1988 demonstration for democracy in Burma, the truth is that some of the ethnic minorities among them had left their homes in search of a secure and economically better haven in Japan even before, as well as after, 1988.

The Chapter Three classifies the ethnic perceptions that took shape through personal ethnic encounters in one's domicile. Categorized into three types, they are: (1) the "Re-Acknowledged Ethnicity," which applies to those ethnic minorities who, though was born in their Ethnic State, reside in an urban centre inhabited mostly by the majority-Bama, as in Yangon, where they experience racial discriminations in their daily life; (2) the "Acquired Ethnicity," which applies to those ethnic minorities who have had no experience of residing in their own Ethnic States, but have been subjected to racial discrimination in their daily life in Yangon; and (3) the "Vitalized Ethnicity," which applies to those minorities who have never resided outside their Ethnic States, but who have obviously been awakened to the hard reality of racial discrimination embedded in Burma's territory, even through their daily exposure to the standard Burmese language and the dominant culture of the majority-Bama. The "Ethnicity" so perceived has apparently encountered a kind of invisible segregation throughout the Bama-dominated society, from which no minorities are left untouched. Their experience in such segregation has left the ethnic minorities rarely with a feeling that they are a truly integrated part of the Union of Burma.

The Chapter Four periodizes major developments affecting minority and majority relationship among the people from Burma residing in Tokyo that grew out of its organized action, as follow: Period One (1988 - 1994), beginnings in the movement for democracy in Burma, organized by the majority Bama in Tokyo. In this period the organized activities of Burma's ethnic minorities in Tokyo were limited only to non-political gatherings because of the fear of reprisal against their relatives in Burma; and Period Two (1995 - 1999), launching, by the majority Bama, Japan branches of major Burmese movements abroad for democracy in Burma, and launching, by Burma's ethnic minorities in the community, of Japan branches of the ethnic minority movements abroad, still limited to the non-political action.

Period Three (2000 - 2002) sees the beginning of joint actions for democracy in Burma by two different groups of the majority Bama organizations in Japan. An event of special significance in this period: An important activist of the minority ethnic background joined one of the two movements mentioned above, an unforeseen development until this time. Period Four (2003) sees emergence of the minority ethnic organizations for political action in Tokyo and beginning of joint action by these organizations, all for the first time. Lastly, Period Five (2004 - 2013), formation of

the majority-minority ties between the Bama organizations and their ethnic minority counterparts in Tokyo.

During the first three periods (1988-2002) is the appearance of no notable change in the minority and majority relationship among people from Burma residing in Tokyo and this is due mainly to the existence of no significant transformation in the self-perceptions of the ethnic identity among them. In Period Four (2003), however, the Depayin Massacre, which occurred in Burma in May 2003, generated a change of heart among those who were hopeful of returning to Burma upon the improvement of conditions there, and this resulted in prompting certain ethnic minorities to stage joint protests. Accordingly, this also led to the emergence of their perception of being "part of Burma's ethnic minority" rather than "part of such-and-such ethnic minority".

Period Five (2004-2013) witnessed a sudden increase in the number of people from Burma residing in Japan applying for formal refugee status. This movement occurred in the metropolitan Tokyo area in the early phase of the Period Five as a consequence of tighter control of illegal residents by the Japanese authorities. In the process, those belonging to Burma's ethnic minorities frequently utilized their separate organizational facilities to assist each other. This, in turn, often led to participation in the political activities of their organizations, the result of which is to facilitate in a new-shared notion of themselves as "Burmese in Japan". In other words, in a quarter-century while the ethnic minorities had been residing in Japan, their self-perception of ethnic identity evolved from being "part of such-and-such ethnic minority" to "part of Burma's ethnic minority" and finally, to "Burmese in Japan".

This transformation of ethnic identity was in many ways a by-product created by the emergence of new minority-majority ties that had taken place in the process of their promotion of a shared cause with the majority Bama in Japan. It should be pointed out that this transformation--whereby Burma's ethnic minorities were able to conclude political ties with the majority Bama in Japan--demonstrates that they have achieved solidarity beyond ethnicity. At the same time, from the viewpoint of Japanese society, the transformation has facilitated turning their previously invisible existence into that of visibly active and politically conscious Burmese refugees in Japan.

The Chapter Five analyses the data from a survey conducted among members of the worker's union led by those people from Burma. The data indicates a clear desire on the part of a majority of those surveyed for the permanent residency in Japan. This

desire, could couple with the emergence of the cooperative organizational ties that have been formed between Burma's ethnic minorities and the majority Bama in Japan, renders support to a growing preference for them to conduct their lives as "Burmese permanent residents in Japan" and no longer as necessarily, as was previously the case, as "temporary residents in Japan belonging to such-and-such ethnic minority in Burma".

The concluding chapter discusses the implications of this new trend, focusing on the two countries concerned, Burma and Japan. First of all, the new minority-majority ties is not only of special significance for people from Burma in Japan but also for Burma that has sought, though with little success, the national unity of its ethnically diverse people for more than half a century. The new ties moreover clearly suggest that a harmonious union between the ethnic minorities and the majority Bama is within the realm of possibilities, given the right combination of conditions available. In the long term, the existence of "Burmese permanent residents in Japan", a novel notion increasingly shared today by many people from Burma in the country, may in the not-so-distant future usher in the use of a new novel designation, "Burmese-Japanese". In fast-moving 21st century Japan, a closed mono-cultural society, this may trigger a serious reconsideration of the question: "Who and what are the Japanese?"