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"Unseeing" Chinese Students in Japan: Understanding Educationally Channelled Migrant Experiences

Jamie COATES

Abstract: Chinese migrants are currently the largest group of non-Japanese nationals living in Japan. This growth is largely the result of educational migration, positioning many Chinese in Japan as student-migrants. Based on 20 months' ethnographic fieldwork in Ikebukuro, Tokyo's unofficial Chinatown, this paper explores the ways in which the phenomenology of the city informs the desire for integration amongst young Chinese living in Japan. Discussions of migrant integration and representation often argue for greater recognition of marginalised groups. However, recognition can also intensify vulnerability for the marginalised. Chinese student-migrants' relationship to Ikebukuro's streets shows how young mobile Chinese in Tokyo come to learn to want to be "unseen." Largely a response to the visual dynamics of the city, constituted by economic inequality, spectacle, and surveillance, the experiences of young Chinese students complicate the ways we understand migrants' desires for recognition and integration.

Dr. Jamie Coates is currently a postdoctoral research fellow at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University. Trained as an anthropologist, his research focuses on China–Japan relations from an ethnographic perspective. His doctoral research centred on modes of belonging among Chinese migrants in Japan. More broadly, he is interested in the materially grounded and phenomenological aspects of cosmopolitanism in East Asia. His current project, funded by the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), explores Chinese migrant media consumption and production in Japan.
E-mail: <jamie.coates@gmail.com>

Introduction

The question of incorporation and recognition is one that deeply affects the experiences of students and migrants. This is particularly pertinent for Chinese students in Japan, as their decisions to move to and remain in Japan are cited in wider discussions of immigration to Japan and Sino-Japanese relations more generally. This paper investigates the experiences of Chinese student-migrants from a phenomenological and discursive perspective in order to explore how it is that a significant flow of student-migrants to Japan remains "unseen" in daily life and Japanese discourse. This paper shows how the phenomenology of the city and Japanese perceptions of Chinese migrants impact the desire to be seen (or not), raising the question, is recognition always a good thing?

Despite historical and continuing animosities between China and Japan, Chinese nationals have become the largest group of non-Japanese living in Tokyo. This growth is relatively recent (post-1985) and can be directly attributed to a nexus of factors surrounding the popularisation of educational mobility during China's reform era, and to Japan's efforts to attract students from overseas (Nyíri 2010; Coates 2013; Liu-Farrer 2011a; Fong 2011; Tajima 2003). In 2010 over 690,000 documented Chinese nationals were living in Japan (Japanese Statistics Bureau 2010). However, since the Fukushima crisis in 2011 and the escalated worsening of political relations between China and Japan, this figure dropped to 648,743 as of June 2014 (Japanese Statistics Bureau 2014). Despite this recent decline, educational mobility to Japan over the past 30 years has ensured that ethnic Chinese people constitute the largest migrant group in Japan today (Liu-Farrer 2011b). A significant proportion of these Chinese "newcomers" originally came to Japan on educational visas after 1985, and more than 100,000 Chinese have been naturalised as Japanese citizens. This suggests that studying in Japan is not merely a means of skill development but also a path towards immigration more generally. Japan has maintained an average ranking of second- or third-most popular destination for Chinese students over the past 10 years (UNESCO 2006, 2012) and is committed to attracting more students. For example, in 2008 Prime Minister Fukuda announced a goal of drawing 300,000 foreign students to Japan by 2020.

Since the 1980s, educational visas in Japan have been tweaked to encourage students to work, both in skilled and unskilled labour (Liu-

Farrer 2011a). During his visits to the ASEAN countries in 1983, Prime Minister Nakasone, under the rhetoric of "internationalisation" (国際化, *kokusaika*), pledged to accept more than 100,000 foreign students before the beginning of the twenty-first century, simplifying pre-college visa requirements and increasing the number of working hours permitted on student visas the following year (Wakabayashi 1990; Liu-Farrer 2011a). Five years after Nakasone's declaration, 30,000 Chinese students were studying and working in Japan, making up 80 per cent of the international student population at the time. In the early 1990s, other visa categories, such as the vocational trainee visa, were introduced (Douglass and Roberts 2000). Currently, Chinese nationals hold 70 per cent of trainee visas and 60 per cent of total student visas in Japan, with students permitted to work up to 26 hours a week and trainees often working longer hours than officially recommended as part of their employment experience (JASSO 2014).

As the case of Chinese student migration to Japan suggests, student migration is positioned within a wider framework of "skilled" and "labour" migration (Liu-Farrer 2011a; Nathan 2014; Wang 2012; Zweig, Fung, and Han 2008). In countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, periods of study contribute points towards immigration applications; it is clear that in the era of incentivised skilled-migration schemes, educational pathways are becoming a primary means not only to migrate temporarily, but also to immigrate permanently. This observation is particularly applicable to Chinese students in Japan, as Japan is close enough to China that transnational ties are relatively easy to maintain, and Japan's demand for skilled labour is increasingly creating opportunities for new graduates.

Although clear figures on how many Chinese students remain in Japan are not available, a general trend towards staying has been noted. Gracia Liu-Farrer's estimates suggested that only 13 per cent of all foreign students who went through tertiary education left Japan in 2004, with current figures at roughly 30 per cent (JASSO 2014; Liu-Farrer 2011b). Wang Huiyao's research on returnee professionals has found that Chinese graduates from Japan have a markedly lower rate of return than Chinese students from the United Kingdom or the United States (Wang 2012). Consequently, although the rate of all foreign students leaving Japan has increased, data suggests that Chinese students have a lower rate of return than most other foreign student categories. This low rate of return also indicates that Chinese

students in Japan have many opportunities to find employment and start businesses with Japanese companies now targeting Chinese students who graduate from Japanese institutions (Liu-Farrer 2014).

Even though there has been a large influx of Chinese migrants to Japan over the past 30 years with a general trend towards remaining in Japan, in many ways they remain invisible. Extant scholarship on Chinese migration to Japan has investigated their labour strategies (Liu-Farrer 2011b); identities (Liu-Farrer 2012); and the implications for Japanese society of the settlement of new flows of people (Okuda and Tajima 1992, 2001). However, the continued settlement of migrants does not necessarily result in their increased visibility. As Junko Tajima noted, Asia has become "buried/embedded" (埋め込まれる, *umekomareru*) within the Tokyo metropolis (Tajima 2005). Although noticeable to some extent, Tajima notes this visibility is but a fraction of the actuality of Asian migrant life: "The visible is only a small part of the world. The things that become visible are merely the tip of the iceberg" (Tajima 2005: 59).

Tajima's work suggests that Chinese settlement strategies often contribute to this sense of Tokyo's invisible Asian population. This paper extrapolates from Tajima's research to investigate what motivates "hidden" settlement patterns. In doing so, it finds that Chinese "hidden" settlement patterns are the result of various forms of inclusion that influence the experiences of Chinese in their everyday life. Rather than a lack of representation, certain kinds of representation inform the spatial and sensory dynamics of the city, contributing to migrants' desire to remain unseen.

Chinese students are a common presence in many parts of contemporary Tokyo, but their experiences within the city and desire to get on with their lives often result in them wanting to remain unnoticed and unseen. Along the western half of Tokyo, Chinese people are everywhere and nowhere in particular, predominating in most of the service-industry spaces along Japan Rail's central ring (the Yamanote line) that runs along the boundaries of historic Tokyo. Chinese student-migrants often socialise and work close to the major stations on this line such as Shinjuku, Shibuya, and Ikebukuro.

This article is based on fieldwork conducted in Ikebukuro between 2008 and 2011. In the early 2000s, Ikebukuro had attracted a large conglomeration of Chinese-run businesses (approximately 200) started by former students, who also employed and served students.

At the time of my fieldwork, Ikebukuro was in the midst of a proposal to label a section of the western half of the station "Tokyo Chinatown," suggesting that the build-up of Chinese businesses in the area was starting to impact migrant identities and hopes for integration. While Okuda and Tajima observed that Ikebukuro served as a hub for people mostly from Shanghai, Fujian, and Beijing in the 1990s, today it attracts Chinese from the Northeast, such as Dalian, Shenyang, and Inner Mongolia. In contrast to Okuda and Tajima's observation that new Asian groups such as the Burmese and Nepalese were replacing Chinese populations, Ikebukuro's Chinese population has grown through new flows of students from the People's Republic of China.

I befriended a group of former Chinese students, now hairdressers, who ran their business from a massive apartment block no longer used for residential purposes. The building was full of small, Chinese-owned and -run businesses; I also came to know many of the other business owners in the building and their predominantly Chinese customers and staff, and followed the owner of the hairdresser's shop into his circle of friends. I took accommodation in a Chinese-only student dorm located in the north of Ikebukuro. The majority of my interlocutors were aged between 18 and 35 and either held student visas or had originally come to Japan on student visas before finding work sponsorship or setting up a business.

Among my 250 interlocutors, 80 per cent worked while studying, with the majority working in sectors predominantly staffed by Chinese students. Of the remaining 20 per cent, 12 per cent were on scholarships from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, and Training (MEXT), while 8 per cent were supported by a family member who also lived in Japan. Due to my reliance on snowball sampling, roughly 70 per cent of my sample were male. However, all the women I interviewed were part of the 80 per cent who worked, making their experiences pertinent to the discussions in this paper. The data I use for this paper mostly stems from the experiences of those who worked.

While all of those I talked to complained about feeling isolated, the social-capital strategies available to those on scholarship and those supported by family differed greatly from those within the majority working population. Scholarship students had little to do with self-funded Chinese students, largely because their networks were

initially formed among students living in scholarship-funded dormitories. Moreover, they were more likely to have not only Japanese friends, but also friends from other countries on the same scholarship. Consequently, this group of students mostly visited Ikebukuro to consume Chinese food or to introduce their pre-established social networks to particular Chinese dishes. Those supported by family usually lived in the suburbs, where previous flows of Chinese migrants have settled, in a similar pattern to those mentioned by Tajima and Liu-Farrer. Although newly arrived, they were often integrated into long-established social networks of Chinese migrants in the region. Although complaining that they felt alienated from Japanese society, they often had more time and opportunity to engage in a range of social activities with long-term Chinese migrants.

Among those self-funded, the majority received initial support from their families in China, but ended up trying to find work soon after arriving in order to ease the burden of their costs on their parents. Due to Japan's geographic proximity, low tuition fees, and flexible student-visa system, a broad demographic of student-migrants flow into Ikebukuro. The unstructured and casual nature of ethnographic interviews means my interlocutors did not always divulge their backgrounds to me; however, I found a majority of these self-funded migrants had parents who engaged in small business operations (个体户, *getihu*) in China. The second-largest demographic had parents who, also in China, worked as modestly positioned public servants, such as schoolteachers, or low-ranking white-collar company workers. Only a few had parents in Japan or parents working as internal migrants within China, and of those, they were mostly highly mobile *getihu* operators rather than labourers. My interlocutors largely came from what has been generally called China's emerging "middle class" (Li 2010).

Save for those on scholarship, though, my interlocutors all complained about their relatively isolated lives outside of work and education. For those who had lived in Japan for less than seven years, their social networks were developed through occasional leisure activities in small hidden spaces within the city, such as a billiards competition I regularly attended. These networks were consistent with both Junko Tajima's general observations about migrant networks (Tajima 2003) and Gracia Liu-Farrer's ethnographies of social dance parties in Ikebukuro (Liu-Farrer 2004) and a Fujianese church (Liu-Farrer 2008).

Usually constituted by migrants who had lived in Japan for more than three years, they were promoted as temporary solutions to otherwise isolating lifestyles. As part of my fieldwork, I attempted to untangle the nexus of factors contributing to this isolation, finding that low-paying jobs and the lack of time that often comes with them, the spatial dynamics of the city, and the ways in which Chinese migrants were seen all impacted the experiences of my interlocutors. What is more, the nature of these experiences resulted in students expressing the desire to live relatively isolated and hidden lives, directing their social-capital networks into the leisure activity of their choice, which rarely broke away from Chinese-language milieus.

Gracia Liu-Farrer has thoroughly documented the ways in which students from China have been incorporated into the various low-paid service sectors of Japan's economy (Liu-Farrer 2011a). Showing that the initial stages are the hardest, her work suggests that the transition from study to work often leads Chinese students into successful careers, even if they are subject to a "wall" (壁, *kabe*) of discrimination in the workplace (Liu-Farrer 2011b, 2014). My data also confirms these findings. Among my interlocutors, those who had remained in Japan after study often had successful jobs or businesses, but they also continued to complain about social isolation. What is more, the greater their Japanese-language ability, the greater their sense of discrimination in Japan. For example, one woman from Dalian in her early thirties had worked for several years in a department store. She was hired for both her excellent Japanese-language skills and her ability to serve the Chinese tourists who have flocked to Japan in recent years. In a casual conversation about language ability, she described how she had been impressed by how polite and friendly Japanese people were when she arrived in Japan seven years earlier. However, since coming to understand the nuances of Japanese formality, alongside understanding public broadcasts, she felt as though she was a much stronger target of ridicule. She stated: "I was much happier when I didn't understand" (Anonymous 1 2010)

Within this paper, I build on the findings of scholars such as Liu-Farrer, Okuda and Tajima to investigate the dynamics that go beyond questions of social capital, identity, and employment – namely, the experiential and sensory aspects of being a Chinese student-migrant. These approaches use predominantly language-centred concepts, such as identity. But by adding another experiential dimension, the

link between identity and materially grounded everyday life can be better understood. In other words, it is identity as it relates to space, and the regulation of space, alongside how these spaces are experienced on a sensory level that informs student-migrants' experiences and their desire for recognition. From the experiences of those who either were studying at the time of research or had formerly been students, I learned that experiences of isolation and stigma are connected to, but also transcend, economic situations, social capital, and language ability. Chinese student-migrants' visual experiences of the city also intersect with their economic and discursive position, contributing to their desire to want to remain "unseen."

On Representation, Recognition, and Multiculturalism

The curious notion that Chinese student-migrants learn to remain out of sight in Japan due to a wide range of discursive, spatial, and phenomenological factors has implications for how we conceive of migrant recognition and representation. As a response to the historically assimilationist approach to understanding migrants in government policy and the social sciences (Castles and Miller 2003), migration studies scholars have increasingly fought to improve the representation and recognition of migrant groups, criticising both the exclusionary framing of immigrants as "a problem" (Castles 2010) and the reliance on "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2003).

Such criticisms gave birth to multiculturalist policies, where scholars and policymakers emphasised creating local institutions and structures that would foster greater cultural recognition within diverse communities (Banks and McGee Banks 1995; Kymlicka 2000; May 1999; Nieto 1992; Taylor 1994). A cornerstone of this approach has been an emphasis on mutual recognition as a pathway towards positive social change. As Castles and Miller have put it, an emphasis on integration does not necessitate greater responsibility on migrants, but greater emphasis on integration and incorporation as a two-way process emerging from mutual recognition (Castles and Miller 2003). In light of this, the "politics of recognition" has arguably become a major goal of migration scholarship over the past 25 years, with migrant integration seen as correlated to migrants' capacity to be recog-

nised as individuals and cultural groups (Butler 1997; Castles 2010; Honneth and Fraser 2003; Sökefeld 2008; Taylor 1994).

Research on migration to Japan has followed along these lines. Due to the widespread portrayal of Japan as a homogeneous society, both in Japan and earlier international academic discourse (Befu 2001; Hankins 2012), scholarly efforts have been made since the 1990s to increase the representation of minorities and migrant groups (Murphy-Shigematsu and Willis 2008; Chapman 2007; Creighton 1997; Weiner 2009; Roth 2002; Ryang 2008).

The "politics of recognition," however, as Pheng Cheah notes, often neglects the fact that minorities face problems in their lives precisely because they are recognised in certain ways (Cheah 2013). Minorities are not so much excluded as included, but in ways that subject them to wider forces that shape their very experiences and hopes for the future. Cheah argues that different modes of recognition, rather than a lack of recognition, subject people to a particular position in the world. Warning that attempts to form a "politics of recognition" have often reproduced the power structures they hope to challenge, Cheah argues that significant attention needs to be paid to the specific material relations that produce forms of recognition.

An ethnographic approach focused on sensory experience provides a useful means of connecting wider theorisations of representation to the embodied experiences of the city and material relations. In the sensory turn within the arts, humanities, and social sciences since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Pink 2009), the researcher is situated in discussions of the experiences of those we research through acknowledgement of the shared sensory nature of participant observation, positioning the researcher as an embodied subject sharing a world with other embodied subjects. This trend encompasses phenomenological approaches in ethnography; drawing on William James' notion of "radical empiricism," Michael Jackson argues that participant observation creates space for researchers to call upon "the plurality of *all* experienced facts," including those of the researcher (Jackson 1996: 7):

> Ethnographic fieldwork brings us into direct dialogue *with* others, affording us opportunities to explore knowledge not as something that grasps inherent and hidden truths but as an intersubjective process of sharing experience, comparing notes, exchanging ideas, and finding common ground. (Jackson 1996: 8)

With this in mind, I include the testimonies of my interlocutors alongside my own observations and experiences. I attempt to imaginatively inhabit their experiences, as well as document how they explained these experiences to me, evoking a sense of what it is like to be a migrant in Tokyo, constantly concerned with where and how one is seen.

Receptacle Living

The Chinese students with whom I shared a dormitory worked in jobs such as overnight *bento* (弁当, lunchbox) packing in Saitama, construction, furniture assembly, dishwashing, and late-night convenience store work. I found my accommodation through a local Chinese-language newspaper where advertising for dormitories is common. These newspapers are free and are usually financially supported by local businesses' advertising. On average there were at least two pages devoted to accommodation in the four major Chinese-language newspapers I collected regularly in Ikebukuro, the majority being advertising for small, shared accommodation. Dormitories are popular with new arrivals in Japan due to their low cost. Advertisements usually listed shared rooms of up to four people costing between JPY 25,000–35,000 a month (USD 300–400); although my dorm was a "single-room only" dormitory (单人间, *danrenjian*) with shared facilities at JPY 55,000 a month. Such dorms are usually closer to major rail junctions, allowing young Chinese to work and play without worrying about transport. Dormitories are also commonly found in buildings with a variety of purposes. They are a good example of "the 'receptacle nature' of Tokyo with 'pencil buildings, eight-to-ten storey, wobbly, windy structures that afford room only for hole-in-the-wall offices and apartments'" (Waley quoted in Richie 1999: 12).

My dormitory was on the sixth floor of a small multipurpose building. The dorm was owned by a Japanese man whom we never met, and managed by an agent originally from Dalian in Northeast China who had been living in Japan for over seven years. It was immediately above a small business and shared a large part of its structure with a vertical car park. The building wobbled when it was windy due to a large billboard on its side, and shuddered whenever a car was moved into its parking allotment. The dormitory rooms were narrow,

each a slight modification on the other. I was easily able to touch parallel walls at the same time, and the room was only slightly longer than the length of my body. A bunk bed had the bottom bunk removed to allow for a small study space, and the roof prevented me from sitting up in bed. Mine was the largest room in the dormitory, although others had low-lying beds that gave their rooms a more spacious feel. A thin wall made of light construction materials separated each of the rooms. Each partition rarely extended all the way to the wall, allowing one to have conversations with neighbours easily, although the gaps were also a source of anxiety for the two young girls in the dorm, who covered them with tape and posters.

All of the recently arrived migrants whom I interviewed (usually having arrived within a six-month period of the interview) were living in dorms, although those who had been in Tokyo for longer than two years tended to eventually find small "apartments" (アパート, *apāto*) in smaller, older buildings, or single-room apartments in large multi-storey buildings referred to in Japan as "mansions" (マンション, *manshon*). They would share this style of accommodation with classmates, a partner, or friends. Yet even the process of finding these spaces was tenuous, as it was difficult to secure a lease as a "foreigner" (particularly Chinese) and most of the set-up costs were prohibitively expensive at an average of USD 2,000. Moreover, it was uncommon for many people in Japan to share *apāto* and *manshon* rooms, so migrants intending to share a room together would simply put the lease under one name and not disclose how many people were intending to occupy it.

This kind of accommodation provided a particular sensory experience of the city. Hidden away in small spaces, one's engagement with the outside world was often through a small window overlooking some part of Tokyo. In the dorm I would often lie in bed trying to read whilst my neighbours played games on Chinese social networking sites like QQ or chatted with friends in China online, beeps and message alerts punctuating their conversations. Due to the private and "receptacle"-like nature of these activities, my neighbours often remained unseen, even to a nosy anthropologist. Irregular work shifts and class schedules further limited contact. But my desire to get to know them all, on many occasions bringing sunflower seeds, fruit, cigarettes, and beer to the kitchen to entice them out of their rooms and ask them questions, made our residence more social than most.

The other *apāto* and *manshon* that I visited were similarly anti-
social, if more spacious. Most of the people sharing these small
apartments lived and worked on different schedules, and consequent-
ly did not see each other often. One of my friends would often bring
me back to his apartment to watch Chinese television series online
and keep him company while his girlfriend worked at night. Save for
these occasions, he said, he did not often see other people and mostly
spent his time working, studying and playing games at home:

> As soon as you go out, it'll cost you. Food is expensive, drinking is
> expensive, and the streets, although bright, aren't really a fun place
> to hang out. Being inside is more comfortable. I can do what I
> like. (Anonymous 2 2011)

Chinese migrants told me much of their experience of Tokyo as a
city, communicating simultaneous confusion, excitement, and disap-
pointment. Tokyo is considered a desirable destination within Chi-
nese discourse precisely because of its relationship to capital, particu-
larly consumption. China's view of Tokyo as a global city and con-
sumption space is reflected in the recent influx of Chinese tourists
who come to Japan to shop for "quality" (质量好, *zhiliianghao*) items
that, although available in China, are seen as more prestigious when
purchased in the reliable consumption spaces of Japan. In this sense,
Tokyo is seen as the epitome of modern consumption in a "devel-
oped country" (发达国家, *fada guojia*) (Fong 2011). However, this
image changes for Chinese migrants as the realities of the city dawn
on them. As noted in a conversation between two young women
from Shenyang, one's excited talk of Tokyo as "a heaven of con-
sumption" (消费天堂, *xiaofei tiantang*) prompted the other to reply
sardonically that the money earned in Japan rarely made it very far. It
was like "being invited to a banquet but not being allowed to eat."

Similar to the allure and contradictions of Tokyo as a consump-
tion space, my interlocutors also felt Tokyo was not a very "legible"
space, saying the city was difficult to navigate and understand. Many
of them told me that one of the initial attractions of the city was that
Tokyo was another large city in Asia, so they believed it would feel
familiar. The signs, although technically in another language, used the
same or similar characters to those in China, and it was possible to be
less visible on the street than it would be in many other countries in
which Chinese students consider studying. At the same time, my
interlocutors often described Tokyo as "chaotic," "messy," or even

"degenerate" (乱, *luan*). This perception was particularly common among my interlocutors from Northeast China and the recently re-furbished cities in the South, who were used to large, Soviet-style boulevards and large public parks used for social activities. Those from Shanghai were less critical, suggesting that Tokyo and Shanghai were very similar, although a 19-year-old woman who had lived in Shanghai previously complained, "They look the same, but the feeling is different, people use the street differently and [Tokyo is] no fun." (Anonymous 3 2010)

Tokyo's lack of public space and tight living arrangements are seen as a product of Japan's efforts to change the spatial inscriptions of Tokyo's past into a capitalist "global city" (Sassen 1991). As Saskia Sassen notes, Tokyo is primarily a site for

> (1) the production of specialized services needed by complex organizations for running a spatially dispersed network of factories, offices, and service outlets; and (2) the production of financial innovations and the making of markets, both central to the internationalization and expansion of the financial industry. (Sassen 1991: 5)

The Japanese-owned international corporations that shape Tokyo's urban landscape have a close relationship with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) (Jackson 1996; Jacobs 2005; Waley 2007). The system of urban expansion in Tokyo also resulted in people moving further from their places of work. By the 1990s, the average commute for people working in Tokyo was over 70 minutes, and property prices skyrocketed fourfold, pushing families to obtain mortgages for properties further from the centre. At the same time, the centre's empty spaces were filled and divided into smaller accommodation and consumption spaces, with a boom in single-person, *manshon*-style apartments throughout the 1990s. This top-down planning resulted in the exacerbation of spatial inequalities in the city and the continued "atomisation" and "fragmentation" of Japan's urban social life, as families were forced to split up sections of their land and sell it to developers, resulting in a mass corporatisation of Tokyo's publically owned areas (Waley 2000: 142).

Today, this process of corporatisation has ensured that areas such as Ikebukuro are largely designed to house workers in small-scale accommodation while leaving the streets as primary sites of consumption. Tokyo's street spaces have been wrapped in various forms of advertising to create a "promiscuous display" for consump-

tion: "hoardings bellow, flags and banners yell, neon points, and kanji grabs" (Richie 1999: 37). Brian Morris suggests that the verticality of these displays makes the streets of Tokyo some of the most visually rich consumption spaces in the world (Morris 2010: 7):

> The spatial reach of the Japanese city street expands downwards and upwards to include those shops, eating places, bars, and businesses located anywhere within this vertical range. This has crucial consequences for advertising signage, which colonizes every available space in order to maximize the chances of customers finding or choosing a particular establishment to patronize. (Morris 2010: 7–8)

Considering the ways in which Tokyo has been corporatised to house labour and promote consumption, the experiences of Chinese student-migrants may not seem particular to their migrant condition. Indeed, it is unlikely they would say so. Free, open spaces in Tokyo have disappeared over the past 40 years (Waley 2000). Coupled with neoliberal reforms in employment, this lack of space has resulted in a rise in "social precariousness," with issues related to social isolation in general becoming a major concern in Japanese society (Allison 2013; Furlong 2008). Consequently, it is likely that Japanese people's experiences of the city are affected by dynamics similar to those salient for migrants. My interlocutors' practices and comments suggested, however, that coming to this situation as a migrant working in a low-paying job while studying exacerbates some of the effects of the city. This wider isolation-producing dynamic within Tokyo has a distinctly visual quality, as low incomes are made more apparent through the "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011) of the city's visually spectacular consumption spaces. Nevertheless, there are also visual dynamics that are more specifically focused on Chinese migrants and the way they are publically depicted.

The Threat of "Unseen Neighbours"

As part of a mini-ethnographic project I conducted whilst learning Japanese in 2009, I interviewed a group of Japanese twenty-somethings recruited through a local university (15 altogether). They were students or alumni of the university, and were of relatively affluent backgrounds, the university being one of Tokyo's more prestigious institutions. A few of them had initially volunteered to participate in

an activity designed as a language-learning exercise for researchers learning Japanese. The activity involved researchers surveying or interviewing a small group of students so they could practise researching in Japanese. I asked them about Ikebukuro and Chinese migration. After receiving comments from them about how Ikebukuro seemed "dangerous" and was "difficult to understand" (解りにくい, *wakarinikui*), I asked if they could introduce me to other people within their social networks. Despite many frequenting Ikebukuro, few knew about Ikebukuro's "Chinatown" or where it might be. When I asked what words they associated with Ikebukuro's northern area, many said they had heard there are many "Chinese people" as well as "gangs," and were often left with a feeling that the place was "dangerous" but had never seen anything other than restaurants and stores.

> When I have been there, it feels a little different. I can hear people speaking something other than Japanese, but I don't know what it is. They look similar though, so I can't really see (見えない, *mienai*) who they are. I've been told there are a lot of Chinese people around there, but I can't see much other than the Chinese grocer. Most of the time I notice the adult entertainment (水商売, *mizu shōbai*) signs before the Chinese ones, but there's definitely a feeling of Chinese-ness (中国らしい, *chūgoku-rashii*). (Anonymous 4 2009)

The growth of the Chinese student population in Japan is occurring in the context of Japanese media representations of Chinese migrants as a troublemaking, "invisible" population that is ever-present but unidentifiable. Social commentator Yoshida Tadanori has tried to combat this representational exclusion in his book *Unseen Neighbours*, which tells the tales of Chinese students who have decided to remain in Japan (Yoshida 2009). *Unseen Neighbours* attempts to make readers recognise the presence of Chinese migrants in Japan and advocates increasing the representation of "invisible" groups in Japan. At the same time, Yoshida's use of the term "unseen" mirrors the perceptions of the young Japanese people I interviewed and suggests that Japan's Chinese population is commonly perceived as invisible in everyday Japanese life. Despite this invisibility, though, they are increasingly made "visible" in the media through a variety of dramatic forms of representation.

Historic associations between people and place exert a strong influence on Japanese discourse on migrant spaces in Tokyo. Historic Chinatowns and Chinese migratory movements, such as those which formed Yokohama's Chinatown, have been celebrated in many ways, and constitute touristic hot spots in many parts of Japan (Tsu 2008; Zha 2005). However, the populations that occupy these historic sites account for only 5 per cent of the registered Chinese population in Japan today (Duan 2010), and recent Chinese movements from the PRC are viewed with greater suspicion. Chinese nationals are often perceived as violent criminals or associated with organised crime, and although this is reflected in some statistics, it is mostly a misperception. Since 2003 Chinese people have made up the largest group (45 per cent) of foreign residents arrested by Japanese law enforcement (Zha 2003; Ministry of Justice 2012). Some of these crimes have received much media attention. For example, in Ikebukuro in July 2014, an argument between a married Chinese couple turned into a public homicide (*Sankei News* 2014). The couple was reported to be having a heated argument in a café in Ikebukuro when the man pulled out a gun and shot his partner in public. Although an isolated personal tragedy, these kinds of events are usually connected to wider concerns around immigration in Japan. As one online news report stated:

> This ranks them first among the "worst" (ワースト, *wāsuto*) nationalities […], the rate of these kinds of atrocious incidents involving firearms is unlikely to lessen. It's clear that there will be negative impacts on the image of Chinese migrants in Japan. (*Livedoor News* 2014)

This form of journalism is mostly relegated to online platforms and inflammatory tabloids. Nevertheless, such reports have also filtered into the increasingly popular genre of "dislike China, hate Korea" (嫌中憎韓, *kenchū-zōkan*) non-fiction literature (Brasor 2014) and sparked an upsurge of panicked online commentary, with a range of speculations about the future of Japan if migration continues (cf. GiraraGappa 2011). In contrast to these panicked estimates, however, overall crime rates in Japan appear to be decreasing (Ministry of Justice 2012), and crimes committed by non-Japanese nationals represent a small fraction of crimes in Japan (3 per cent), with the majority of Chinese illegal activity recorded in official statistics being traffic- or visa-related rather than violent crimes.

These concerns also connect to wider perceptions of China in general. For example, opinion polls have consistently found Japanese people to hold negative attitudes towards China and Chinese people, with a broader international study conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project ranking Japan first among those with unfavourable views of China (Pew Research Centre 2010; Zha 2003). Such negative attitudes are mapped onto spaces within Tokyo largely due to postwar Taiwanese, Chinese, and Korean traders' involvement in illegal markets that formed in areas of Tokyo during times of scarcity in the immediate post-surrender period (Tsu 2011).

Over time, associations between certain spaces, crime, and ethnicity have formed, reflected in popular culture today. For instance, the film *Shinjuku Incident* stars Jackie Chan as a poor rural Chinese worker who follows his childhood love to Japan only to fall into a downward spiral of gang violence in the streets of Shinjuku's adult entertainment district (Yee 2009). Similarly, a recent novel series titled *Dragon Tears* focuses on a detective's search for missing Chinese trainees in Ikebukuro, and their relationship to crime, prostitution, and drugs (Ishida 2011). Considering the association between Chinese people and criminality, and the association between criminality and certain spaces, it is not surprising that the Japanese twenty-somethings I spoke with associated Ikebukuro with danger. This perception also contributed to my interlocutors' sense of Ikebukuro, as it produced an environment of surveillance and suspicion in the street.

"Annoying Surveillance" and Friendly Authoritarianism

The sense of being observed and suspected of criminality whilst in street-level spaces was deeply felt by my Chinese interlocutors. Whenever we travelled together along the streets of Ikebukuro, there was always a sense of haste. The street was not a space to dawdle or enjoy, and it was described to me as "somewhere that made one feel annoyed" (烦, *fan*). This discomfort also contributed to students' desire to remain inside, out of view, and in many senses exacerbated their image as invisible. The discomfort was due to the imposition of certain norms, such as keeping quiet or smoking in a designated place, but also on occasion due to police harassment.

> There are too many Japanese people out there (在外面日本人太多了, *zai waimian ribenren tai duo le*). If I just speak Chinese then someone might complain or look at me strangely, so I just don't open my mouth unless necessary. I also don't smoke outside, I'm tired of having some old person (老头, *laotou*) come up to me and tell me off. I know you can only smoke in some places, but it's just weird! (Anonymous 5 2010)

Comments such as these were common in the daily joking and discussion about Japan that occurred among my interlocutors. Due to the predominantly male-gendered representation of Chinese criminality in popular discourse, it was unsurprising that young men complained about a sense of constant surveillance. In contrast, young women had a more ambivalent sense of street surveillance. One young woman who I met in my friend's hair salon demonstrated that being able to negotiate the position of being unseen could feel rewarding. She told me how she delighted in her ability, as a "yellow person" (黄人, *huangren*), to fit in in Japan. As long as she did not open her mouth and wore the latest Japanese fashion, no one bothered her. She explained this was the reason why Japan was a better place for Chinese migrants, as it was impossible to achieve a similar level of "passing" in Australia or America (Anonymous 6 2010).

The "annoying" nature of the street in Japan is a product of what Yoshio Sugimoto has called "friendly authoritarianism" (Sugimoto 2002). Sugimoto provides a list of techniques through which the population is both disciplined and mutually disciplines each other. These include

- encouraging mutual surveillance in small locales and groups;
- making power visible and tangible in everyday life through the use of public notices, announcements, and ever-present gentle policing;
- preserving ambiguity in public directives, which allows figures of power to manipulate their meanings based on circumstances; and,
- appealing to the psyche of individuals through moral reasoning.

> These techniques softly control the populace by ensuring that the dominant moral order is reproduced in face-to-face situations. The power of the state does not remain an abstract concept but is brought into daily experience in a moralistic fashion. (Sugimoto 2002: 277)

Davidson has extended the notion of "friendly authoritarianism" to argue that public space serves a disciplining rather than democratic function in Japan (Davidson 2013). According to Davidson, the streets and tightly packed buildings are "panopticon-like," with average people confronting others for eating or smoking in public, and even reporting unknown people to the local police.

Evidence of this panopticon-like "friendly authoritarianism" could be found in a variety of spaces in Ikebukuro. The path along the train tracks was adorned with banners reminding people to behave in a civil way, with many warnings that the community was "watching you," stating in smaller text at the top of each banner: "If we combine everyone's strength, we can cultivate safety and peace" (皆んなの力を合わせて、安全安心街づくり, *minna no chikara wo awasete, anzen anshin machitzukuri*). Due to Ikebukuro's association with criminality, foreignness, and danger, speculations could be made as to whom these notices were directed towards. In one sense, they reminded Japanese viewers that Ikebukuro was dangerous. Indeed, when I decided to live in Ikebukuro and attempt to meet resident Chinese migrants there, I received many warnings about the dangers of the area from concerned Japanese friends and professors. They warned me against associating with Chinese people in Ikebukuro, implying that such Chinese were likely to be connected to criminal or mafia-related activities. However, these kinds of notices were often ignored by my interlocutors, partly depending on their language ability, but also because the daily forms of interactions between people within "friendly authoritarianism" was a much greater concern for them. Constantly harassed about the right place to dispose of rubbish, hold social activites, and even smoke, stand, and eat, they sensed that to be visible was to be vulnerable.

"Friendly authoritarianism" often targets marginalised groups in different ways. As Tsuda shows in the case of Nikkei Brazilians in Japan, concerns about public noise, waste management, and safety intersect to frame Nikkei as constant objects of surveillance (Tsuda 2003). For Chinese student-migrants, the surveillance of the streets meant direct intervention from police and occasional harassment. On one occasion as I walked along the same path I always took through Ikebukuro, I witnessed a particularly striking example of the annoying everyday consequences of being seen on the street. Two young police officers targeted a young Chinese man riding his bicycle to the sta-

tion. As he rode, they called for him to stop his bike and present his "alien registration card" (外国人登録書, *gaikokujin tōrokusho*) so they could check that he had a valid visa. This practice was not uncommon, and I had experienced similar inspections during my time in Japan. But as a white male with Japanese-language skills, my experience had always been that of a polite and friendly request made by a police officer.

In this instance, however, the young man's bike was stopped forcefully before he even managed to stop it himself, and rather than using polite sentences, the policemen aggressively repeated, "Registration card, registration card!" One officer came around to the back of his bicycle and started opening the young man's backpack to search through it while he was trying to maintain his bicycle's upright position and take out his wallet to show the other officer his card. When his card had been checked, they gruffly handed it back to him leaving his backpack open. The young man did not stop to close his bag, but quickly rode away when given permission to go. While this was not a case of brutality or even particularly harsh harassment, what surprised me was the marked difference in the treatment of this young man and myself. This incident piqued my interest, and I asked my interlocutors whether they had experienced similar incidents. A conversation amongst five men resulted in the group comparing how many times they had experienced such an incident (their average was four times a year):

> The most annoying thing (最烦的事, *zui fan de shi*) is how they stop you then touch you. I don't know them but they open your bags and search your pockets without asking properly or even checking to see if you understand Japanese, they just start ordering you around (he starts to make mock gestures of checking a person's bags and pockets). (Anonymous 7 2011)

This sort of experience shaped many of my interlocutors' everyday lives and sense of place in Tokyo. The constant worry about being caught without one's registration card wore away at them more than the worry that they might be considered illegitimate. They were constantly reminded that when walking the streets they must behave a certain way and carry the right documentation.

The use of public notices and police spot-checks in Japan is similar to some disciplining practices in contemporary China. In this sense, the experience of being under surveillance should not be new

for young Chinese student-migrants in Japan. However, as most of the students I worked with came from middle-class backgrounds and had moved to Japan at a relatively young age, the surveillance discourses of China were mostly viewed as public rhetoric rather than personal experiences. Both the "civilisation" (文明, *wenming*) and "harmonious society" (和谐社会, *hexie shehui*) campaigns encouraged by the Chinese government have been designed to have widespread effects on how Chinese people behave and how they perceive each other (Boutonnet 2011a, 2011b). As Boutonnet notes, the rural workers (民工, *mingong*) who have moved into China's urban centres to find work in the Reform Era have been one of the major targets of these campaigns. Constantly harassed, and highly aware of their economic disadvantage, the disciplining effects of China's own form of "friendly authoritarianism" are particularly unkind to rural workers (Hansen 2012; Zhou 2004).

Although the rhetoric of China's "civilisation" and "harmonious society" campaigns is similar to the moralising discourses found within Japan's public notices, their implementation differs. In Japan, police still tend towards a "gentler" form of surveillance than that found in China. Moreover, as almost all of the student-migrants I worked with were legally living and working in Japan, they only feared the police to a certain extent, seeing the checks as "annoying" rather than truly "threatening":

> Although it's annoying, basically Japan's laws still work. The police only have certain rights and so, even though it's annoying and I try to avoid them, I'm not really worried. The worst thing that could happen is, if I forgot my residency card, they could lock me up until someone came and brought my documents. That's the difference. China is fairly backwards in many ways still. […] The best thing is not to spend too much time wandering around looking like you don't know where you're going. If you look like a foreigner, they'll spot-check you. I'd rather just stay inside or at least not get noticed when outside. (Anonymous 8 2014)

Conclusion

Tokyo's street life, full of unaffordable consumption and surveillance, affects Chinese student-migrants in Ikebukuro in various ways. On the street, either they are reminded of their precarious economic position due to their inability to engage in the "promiscuous display" of

consumption spaces or they are subject to surveillance from police and concerned citizens. These dynamics are a product of both the specific representations of Chinese migrants in Japan and the way Tokyo is spatially constituted in general. Chinese student-migrants thus experience Tokyo as a site of high global capital and consumption and a site of "friendly authoritarianism" in specific ways. The effects of these dynamics are often expressed and negotiated visually. As a strategy to negotiate these dynamics, Chinese student-migrants often end up confining their everyday practices to small, "hidden" spaces within the high-rise buildings of Tokyo's urban landscape.

While extant scholarship on Chinese student-migrants in Japan has focused on the forms of social capital and identity construction that influence their ability to settle into Japanese life (cf. Liu-Farrer 2011a; Tajima 2003), there is no research on how these settlement patterns relate to the representation or recognition of Chinese migrants in Japan more generally. Despite this lack of research on Chinese migrants in Japan, there is considerable work that calls for better representation and greater recognition of migrants in Japan more generally (cf. Weiner 2009; Burgess 2004; Nagy 2015). However, the case of Chinese student-migrants shows that it is important not to conflate greater representation with greater recognition. Conversely, too, a lack of interpersonal recognition in daily life may be due to a more complex entanglement of discursive and spatial exclusion, resulting in migrants themselves opting to remain unseen. Considering the complexities of these dynamics then, it would seem pertinent to emphasise that while migrants in Japan require greater and more positive representation in Japanese media, this also needs to be coupled with approaches that tackle the everyday phenomenological aspects of their lives, fostering modes of recognition that make the street and public shared spaces more "desirable." At the same time, wider issues related to the material relations that affect people's daily lives in Tokyo, such as affordable spaces of conviviality, need to be encouraged so that those deemed socially precarious, such as migrants and the marginalised (Allison 2013), feel as though they have a "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1991) and no longer want to remain "unseen."

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