



The Great Hanshin Earthquake's Impact on the Chinese of Kobe: A Study of Community Development in the Face of Localisation and Globalisation Forces

Masuta, Ayumi

(Citation)

国際協力論集, 5((3) 阪神淡路大震災特集):111-126

(Issue Date)

1998-01-17

(Resource Type)

departmental bulletin paper

(Version)

Version of Record

(JaLCD0I)

<https://doi.org/10.24546/00181260>

(URL)

<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14094/00181260>



The Great Hanshin Earthquake' s Impact on the Chinese of Kobe:

A Study of Community Development in the Face of Localisation and Globalisation Forces

Ayumi MASUTA *

1 Background

In the early morning of 17th January 1995, an awesome earthquake struck Kobe city. It killed more than 5,000 people instantly. The number of houses damaged was estimated at 300,000.¹ Among the casualties were 174 foreign residents,² including 48 Chinese.³ Some of the Chinese were overseas students. Properties of the Chinese community such as temples, schools and organisation buildings were also badly damaged. Apart from the loss of lives and material damages, many people were traumatised or suffered great mental anguish.

Kobe has had a large population of foreign residents since her port was opened to the outside world, one of the earliest in Japan. Her cosmopolitan character has made it a popular destination for Japanese tourists. The ratio of foreign residents to the total Kobe population is 2.9%,⁴ three times higher than the 1.1%⁵ national average for Japan. The 8,838-strong Chinese population of Kobe is the second largest foreign group, smaller only than the Korean. The Chinese represent around 22% and the Korean 64% of the foreign population. There are 95 different nationalities represented among Kobe' s residents.⁶

In this paper, I will examine the Chinese community' s activities during the earthquake emergency and in the reconstruction of Kobe, especially their participation in

*Lecturer, Nagoya Gakuin University.

1 Shouboucho, *Shoubouhakusho*, 1996 p.5.

2 Hyogo Prefecture Kokusaibu, *Hyogoken Gaikokujin Hisaigaijoukyou*, May 1996.

3 *Ibid.* and Kobe Kakyou Shinsaitaisaku Honbu, *A report on the number of persons who lost their lives in the earthquake*, August 1995.

4 Japan Immigration Association, *Zairyuugaikoujintoukei*, 1996, 135.

5 *Ibid.*, p.4.

6 *Ibid.*, pp.135-141.

policy making and implementation of reconstruction projects. As the Chinese community shares a number characteristics with other foreign communities, this analysis of the Chinese will also reveal important aspects of Japan's most 'multicultural society', Kobe, and its diverse communities' response to a major natural calamity. The analysis can thus offer an insight into community development and the role of minorities in public policy formulation and civic action in a cosmopolitan environment.

The Chinese and Kobe's other foreign communities have a number of common features. They have mutual assistance organisations like those found in the Korean community, wealthier Indian merchant groups, and newer Vietnamese and the Filipino communities. In studying the Chinese, we are able to get a better understanding of the other foreign communities. However, the Chinese also differ from other groups in several ways. The community in Kobe has a 'China Town' and a 'Chinese Shrine' in the center of the city. These are among the most popular tourist attractions in the region. This unique Chinese heritage perhaps explains the Kobe City Government's special attention on this particular foreign community. For this reason the city government has paid more attention to them than any other foreign communities. As I will discuss later in this paper, this factor has given the Chinese a special role in Kobe's reconstruction.

2 Aftermath of the Earthquake⁷

Members of Kobe's Chinese community were involved in a variety of activities at different levels in the aftermath of the earthquake in order to survive and to help each other to survive. Some of the work was done by individual community organisations

⁷ This section draws on the following references and resources:

Wan Pechuen, 'Hanshin Daishinsai to Kobe Kakyō' in Kobe Kakyō Kajin Kenkyūkai ed, *Tuushin: Hanshin Daishinsai Tokushuugou*, Vol. 26 (February 1995).

Lin Donchun, Kobe Kakyō Shinsai Taisaku Honbuchō 'Oshimite Amariaru Jinzaino Sonshitu', in Kobe Kakyō Kajin Kenkyūkai ed, *Tuushin Hanshins Daishinsai Tokushuu*, 2 Vol. 27 (February 1995).

Wan Pechuen, *A report for Kobe Kakyō Kajin Kenkyūkai, Hanshin Daishinsai to Kobe Kakyō no sonogono joukyōnituite* (May 1995).

'Hanshin Daishinsai kara ichinen to Kakyō' in Kobe Kakyō Kajin Kenkyūkai ed, *Tuushin*, Vol. 29 (February 1996).

Yasui, L. Chen and F. Guo, *Hanshin Daishinsai to Kakyō: Kobe Shoka Daigaku Hanshin Awaji Daishinsai ni kansuru sougoukenkyūu* and Kobe Daigaku Hyogoken Nanbuzishin ni kansuru sougoukenkyūu, 1996.

For information on the emergency activities of other foreign communities, refer to Gaikokujin Zishin Jouhou Center, *Hanshindaishinsai to gaikokujin*, Akashishoten, 1996.

called *Pan* comprising members from the same province or county in China.⁸ Other work was done by larger collective organisations. The mutual assistance provided by each *Pan* was most effective because networks among members were well developed. This allowed them to take care of each other, and the support was especially beneficial for those suffering from psychological trauma or stress.

By the third day following the earthquake, the Chinese had set up an umbrella organisation called *Kobe Kakyō Shinsaitaisaku Honbu* (KKS), or Committee for Earthquake Emergency Activities⁹. Among the Committee's priority activities were the gathering of reliable information on the nature and extent of damages suffered by the Chinese and the development of strategies to help those affected by casualties, injuries, and other damages. The Committee for Earthquake Emergency Activities (KKS) became the first point of contact for members of the Chinese communities and governments. Its Chairman, who was also the President of *Kobe Kakyō Soukai* (KKS),¹⁰ or Kobe Chinese Association, and Vice-Chairman visited the Kobe City Government and Hyogo Prefecture Government to seek their assurance that Chinese residents would receive equal treatment as other residents.

The Committee for Earthquake Emergency Activities (KKS) received strong support from Chinese communities in other Japanese cities, including Nagasaki, Yokohama, Tokyo, Kumamoto, and Fukuoka and cities in Asia with a large Chinese population, such as Singapore and Hong Kong. Money was raised from all over the world, including contributions from the Government of the People's Republic of China¹¹ to help members of Kobe's Chinese community. This help was channeled

8 In Kobe, there are 6 '*Pans*' representing the *Hokkien* (*Fujian*), *Jiangsu*, *Canton* (*Guangzhou*), *Shandong*, *Zhejiang*, and *Taiwan* groups. *Pan* membership is usually limited to people from the same province or county. Some *Pan* membership was confined to people of the same occupation, very much like a guild. For example, the *Fujian Pan* used to have many members engaged in the clothes trade, the *Jiangsu Pan* had many barbers, and the *Guangzhou Pan* had international traders and cooks.

9 Organisations which joined Kobe Kakyō Shinsaitaisaku Honbu were the *Pans* of Kobe, Fujian Huiguan (Fujian House), Zhonghua Huiguan (Chinese House), Kobe Chuuka Doubun Gakkō (Kobe Chinese School), Kobe Chuuka Doubun Gakkō Kachōkai (Parents Association of Kobe Chinese School), and Kobe Kakyō Soukai (Kobe Chinese Association). The Consul-General of the People's Republic of China attended its first meeting.

10 Kobe Kakyō Soukai has been a center for all Chinese organisations in Kobe. It has been involved in welfare, education and cultural maintenance of Kobe's Chinese people and protection and advancement of their rights. Assistance and advice in immigration matters are also its roles. It was separated from the Ryuunichi Kobe Kakyō Sokai, on Taiwan's side, since 1957.

11 The government of the People's Republic of China donated some money to Kobe Kakyō

through KKSH which treated all needy Chinese people equitably regardless of their organisation membership.¹² For example, newer members of the Chinese community, including Chinese students and working students from China, who did not have contacts with Kobe's Chinese organisations, also received financial and other assistance from KKSH. This out-reach to newer residents by the organisations, run mostly by the more established Chinese, including those who had lived in Japan for generations and tended to be conservative, was an unprecedented initiative. The embracing of people who were previously outside the sphere of interest of these organisations was a re-definition of group membership prompted by a natural disaster that exposed the vulnerability of established and newer members of the population.

Another committee established to help Chinese affected by the disaster was the *Ryuunichi Kobe Kakyō Soukai* (RKKS), or Taiwan Kobe Chinese Community Association. This organisation had close contacts with the government in Taiwan and received considerable financial support from Taipei. This affiliation prevented the Taiwan Kobe Chinese Community Association (RKKS) from making direct approaches to the Japanese government. To overcome the political sensitivity, contacts with Japanese authorities were done through some Japanese politicians. Although the Kobe Chinese Association (KKS) and Taiwan Kobe Chinese Community Association (RKKS) were not permitted to have any official relations, they tried to help each other by exchanging information at private levels.¹³

At this point, it is important to identify two other collective bodies which played a very positive part in the face of devastation and hardship caused by the earthquake. These were the *Kobe Chuuka Doubun Gakkō* (KCDG),¹⁴ or Kobe Chinese School and

Shinsaitaisaku Honbu and Kobe Chuuka Doubun Gakkō.

¹²The number of Chinese families who lost or had homes damaged was 1,153. For each of the families, 50,000 yen was offered by Kobe Kakyō Shinsaitaisaku Honbu. For further information on the reaction of the Chinese Embassy and consulate to the Chinese community after the earthquake, refer to Chinese Embassy: 'Hakkisareta renkei wa no kakudai', *Kokusaijinryū*, Vol. 96, May 1995.

¹³The cooperation and mutual assistance of organisations previously polarised by political ideology also occurred in the Korean community. Zai Nihon Daikanminkō Mindan sympathetic to South Korea and Nihon Chōsenjin Sōrengōkai sympathetic to North Korea assisted each other.

Sankei Shinbun, 'Nanbokuno kabe koeta', 10 March 1995, p.3.

Asahi Shinbun, 'Hisaishita zainichi Chōsenjin to Nihonjin Chōsengakkō de netomari', 27 January 1997, p.34.

¹⁴Kobe Chuuka Doubun Gakkō united with Chuuka Kōgaku in 1937 and has run the Chinese elementary and junior high school in Kobe's Chinese community. It had 632 students in

Nankinmachi Shinkou Kumiai (NSK), or Kobe China Town Association. The Kobe Chinese School (KCDG) ran an elementary and junior high school with an enrolment of about 600 students. As the campus was in a residential area, it soon became a shelter for people affected by the earthquake. It had 170 refugees, consisting of an equal proportion of Chinese and Japanese. The relation between the school and local residents had not been good in the past mainly because of the lack of the communication. The Japanese residents' stay at the school provided for the first time a direct opportunity for members of the two groups to communicate with each other. This has greatly improved relations between the Chinese and Japanese in the area. This as some of the School's temporary residents described it, was a gift from the earthquake.

For the Chinese themselves, the School also became a shared space, although they might be divided in other aspects of lives by their political allegiance to the Mainland or Taiwan government. The umbrella organisation, the Committee for Earthquake Emergency Activities (KKSH) was located at the school for the convenience of all Chinese people. The Kobe Chinese School (KCDG) thus assumed the role of a spiritual center that healed the rift of the natural disaster and men-made political differences.

The fourth organisation, the Kobe China Town Association (NSK), was formed by restaurants, shops and other businesses in Kobe's China Town commercial area. The Association decided to organise a major public celebration of the Chinese Spring Festival to cheer Kobe's residents, in spite of the hard conditions and lack of resource for organising such an event. The Association also provided free hot Chinese meals to the local people. This gesture greatly impressed and moved Kobe's residents as most people were hungry and yearning for a hot meal. The earthquake had cut the city's electricity, water and other supplies. Until then, there had not been any significant relationships between local Kobe residents and its China Town, as China Town was perceived and reacted to as a tourist facility or spot. The work of members of the Kobe China Town Association at a time of hardship and suffering enabled the people of Kobe to relate to the Chinese in a new and personal way.

In examining the response of the Chinese community in the wake of the earthquake, two approaches may be identified. Firstly, this major calamity allowed the Chinese to give more attention to the needs of other Chinese from other parts of the world and

March 1996. The number of students has since increased.

from different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. They were forced to support and care for each other regardless of the boundaries of community organisations and political identification. This tendency was also seen in the Korean community.¹⁵

The other approach was directed to outside the Chinese community. The earthquake provided an opportunity for the Chinese community to begin to communicate in a more meaningful way with the wider local society and other Chinese previously regarded as outside 'the Chinese community'.¹⁶ This breakthrough was especially important for those sections of 'the Chinese community' with a conservative outlook, as the direct contact with Chinese people outside their immediate group gave them an opportunity to take the first step towards a more open and dynamic world and to consider other perspectives.

This development was evident during the consideration of membership at the meeting of the Committee for Earthquake Emergency Activities (KKSH).¹⁷ Their open attempts to help overseas Chinese students, working students and new comers recently arrived from China must have impressed the Chinese people generally. However, there were still some Chinese students and working students who did receive assistance from any Chinese organisations and were forced to return to their home country. The more lucky among them managed to get assistance from other Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).¹⁸ This failure to get support from community organisations serving as information centers or rescue shelters was also observed among other foreign communities, including the Vietnamese and Filipinos.¹⁹

15 For more information on the emergency activities of the Korean community, refer to Zainihon Daikanminkoku Mindan Chuuouhonbu-Hanshindaishinsai Kyuuentaisakuhonbu, *Hanshindaishinsai Taisakuhonbu katudoukeika*, Hyogoken Nanbuzisin nitaishuru kyuenkatudou, and *Sankei Shinbun* op.cit.

16 'The Chinese Community' refers mainly to the community of Chinese organisations. Kobe Kakyou Sokai represents the older generation of Chinese with mostly first generation members. It is estimated that about 50 percent of the Chinese population in Kobe do not belong to 'the Chinese Community' of organisations based on my estimate of the number of people who joined any Chinese organisations and the number of Chinese residents in Kobe.

17 Interview with Lin Donchun, Chairman of Kobe Kakyou Shinsaitaisaku Honbu, on 9 April 1996 at Kobe Kakyou Soukai.

18 Kobe Gakusei Seinen Center offered 30,000 yen as emergency assistance to each overseas Chinese student and working Chinese student. They also organised homestay and called for donations to help the students. Overseas Chinese students also carried out assistance among themselves through the Kobe branch of Chuugokujin Gakusei Rengikai. For further information, refer to Gaikokujin Zishin Jouhou Center op.cit.

19 About the emergency activities of the Filipinos and Vietnamese, who did not have such well organised networks as the Chinese community, refer to Gaikokujin Zishin Jouhou Center op.cit. and information sheets of *Hisai Betonamujin Kyuuen Rebrakukai*.

3 Participation in Policy Making and Reconstruction of Kobe

Kobeshi Zaijuu Gaikokuinmondai Konwakai (KZGK),²⁰ or the Committee for Foreign Resident Affairs of Kobe City, held its second meeting after the earthquake in April 1995. The meeting discussed problems and claims for assistance caused by the earthquake. Its Statement of Recovery announced at the meeting contained several proposals for the reconstruction of Kobe.²¹ The Committee for Foreign Resident Affairs of Kobe City (KZGK) had representatives from the city's foreign communities. It was established a year earlier to facilitate communication between the city's authorities and its foreign residents. This was supposedly a forum for foreign residents to express their views and opinions about the city's services. The post-earthquake Statement of Recovery noted the need for assistance for foreign schools, overseas students, foreign community clubs, and the establishment of an international volunteer centre, among others.²² In actual fact, one must question the effectiveness of the Statement of Recovery and the Reconstruction Plan of Kobe City.²³ Its Committee for Foreign Resident Affairs (KZGK), for example, did not have any advisory role in the City's decision-making process. Some members of the 100-strong committee, comprising citizens and academics, reported that committee discussions did not touch on important community issues such as the needs of the elderly, disabled and foreign residents.²⁴

20 *Kobeshi Zaijuu Gaikokuinmondai Konwakai* was established by Kobe city to consult and obtain the views of its foreign residents in order to improve its services. The membership of this committee includes civil servants of Kobe city, some academics and representatives of foreign community organisations. The foreign communities participating in this committee are Hyogoken Chosengakuenchosen Nishi Kobe Chosen, Shotou Chuutou Gakkou Kyouikukai (Korean), Zainihon Daikanminkoku Mindan Hyogochihou Honbu (Korean), Kobe Kakyou Sokai (Chinese) and Kansai Kokusai Inkai (Westerners). For further information, refer to *Kobe Kokusai Kouryuu Kyoukai, Ziyougaiyou*, 1995.

21 The Statement of Recovery was initiated by *Kobeshi Zaijuu Gaikokuinmondai Konwakai Fukkou Teigen* which put forward 8 proposals for the reconstruction of Kobe. They included financial assistance for repairing foreign schools, support for overseas students, assistance for foreign community organizations, development of a mechanism to receive assistance from overseas, organizing of international supporting system for emergency, establishment of an international volunteer center, and liaison with international bodies such as consulates, international organizations and foreign companies, and foreign workers matters.

22 *Kobeshi Zaijuu Gaikokuinmondai Konwakai, Kobeshi Zaijuu Gaikokuinmondai Konwakai Fukkou Teigen*, April 1995.

23 *Kobeshi Fukkoukeikaku Shingikai, Kobeshi Fukkoukeikaku ni kansuru Touseinsho*, June 1995 and *Kobeshi Fukkou Shingikai no kongono susumekata nituite information paper*, No. 9, April 1995.

24 *Kobe Shinbun*, 'Haneisaretaka hisaishano negai, Kobeshi Fukkou Keikaku Shingikai shuuryou', 27 June 1995, p.23.

The attitude and structure of Kobe city authorities can be contrasted with that of the Prefecture of Hyogo, where Kobe is located. The Hyogo prefecture also organised a meeting, represented by its foreign residents, the *Gaikokujin Kenmin Hukkoukaigi*, or Conference on Reconstruction by Foreign Residents of Hyogo.²⁵ The meeting was held in February 1995 and seemed to pay more attention to foreign residents' participation in policy making. The Hyogo prefecture included this meeting as one of its advisory inputs for the prefecture's reconstruction plan, the Reconstruction Plan of Hyogo.²⁶ The prefecture thus openly recognised and affirmed its foreign community as an important part of the local community. The difference in approach in involving foreign residents in policy making is quite clear between the city and prefecture governments. However, some questions remain as to how the foreign communities' proposals might be incorporated and implemented under the prefecture's action plan following the meetings. In the case of the Chinese, for example, their desire and claims for pension and related welfare benefits put to the prefecture authorities in the past and at the meeting following the earthquake were not included in the Prefecture's action plan.²⁷

The Chinese community was among the foreign communities represented at these key meetings of the Kobe City and Hyogo Prefecture authorities. The person representing the community for the city meeting was different from the one attending the prefecture meeting. The representative for the prefecture meeting was the President of the Kobe Chinese Association (KKS) who has extensive experience as a community representative in such functions. The person representing the community for the city's meeting was a younger person who had not played such a role for the commu-

25 Gaikokujin Kenmin Hukkoukaigi was established by Hyogo prefecture and had its first meeting on 17 February 1995 to listen to the opinions of foreign communities on their need for assistance and compensation as a result of the earthquake. The representatives of foreign community organizations were Chousensouren (Korean), Zainihon Daikanminkoku Mindan (Korean) Kobe Kakyou Sokai (Chinese), Indo Shoukou Kaigisho (Indian), Kansaikokusai Iinkai (Westerners), and seven foreign schools (Korean, Chinese, American, Canadian, and International).

Gaikokujin Kenmin Fukkou Kaigi, *Sekaini hirakareta machi wo mezasite Gaikokujin Kenmin Fukkoukaigi karano teigen*, May 1995.

26 Hanshin Awaji Shinsai Fukkou Keikaku Sakuteichousa Iinkai, *Hanshin Awaji Daishinsai karano souzouteki fukkou wo mezashite: Hanshin Awaji Shinsai Fukkou Keikaku*, June 1995.

27 Interview with Lin Donchun, Chairman of Kobe Kakyou Shinsaitaisaku Honbu, on 9 April 1996 at Kobe Kakyou Soukai.

28 Kobeshi Zaijuu Gaikokuinmondai Konwakai, *Kobeshi Zaijuu Gaikokuinmondai Konwakai Fukkou Teigen*, April 1995.

nity in the past. It was unclear as to why the city authorities included the younger and less experienced person to be a community representative.²⁸ One possibility was that the authorities were uncomfortable with an experienced, knowledgeable and more effective advocate for the Chinese community.

The Chinese community played an active leadership role among the foreign communities at the time of crisis. It helped to galvanise and organise Kobe's different foreigner communities. For example, soon after the first meeting of the prefecture authorities, the Chinese community representative, the President of the Kobe Chinese Association (KKS) called a meeting of representatives of foreign schools. The meeting developed a joint action plan to protect and advance the interest of foreign schools affected by the earthquake. They appealed jointly to the authorities for financial assistance to repair damages to schools, an assistance already provided to Japanese schools.²⁹ This unity and coordination among the prefecture's diverse foreign schools, including those of Asian and Western communities, was the first in the history of Kobe.³⁰ The improved communication among foreign schools has flowed from this action. This network building and cooperation among diverse community organisations with the view to influence local policy decision had not occurred in the foreign communities before, including the Chinese community. The coalition-building in the education area among the foreign communities allowed the Chinese to also pay their first attention to cooperation with mainstream Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in the local community. The Conference of NGOs Working for Kobe in December 1995 gave Japanese and the non-Japanese community organisations an opportunity to get to know each other, to discuss shared concerns and interests, and to jointly participate in the reconstruction and further development of Kobe.³¹

I have shown how a community that previously had been relatively inward looking and somewhat divided within its own membership has successfully become more outward looking, inclusive and committed to cooperation with other communities for the common good. The Chinese community as a result of trying to cope with and over-

²⁹ *Kobe Shinbun*, 'Houjinto douyouno kyusaisochi yobou Hyougoken Gaikokujin Fukkou Kaigi ga hatukaigou', 18 February 1995 p.3.

³⁰ *Kobe Shinbun*, 'Nana gaikkujingakkouga teomusubu', 9 September 1995, p.29.

³¹ An NGO forum Kurashisaiken Imao misuete was held on 8 to 10 December 1995. The main topic of discussion was protective measures against further natural disasters and cooperation among local NGOs. Kobe Kakyou Soukai also attended the meeting.

come the adversity of a major natural calamity has in the process gained a new voice and fresh outlook. It has begun to express a clear and strong voice in the public arena and has done this in the spirit of cooperation with others. The earthquake in a sense has liberated the Chinese community from its insular cocoon of tending to relate with another in the confine of homeland regional identification and jolted them out of their history of non-involvement in local Japanese politics. In contrast, the Japanese government, especially at the city level, has continued to categorise its residents in narrow ethnic terms and exclude the wider community from decision-making. This is best illustrated by its treatment of its foreign resident communities as valuable tourist properties for Kobe rather than communities of citizens, and its continual refusal to consider and embrace its foreign residents as local residents with the same rights and responsibilities as other Japanese.

4 Implementation of Reconstruction Projects

Over 200 separate projects have been developed as part of the Kobe City's Plan of Reconstruction. They covered a variety of activities such as housing, commerce, cultural exchanges, and prevention of further disasters. The projects involving the Chinese community were classified under the cultural and commercial categories in the reconstruction plans.³² The projects where the Chinese community has an active part include (1) the Shanghai-Yangtze River Trade Projects, (2) the Chinese community's property repairing schemes, and (3) the Asian Town Projects. There was also a project called (4) the International Volunteers Centre to be located in West Kobe where most of the Korean people live and work at factories. I would like to examine these projects and others involving the Chinese community in order to highlight local and global forces brought to a focus by the reconstruction plan and activities.

- (1) The Shanghai-Yangtze River Trade Projects:³³ This project aims to link the reconstruction of Kobe Port with the expansion of international trade with

³²Hanshin Awaji Shinsai Fukkou Keikaku Sakuteichousa Iinkai, *Hanshin Awaji Daishinsaikaikano souzoutekifukkouo mezashite-Hanshin Awaji Shinsai Fukkoukeikaku: bunyabetu jigyou setumeishiryuu*, June 1995.

³³Kobe city, *Chuugoku Azia Kouryuu Zoun kousou-Shanghai-Choukou Purojekuto Houkokusho*, January 1996.

Shanghai and the Yangtze River region. It is also tied to the building of commercial facilities including the China Town in Kobe Port. The Chinese community has participated in the planning and administrative committee of this project with Japanese big companies and the governments of Japan and China. This project has the explicit objective of linking the development of local commercial initiatives in Kobe and trade relations between Japan and one of China's most rapidly growing economic regions. By being drawn into this aspect of Kobe's reconstruction, the Chinese community has become a bridge for the consolidation and expansion of Japan's economic interest in China.

- (2) Chinese Community Property Repairs Schemes: This project under Kobe City's Reconstruction Plan is to repair damages caused by the earthquake to some of the Chinese community's properties. They included properties in the China Town commercial area³⁴ the building of the Taiwan Kobe Chinese Community Association (RKKS),³⁵ an organisation with strong ties to Taiwan, and *Nakayamate-Chiku Saikaihatu* (NCS),³⁶ or the Nakayamate Area Development. These activities are related to the commercial and tourist developments associated with the city's Chinese heritage precinct. Many other Chinese properties, including several other community buildings and centres were also badly damaged, but as they have more limited tourist or commercial value, their repair was not cov-

34 The China Town commercial area is called Nankinmachi. There is a reconstruction plan which will make Nankinmachi electricity supply poles-free and its streets more attractive and efficient.

Yasui, Chen and Guo, *op.cit.*

35 The building of Ryuunichi Kobe Kakyou Soukai is located in the Kitano which has many old foreign houses and is well known as a most attractive tourist landmark. The building of RKKS was one of the popular foreign structures but was damaged badly by the earthquake. A group of scholars appealed for its preservation and the city has decided to assist financially in its repair.

Yasui, Chen and Guo, *op.cit.*

36 Nakayamate-Chiku Saikaihatu had a reconstruction plan to develop this area commercially. That plan had the theme of 'China', and received much attention when it was announced publicly in 1988. Because of Japan's economic downturn, the project was stopped before the earthquake. Following the major damages caused in the area, a new reconstruction plan is in place with the new theme 'Asia'. This plan has been led by the local Chinese community.

Nihon Keizai Shinbun evening paper: 'Kakyou Kobe de shinChuukagai', 24 March 1988, p.1. Wan Pechuen, *A report for Kobe Kakyou Kajin Kenkyukai, HanshinDaishinsai to Kobe Kakyou no sonogono joukyounituite*, *op.cit.*

37 Kobe Azia Taun Suishin Kyougikai Kobe Azia Taun seturitu ni muketeno kihonkousou, January 1996.

Kobe Azia Taun Suishin Kyougikai Jikkou Inkai, *Kutunomachi Nagata Azia Jiyuu Shijou: kikakusho*.

ered by the reconstruction plan.

- (3) The Asian Town Projects:³⁷ This project involved the construction of an area with four blocks dedicated to the Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Westerner respectively. The project was initiated by the local Korean residents of Nagata in west Kobe where many Korean residents live. The Koreans have put in a great of efforts to enhance the tourist and commercial value of the project. Among the functions planned for the precinct are festivals to draw tourists and other attention to the area. Their efforts appeared to have gone well so far, and the city has taken up the project and plans to further develop it. The Korean community has approached other foreign communities, including the Chinese, for cooperation. It has developed communications with other groups as well, including some Koreans who had not previously been in touch with the main Korean community.³⁸
- (4) International Volunteers Centre : This is Kobe City's plan to establish a volunteers center to promote international understanding and develop an international community in Nagata where many foreign residents are found.³⁹ The area contains one of Japan's largest Korean populations. Prior to the move to set up the International Volunteers Centre, the area had an NGO office, called *Hyogoken Teijuu Gaikokujin Seikatu Fukkou Senta*, or Foreign Residents Centre of Hyogo, serving the needs of foreign residents, especially Korean and Vietnamese people. This NGO centre had approached the city about the possibility of cooperation with the new International Volunteer Centres. However, they have not received any response from the city authorities.⁴⁰ This suggests a lack of interest on the part of the city authorities. If the city is really concerned about developing quality service through the International Volunteers Centre, they should have liaised with the NGO body which has considerable experience in serving the needs of the city's diverse foreign residents.

It appears that the city's reconstruction policies and projects as identified in this paper were primarily concerned about commercial gains and not targeted at people's

38 Interview with executive committee member of Azias Taun Suishin Kyogikai, Mr Songil Kim, at his office in Nagata, on 12 March 1996.

39 Kobe city, *Kobeshi chiikibetu fukkoukeikaku youshi*, June 1995.

Kobe Shinbun: 'Kobeshi 18 projekuto', 1 July 1996, p.21.

40 Interview with Mr Songil Kim, President of Hyogoken Teijugaikokujin Fukkou Center, at his office in Nagata, on 12 March 1996.

lives or community development. This utilitarian motive can be found even in projects that were meant to promote 'cultural' or 'international' understanding and development. It can be observed that such 'inter-cultural' or 'international' understanding projects are directed at the outside world and overlook the cosmopolitan local residents of Kobe.

The city authorities' active encouragement of its Chinese community in some of the reconstruction projects may also widen the gap between the Chinese and other resident communities. Although the Chinese community has begun to cooperate with other communities in local development and taken a leadership role in a number of reconstruction projects, its involvement in domestic tourism and international trade driven projects has the potential of isolating the Chinese from the needs, experience and aspirations of other local communities, including those that have come from more than ninety countries of the world. It is important that the Chinese community continues to be involved in local community affairs to serve the interest of local needs, but at the same time take part in the commercial development of the city through tourism, commerce, and international business network with China and other economies. Its ability to balance between these local needs and international interests will have important consequences on the community's relation with Kobe's diverse residents and its potential as a global diaspora community in promoting international trade and co-existence.

5 Conclusion

The Chinese community has displayed two orientations through their response to the great Hanshin Earthquake and their participation in the city's reconstruction. One aspect is their attitude towards the unity of the Chinese community, a community comprising members from different socio-economic and political backgrounds and various parts of China and the rest of the world. The network of support, both financial and psychological, has greatly relieved the suffering of the Chinese people in Kobe. This shows that a united community and its support organisations can work effectively to assist people in a major emergency. Such community networks and informal organisations fulfilled a particularly crucial role when adequate and appropriate support is not available from the local community or government organisations. In the

aftermath of the Kobe earthquake, this was the situation experienced by the Chinese.

The other orientation is the response of the Chinese community to the outside world as they dropped their traditional inward-looking attitude and re-oriented their interest to work with other groups for the common good. The earthquake emergency and the subsequent re-building activities have demonstrated the ability of the Chinese community to communicate and work with others and to play a leadership role in cooperative community development. An important aspect of the change was their cooperation with other foreign resident communities in openly voicing their common concerns and demanding respect for their rights.

This shift in outlook of the Chinese allowed them to break through two long-held attitudes, namely the avoidance of direct involvement in local political activities and the tendency to rely entirely on internal community or family resource at times of need or crisis. This pro-active attitude and outreach to cooperate with other communities to achieve shared objectives also occurred among other foreign communities. It seems that the shared experience of hardship, trauma and loss during and after the earthquake sensitised individuals to the existence of others and allowed them to sympathise and empathise with members of other groups and to develop better interpersonal and intergroup communications.

In the reconstruction of Kobe, the Chinese community is drawn by two forces with quite different aims and likely outcomes. As explained in the preceding sections, the Chinese community has emerged from the ruins of Kobe as an active community committed to local interests and cooperation with other foreign residents in the rebuilding of Kobe. However, they have also become the target of several City initiated reconstruction projects motivated by commercial gains rather than community concerns or development. These projects make use of the unique cultural heritage of the Chinese and their ties to China. Financial motives aside, the attitude of the prefecture and especially the city towards the Chinese as a community has not changed as a result of the earthquake. The Chinese and other residents are still perceived by the authorities as different and not an integral part of the local community. On the face of it the Chinese may appear to have a special role in the reconstruction plan of the city. However, their involvement and participation are not real participation, as this has been very much on terms dictated by the prefecture and city authorities with the aim to serve

the needs of these authorities. This position of the city has also put the Chinese at some risk, as their service to the authorities if it occurs at the expense of their cooperation and coalition building with other foreign communities, will in the long run isolate the Chinese from other international residents of Kobe.

In researching the experience of Kobe's residents during and after the earthquake, I was especially alarmed by the number of individuals, including some Chinese and other foreign residents, who failed to find support from any source. These individuals for various reasons were unable to locate and reach an organisation for help and were unable to organise support mechanisms for themselves. They had no one to turn to. Among them were some foreigners who could not approach community organisations for fear of exposing their expired immigration visa status. This sad state of affairs should not happen in any civil society.

This paper has analysed the interplay of community aspirations, local needs and international objectives as experienced by Kobe's diverse communities, in particular the Chinese, in the aftermath of the Great Hanshin Earthquake. The paper has examined the tensions and conflicts between the local and global, and how a community may potentially be caught in between such pressures. The City of Kobe has for decades had a fine reputation as Japan's most cosmopolitan and multicultural city. However, the trauma of the earthquake has shown that its perception and response to the needs of its diverse resident communities are still coloured by a parochial and out-dated view of identity, community, and citizenship. Its repeated use of the term 'international' in a number of reconstruction activities, for example, was motivated by its desire to communicate and benefit from links with the world outside Japan, and not for the promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation within Kobe's own multicultural community.

This paper has highlighted a major difference in how two levels of government and communities of people of diverse background have reacted to a major calamity, and how the two sectors have developed dramatically divergent approaches to deal with human trauma and suffering and to overcome Nature's destruction. While the Japanese and foreign communities have matured and become more caring towards their own members and members of other groups, the Japanese government administrative sectors have persisted with their conservative world view and failed to learn

from a potentially liberating experience. It is particularly disappointing that this conservative attitude has been perpetuated in one of Japan's most cosmopolitan cities. From this careful analysis of the responses and adjustments of the Chinese community in the aftermath of the earthquake, it is hoped that Kobe and other Japanese cities, as well as cosmopolitan centres in other parts of the world, will learn to balance the needs of local communities and global economic interests in times of peace and turbulence.