

Dekasegi

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Introduction

The Japanese economic success has attracted foreign labourers on a large scale since the 1980s and this has increased in the 1990s. This is in contrast with the period from the last half of the nineteenth century until the 1960s, when many Japanese emigrated in search of a better life. These people were called *Dekasegi*¹⁾. They settled down especially in North and South America where they formed their ethnic communities. The largest number of these immigrants are in Brazil. The big majority of legal migrants currently working in Japan are from this Brazilian community, and like their ancestors, they are called *Dekassegui*²⁾. They have often been referred to as immigrants who became migrants, yet a social phenomenon never repeats itself. Neither the social actors nor the historical and social context are the same.

The purpose of this paper is to give an account of the *Dekassegui* in contemporary Japan and address the question of their future. It begins with a brief historical overview of Japanese emigration. This is followed by an examination of the Japanese Immigration legislation and the debate over foreign workers. We shall then characterise the *Dekassegui* population using the available data and the results of research conducted by the authors in 1993 in Soja city, Okayama Prefecture. Finally, the possibility of their settlement and its implications are discussed.

Japanese emigration

During the modernisation and industrialisation of the Meiji period (1868-1912), numerous socio-economic problems afflicted Japan, such as overpopulation and the impoverishment of agricultural workers. Seeing no possibility of making a living in Japan, a number of Japanese began to emigrate.

1) Literally working away from home, that is migrants labourers.

2) In Brazilian Portuguese. This term is used in this paper referring to Brazilians of Japanese descent who migrated to Japan and is interchangeably used with the term *Nikkeijin* that signifies people of Japanese ancestry. See also note 4. This spell, *Dekassegui*, is used in Brazil.

From 1885 to 1923 half a million Japanese left Japan (Reichl, 1988: 23). Within Asia, the largest number (25%) went to Manchuria and some went to Korea in 1910. A smaller number went to the Philippines in 1903 and other Pacific islands (Staniford, 1973: 7) Most went to Hawaii (46%) and US (20.9%). The first emigration to Hawaii occurred in 1868 with 150 Japanese, but Japanese government permission was only granted in 1884. After that recruiting agents from pineapple and sugar plantations went to Japan searching for workers. and between 1885 and 1894, 29,132 Japanese emigrated to Hawaii.

Although emigration to the US had began in 1868, significant immigration occurred after 1880 and the flow continued till 1924. By 1910, about 72,157 Japanese had either gone to the west coast of the US from Hawaii or directly from Japan. By 1940, a total of 277,591 Japanese had migrated to the US. (Shimpo, 1995: 48). The first documented Japanese immigrants arrived in Canada in 1877. From 1897 to 1901 a total of 15,280 Japanese had entered Canada. By the time of Pearl Harbour they were 23,000 but with the 'voluntary repatriation' policy in 1945, their number decreased substantially.

As mentioned above, only after 1883 were Japanese officially allowed to leave the country. Emigration had been prohibited in Japan for a long time, even after the end of *sakoku* (Japan's seclusion) period. However, Japan was facing serious difficulties and such emigration came to be seen as a means to help solving the problems of unemployment and overpopulation simultaneously. It became a governmental policy after 1925 (*Kokusaku Imin*)³⁾ and accordingly the Japanese government became involved in the emigration process. The activities of recruitment were encouraged and information on possibilities was transmitted by labour recruiters, national government agencies, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, and prefecture authorities. Publications were dispersed particularly in southern Honshu and in northern Kyushu. In 1927 the government issued the Law of Overseas Co-operation and requested the prefectures to create the *Ijuu Kumiai* (Emigration co-operatives) (Comissão, 1992: 156).

Already in 1891 *Kaigai Ijuu Doshi kai* (Association of the Emigration Friends) had been founded and it was followed by other similar organisations. Until the Emigration Protection Law in 1886, the number of recruiting companies multiplied. In 1917 these companies were joined together to form the *Kaigai Kogyo Kabushiki Kaisha* (abbreviated to *Kaiko*) which came to be in charge of all the migration process. Until the mid-1920s the most common agents promoting emigration were Japanese emigration companies (*Imin Kaisha*).

In spite of governmental encouragement to leave Japan, Japanese immigrants soon ceased to be welcome in the receiving countries. Australia prohibited Japanese immigration in 1888 and the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1908 between US and Japan, and later the Quota Immigration Act of 1924, put an end to immigration to Hawaii and the

3) Comissão de Elaboração dos 80 anos de Imigração Japonesa no Brasil (Japanese Immigration 80th Anniversary Committee), hereafter abbreviated as Comissão. Uma *Epopéia Moderna: 80 Anos de Emigração Japonesa no Brasil*, 1992, p. 137.

US. Consequently, alternative channels of emigration had to be opened: First, after 1899, to Peru and in 1908 to Brazil (Izumi, 1961), after several years of negotiation between the Japanese government and the state of Sao Paulo (Jirimutu, 1994). Recruiting agencies for Peru operated between 1899 and 1923 (Shimpo, 1995: 48). During this period, 17,764 Japanese emigrated to Peru. After that, migration continued through informal channels and by 1940, 33,070 Japanese had migrated to Peru. However, the presence of Japanese immigrants caused an anti-Japanese movement and, as a result, immigration to Peru was discouraged after 1935. (Nakagawa, 1983). During World War II Japanese migrants were arrested in Peru and 1771 Japanese were sent to relocation camps in the US.

As Japanese immigrants faced strong resistance in other countries and Brazil was looking for labourers, soon Brazil became the most important destination for them. By 1938 the Japanese population (91,116) was the second largest population outside Japan after Manchuria (233,842) (Normano and Gerbi, 1943). In the 1950s the Japanese population in Brazil was already the largest outside Japan, numbering about 373,000. However, as a result of Japanese actions in the war, feelings in Brazil turned against them, and in 1952 the Japanese government negotiated a new treaty regulating migration to Brazil and arranged to open up new settlements in Paraguay, Dominica and Argentina. However, the post-war emigration made up only 5 per cent of the total emigration from Japan (Suzuki, 1969: 16), 80 per cent to Brazil, 10 per cent to Paraguay and the rest was further immigration to Argentina, Bolivia and Dominica (Staniford, 1973: 8).

Table 1 Number of Japanese Emigrants in Latin American countries by period and country

Country	1899-1941	Post II war	1986*
Mexico	14,476	671	11,936
Panama	415		
Cuba	686		
Brazil	188,986	71,372**	1,228,000
Peru	33,070	2,615	55,335
Argentina	5,398	12,066	32,327
Chile	519		
Colombia	229		
Bolivia	202	6,357	8,123
Venezuela	12		
Uruguay	18		
Paraguay	521	9,612	6,472
Dominica		1,390	614
Others	4	161	52,903
Total	244,536	935,412	1,395,710

* Table of first, second and third generations (*Issei, Nisei, Sansei*) and permanent residents with Japanese citizenship as of October 1986. ** According to other source, *Estatística de Emigração Ultramarina*, JICA, de number of Japanese Immigrants from 1952 to 1988 was 53,555 (Comissão, 1992: 424).

Source: Adapted from *Waga Kokumin no Kagai Hatten* published by the Foreign Ministry Consular and Emigration Affairs Department and Emigration Statistics 1952-1982, in *Uma Epopeia Moderna: 80 anos de Emigracao Japonesa no Brasil*, 1992, p. 33. The figures for the post-war period and for 1986 are drawn from Mokoto Tsushida, 1995. Those for Brazil are from the survey in 1987-1988 conducted by *Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros*, Sao Paulo, 1990.

Immigration to Brazil

With the end of the Atlantic slave trade in 1850, the coffee planters finally realised that slavery was condemned. Fearing a labour shortage on coffee plantations after the abolition of slavery, they looked for immigrants as a labour force. After 1870, they tried to replace the slaves with European immigrants.

In 1886, a group of coffee planters in Sao Paulo created the Society for the Promotion of Immigration (*Sociedade Promotora da Imigração*) organised with the purpose of recruiting European immigrants, in particular from Italy. This Society was financed by the Treasury of the state of Sao Paulo but, in 1889, the Society began to be taken over by the government of the state of Sao Paulo. The Society started a policy of subsidised immigration in order to provide workers for coffee plantations, using the *colono* (contract labours) system, in which partial passage to Brazil, transportation from the port of Santos to Sao Paulo, lodging and food while a job was arranged and then transportation to the place of employment was paid by the state and the federal governments.

The subsidised coffee labour migration brought the most intense migration. Between 1880 and 1900, 1,6 million Europeans arrived in Brazil, over half from Italy, a quarter from Portugal and one third from Spain. Immigrants were conducted primarily to the states of the centre and south. After 1880, 878,000 immigrants arrived in São Paulo (Klein, 1995: 208-9). At that time São Paulo accounted for 70 per cent of all immigrants and in 1900 accounted for 69 per cent of coffee national production (Comissão, 1992: 25).

Although the country was receiving many immigrants, it soon had a very bad reputation. In 1902 the Italian government issued a decree forbidding emigration to Brazil due to the number of complaints of mistreatment of Italian colonos and in 1859 Prussia banned emigration to Brazil for the same reasons. France passed a similar fiat in 1875 and the Spanish government took similar action.

While these sanctions did not stop the flow of immigration completely, it decreased substantially. Moreover, as many immigrants fled from coffee plantations during the 1897-1906 coffee crisis, Brazil was suffering a severe labour shortage. The idea of receiving Chinese labourers was discussed but not accepted on racist grounds. As for the Japanese, though they were not enthusiastically regarded, the victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese war may have contributed to their acceptance. The wish to find a market for the growing coffee production may have contributed too, but probably the most important factor was the great necessity of finding new sources of labour.

Therefore, the Japanese went to replace the European immigrants. On 18 June 1908 the ship *Kasato Maru* arrived in the port of Santos with 781 Japanese (165 families with 733 members, 40 single persons and 8 children) (Comissão, 1992: 63)⁴⁾. They came as *colonos* under a contract between Japan and the state of Sao Paulo and were the first of a total of nearly a quarter of a million Japanese who entered Brazil during the following seventy years. Between 1908 and 1923, 32,266 Japanese entered Brazil (2.5 % of all immigrants) subsidised by the state of Sao Paulo and by Japanese emigration agencies, both private and governmental. In 1923 the state of Sao Paulo stopped the

policy of subsidies.

The socio-economic difficulties in Japan during the 1920s and the US Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924 resulted in an increased involvement of the Japanese government in the emigration of their citizens to Brazil, as previously mentioned. In 1924 the Emigration Council, headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shidehara, after having sent a mission to South America to explore possibilities, decided to concentrate migration efforts on Brazil (Jirimutu, 1994). From that year on, the Japanese government assumed responsibility for the payment of transportation expenses to Brazil, making the Japanese aware of economic opportunities there, and arranging employment and housing in Brazil. Under the sponsorship of the Japanese government, 150,000 persons entered Brazil between 1924-1941 (Suzuki, 1969). From 1924 on, Japanese immigration to Brazil steadily increased each year, reached a peak in 1933 when 23,299 Japanese arrived in Brazil. Nearly 60,000 Japanese went to Brazil between 1932 and 1934, about half the total immigration to Brazil during this period (Smith, 1972, 1974).

However, in 1934 the Brazilian government imposed restrictions on immigration. An annual quota of a total of 62,246 for all immigrants and 2,711 for Japanese immigrants was settled and this continued until 1941 (Izumi, 1959). The number of immigrants became less than the quota after 1938, and the decline continued after the war.

By 1940 there were 205 thousand Japanese and Japanese descendants, 0.5 per cent of the total Brazilian population (41,160,000) (Comissão, 1992: 191). Between 1942 and 1952, Japanese migration almost stopped but subsequently continued, though at a lower rate, because Brazil was the first country to open up to immigration from Japan after the end of the war (Smith, R., 1979). During this period, the Amazon region received 14,000 immigrants. In 1952 the Japanese government negotiated a new treaty regulating immigration to Brazil and the post-war immigration began in 1953 (Staniford, 1973: 18). From 1952 to 1963 about 50,000, 19 per cent of the total Japanese immigrants came to Brazil. (Suzuki, 1967: 17) and with the economic development of Japan economic emigration ceased. However, during the years of the "Brazilian miracle", Japanese investment in Brazil sparked off a different kind of migration with many of the descendants of the early Japanese immigrants moving to the new centres of arising out of Japanese investment.

In 1958, fifty years after the arrival of the first group in Brazil, a census was conducted all over the country by a commission of Japanese immigrants with financial support from the Japanese and Brazilian governments and other sources. According to this census, there were a total of 430,135 Japanese living in Brazil, of whom 32.3 per cent were *Issei* (first generation) and 67.7 per cent were *Nisei* (second generation)

4) Different sources report different figures. For example, the statistics of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not tally with those of Brazilian sources. Here we use mainly the statistics of the Comissão de Elaboração dos 80 anos de Imigração Japonesa no Brasil (Japanese Immigration 80th Anniversary Committee).

(Suzuki, 1969: 37) and 75.68 per cent were living in the State of São Paulo. In this 1958 census, 40.5 per cent of the total Japanese population was under 15 years old. By 1968, the Japanese and their descendants were 50 per cent of all Japanese residing outside Japan (Jirimutu, 1994).

The most recent demographic data on people of Japanese ancestry in Brazil, a three year survey published in 1990, reports that the total of Japanese and Japanese descendants living in the country for more than 3 months in July 1987, was 1,228,000 and comprise 8.9 per cent of first generation (*Issei*), 36.6 per cent of second generation (*Nisei*), 40.7 per cent of third generation (*Sansei*) and 1.6 per cent of the fifth generation (*Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros*, Sao Paulo, 1990).

As already mentioned, the majority of the Japanese immigrants were farmers and started as contract labours on coffee plantations; however, within 50 years of their arrival, they rose from the least privileged status of *colonos* to that of middle class citizens. Nevertheless, the difficult economic situation in Brazil, particularly in the 90s, has pushed the Japanese immigrants offspring to emigrate to the land of their ancestors. The Japanese community in Brazil is the largest in the world and more than 10 per cent of this population is now in Japan.

The Japanese Immigration legislation

The Japanese Immigration Control Act was instituted in 1952 and revised in 1981 into the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law which in turn was altered in 1989. According to the system brought into effect by this law, each foreigner intending to stay in Japan must have his/her status specified along with the purpose and duration of the stay at the time of the entry. In this way, the status of residence serves as the legal basis governing foreigner's activities in the country (Hirowatari, 1993: 111).

The revised law expanded the range of activities available for foreigners in certain skilled and professional categories. This expansion was to meet the strong demand for unskilled labour power from Japanese companies, and introduced severe sanctions both for employers who took on illegal foreign workers and for job contractors who found jobs for those workers. At the same time a new category of 'long-term resident' was created for the Japanese emigrants, their offspring and their spouses. Furthermore, if a relative within the sixth degree of consanguinity in Japan obtained a certificate of eligibility from the Immigration Office in advance, a visa could be granted (Kura, 1992: 248). The status of 'long-term resident' and 'spouse or child of Japanese national' permit *Nikkeijin*⁵⁾ to stay in Japan for up to three years and,

5) As mentioned in note 2, the term means people of Japanese descent. The Japanese citizens who emigrated from Japan and were naturalised in the countries where they resided, are also referred to as *Nikkeijin*. The term *Issei* means first generation, *Nisei* to the second generation and *Sansei* to the third generation.

although the visa is not a working visa, they are allowed to work without restraint.

The main points of the legal amendment on immigration were as follows. First, the number of foreign professionals and skilled workers allowed to stay in Japan for three years was enlarged. Secondly, people of Japanese descent and their spouses were permitted to stay in Japan without any restriction of activity up to the third generation. Thirdly, sanctions on illegal workers were intensified. Penalties on employers who recruited illegal workers included a fine up to 2 million yen and 3 years of imprisonment. Fourthly, the 'on-the-job-training system' was recognised under certain conditions (Japan Institute of Labor, 1990: 6-7).

There is little doubt that the amendment of the law created incentives for Japanese ancestry workers who became legally permitted to perform unskilled jobs which other foreign workers could not. This resulted in an increasing demand for *Nikkeijin*. One might say therefore, that the immigration control policy is based on the idea that foreigners of Japanese 'blood' lineage should have privileged treatment denied to foreigners in general (Hirowatari, 1993: 113).

The policy of favouring people of Japanese descent is not new and had been used prior to the revision of Immigration Law, when they were granted special permits by the Minister of Justice. However, the status of 'child of Japanese national' was accorded only to applicants whose parents and grand-parents were both Japanese and, later, the requirement was having a relative within the fourth degree of consanguinity who guaranteed the applicant's status. The creation of the status 'long-term residence' in 1989 was, therefore, a continuation of this line of thought.

Before the 80s only a limited number of the second and third generation descendants of the Japanese immigrants in South-American countries with Japanese or dual nationality, came to work in Japan. By 1985 the flow became more significant mainly due to the government enlargement of the category of 'child of Japanese national'. The amendment of the law came into effect and the socio-economic problems faced by many South-American countries significantly increased the number of South American *Nikkeijin* coming to Japan, as can be seen in the table 3. In June 1991, the population of Japanese descendants, mostly from Brazil, Peru, Argentina and Paraguay, was estimated at 148,000 people.(table 2). At the end of 1992 their number was already 200,000.

Labour shortages and the issue of foreign workers

Japan has faced labour shortages since the period of stabilised economic growth after the first oil crisis in the early 1970's. The total job offer/seekers ratio for all industries was in 1991 the highest since 1973 although it has fallen since then (Economic Planning Agency, 1991). The problem of the shortage of labour for low-skilled jobs due to the economic growth was initially overcome through seasonal migrants from rural areas, the introduction of the manufacturing process and investment in South East and East Asian countries (Hatsuse, 1992). Part-time and temporary workers (housewives and students) were also used to cope with the problem.

Table 2 Number of South-American Migrants by Country of Origin as of June 1991

Country	Number	%
All South America	148,700	100.0
Brazil	120,000	80.7
Peru	18,000	12.1
Argentina	8,500	5.7
Bolivia	1,500	1.0
Paraguay	700	0.5

Source: Japanese Ministry of Labour in International Migration Quarterly Review, 1993, 453

Table 3 Number of Peruvians and Brazilians staying in Japan

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Peruvians	553	615	864	4,121	10,279	26,281	31,051	33,169
Brazilians	2,135	2,250	4,159	14,528	56,429	119,333	147,803	154,650
Total	2,688	2,865	5,023	18,649	66,708	145,614	178,854	187,819

Source: The Japanese Ministry of Justice in Kajita, 1995⁶⁾.

Small sized manufacturing firms have been most affected by the scarcity of labour. With lack of capital they can neither invest in labour-saving equipment nor invest overseas as larger firms do. Moreover, they did not secure employees during the expansion period because they could not offer the same employment conditions as larger firms did. The situation has been especially serious in the construction and the growing service industry. The White Paper on Labour-1992 analysed the trends in the labour economy and concluded that "In the future years, the Japanese economy will be confronted [by] labour supply constraints and ageing, both of which will progress simultaneously" (Japan Institute of Labor, September, 1992, p.13). Furthermore, in spite of the economic recession the unemployment rate (3.5 per cent in January 1996) is still low comparing to other countries (Japan Institute of Labor, 1996).

The use of foreign labour as a form of temporary help may be used as a mechanism for adjusting labour supply and demand. This was recognised by the government and resulted in the 1990 revision of the Immigration Law as already mentioned. As a consequence of the legal amendment on immigration requiring Japanese ancestry, *Nikkeijin* have become the main group among foreign workers (Kajita 1993: 148). However, the number of people who overstay their visa ⁷⁾ has not decreased. In fact, the number of detected illegal foreign workers has been increased since 1981. The total

6) Different sources (e. g., Motoko Tsuchida, 1995 and Yoko Sellek, 1996) report different figures.

7) *Chouketaizaisha*, people who have continued to reside and work in Japan after the expiry date of their visa.

Table 4 Estimated total number of Residents after Expiration of Legal Status

July 1, 1989	May 1, 1990	November 1, 1991	May 1, 1992	Increase over Nov 1, 1991
106,497	159,828	216,399	278,892	28.9%

Source: Adapted from the Immigration Bureau of the Ministry of Justice in Furuya, 1994.

was 106,497 in 1989 and increased to 278,892 in 1992. This can be seen in the table 4. In May 1991, the Ministry of Justice estimated that this number was 160,000 and stated that the number has been increasing by about 10,000 per month since that time (Kawai, 1993: 277). According to Komai (1993b), 300,000 are overstayers and the number of those permitted to enter as artists, students, trainees who are doing unauthorised work can be taken as 70,000. The conclusion we must draw from this is that many companies are still employing undocumented workers.

Many foreigners come as tourists and remain after the expire of their tourist visas. Others, come as students (*Shugakusei*)⁸⁾. Currently there are 60,000 foreign university students and about 40,000 students enrolled at Japanese language schools and most of them are from Asian countries. Although these foreign students are allowed to work part-time for 20 hours a week, many are working more than this (Mori, 1994) in metal working, welding and plating and electrical machinery firms. Most of young females particularly from Thailand and Philippines work as hostesses in bars and night clubs.

Other foreigners still enter the country with trainee visas and work at companies as trainees (*kenshuusei*). As mentioned earlier, the 'job-training-system' was recognised in 1990 and the work training program was inaugurated in April 1993. Under this system, foreigners are allowed to work for one year and three months. After completing a nine month training period and succeeding in a skills test, they will receive wages and will be treated as Japanese workers. The training period is altogether two years and cannot be extended. Their number was about 40,000 in 1992 according to the immigration statistics; however, a survey on smaller companies suggests a much greater number. Trainees from Asian countries, mainly China, Thailand and the Philippines, account for 90 per cent of the total (Furuya, 1994).

If the revision of the Immigration Law did not stop illegal immigration, it certainly created a dual market structure of foreign workers: on one hand the legally employed descendants of Japanese emigrants and on the other, the illegal workers, mostly Asians. The stratification among foreigners is reflected in income differentials. Wages for illegal workers are between 20 and 50 per cent lower than those of Japanese workers (Hatsuse, 1992: 235). and, according to Komai (1993a), Pakistanis are on the bottom and *Nikkeijin* are on the top of the hierarchy. Among *Nikkeijin*, Peruvians receive less than Brazilians do.

Both because labour shortage is likely to persist in the long run and because the legal

8) *Shugakusei*, students of language and technical schools.

requirement of Japanese ancestry has been attracting criticism in that it aims maintaining ethnic purity is a form of racial discrimination, the issue of foreign workers has received much attention.

Debate over foreign workers

It has been very often argued that Japan has throughout its history been closed to foreigners. In fact, the number of foreigners resident in the country is still rather small compared to other industrial countries but has been increasing as is shown in the table 5. In 1992 foreign residents in Japan accounted for over 1 per cent of the population of the country. In 1993, this percentage was 1.06. Breaking down the 1.32 million foreigners residing in Japan in 1993 according to their country of origin, about 1.03 million (78%) were Asians, 200,000 (15%) were South-Americans, 50,000 (4%) were North Americans, and 30,000 (2.3%) were Europeans (Mori, 1994).

The lack of a tradition of receiving foreigners and the flow of foreign workers in recent years has generated a debate over the consequences of accepting foreign workers. Opinion is deeply divided between those who want a more 'internationalised' Japan and those who want to preserve the 'homogeneity' of Japanese society. The following arguments have emerged: On the side of the proponents of accepting foreign workers: 1) Hiring foreign workers provides Japan with an opportunity to internationalise and solve the problem of labour shortages in certain industries; 2) The practice of recruitment illegal workers leads to exploitation; thus, the issue of foreign workers is a question of human rights and Japan as an economic power has obligation to accept and protect them. Illegal migrants should have their status legalised so that their rights may be protected. On the other side, there are arguments that for historical and cultural reasons Japan is a closed country. As foreigners do not understand Japanese culture it is difficult to accommodate them. Foreign workers may have a negative social impact on Japanese society; consequently, they should not be admitted.

The general conclusion of the conference on Japan and International Migration, held

Table 5 Percentage of Registered Foreigners by Country of Origin and Year

Country	1988	1990	1992	1993
Korea	72	64.0	53.7	51.7
China	13.7	14	15.2	15.9
Brazil	0.4	5.2	11.5	11.7
Philippines	3.4	4.6	4.9	5.5
USA	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.2
Peru	0.1	0.9	2.4	2.5
Others	6.9	7.7	9	9.5
Total	100	100	100	100

* North and South Korea

Source: Japan Immigration Association *Kokusai Jinryū*, Oct 1994: 37 in Tsuchida, 1995

in Tokyo in 1992, illustrates the general concern involved in this issue. "..... by far the most central issue of concern among Japanese participants was uncertainty as to whether Japanese people were willing or able to recognise and understand the issues posed by the presence of foreign workers and to identify and implement appropriate measures" (Appleyard and Stahl, 1993: 214).

As for the authorities, the Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry have carried out surveys on the issue of foreign workers but the acceptable options have not yet been spelled out. The Minister of Justice has called for tighter control (Hatsuse, 1992: 237) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1993), although proposing that improvements should be made in the treatment of illegal foreign workers, also called for strengthening immigration controls. The Ministry of Labour (1993) is concerned with the increased social costs involved in the settlement of foreign workers and the risks of their unemployment during economic recession.

There is evidence that companies and management in general tend to favour a policy of accepting foreign unskilled workers. For instance, in the surveys conducted in 1988 by the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce (5,000 member firms) and Osaka Chamber of Commerce (2,762 member firms), only a minority of respondents did not support the acceptance of foreign workers (Komai, 1993a).

As far as Trade Unions are concerned, *Rengo* (Japan Confederation of Private Sector Trade Unions), the central national trade union organisation, although concerned with their working conditions is opposed to the free and unconditional entry of foreign workers. The *Nihon Kagaku Energi Rodo Kumiai Kyogikai* (Federation of Chemical and General Workers' Unions Japanese Affiliates Federation) examined the attitudes of 6,500 Japanese workers in 1987, and it was found that 33 per cent supported the acceptance of foreign workers and 22 per cent saw it as unavoidable (Komai, 1993a). According to Kazuo (1992: 257), Japanese Unions in general are opposed to the employment of unskilled foreign workers.

As there is not yet a clear official position, foreign workers are tacitly accepted. Employers see many advantages in employing them because they receive lower wages and accept working conditions that a Japanese would not accept (Hatsue, 1992, p. 239).

The economic recession has led to a fall in the number of foreign workers entering Japan. Even the number of *Nikkei* from Brazil has dropped by nearly 20 per cent for the first half of 1992, compared with the same period for the previous year and *Nikkeijin* have been discouraged to migrate to Japan (Komai, 1993b). Conversely, the number of repeaters has been increasing as shown in the following table.

The new Dekasegi

It is in this context of labour shortage, undocumented foreign workers and legal reforms that the new *Dekasegi* make their way to Japan. The term *Dekassegui*, used in Brazil for Japanese emigrants as was mentioned earlier, came into use in 1985 among the Japanese community to refer to the Brazilian *Nikkei* who migrated to

Table 6 The ratio of 'Repeaters' to the Total Number of Immigrants for 1992

Country	Repeaters	All Immigrants
China	34.8	85,304
Brazil	32.6	45,721
Philippines	30.4	62,919
Korea	29.1	544,047
Peru	20.1	11,867
Thailand	8.1	53,818
Malaysia	6.8	35,545
Iran	3.2	12,574

Source: *International Migration*, Dec. 1992, p. 37 in Komai, 1993b

Japan. In 1986 one company in Sao Paulo started the recruitment of workers especially for automobile companies. By 1988 the recruitment conditions were improved and after working two years in Japan, the company paid the return passage to Brazil. One year later the number of recruitment advertisements increased substantially in the Japanese community in Sao Paulo.

There were then two ways to come to Japan. The legal way required a letter from relatives in Japan in order to get a tourist visa which would be changed later in Japan providing they had a relative in the country as a guarantor. Following the second way, they would come on a tourist visa and when it expired they had to leave the country and reenter in order to get a new visa.

Travel agencies often acted as job brokers. Arranging jobs in Japan proved to be good business and the number of brokers in Brazil acting as travel agencies soon multiplied. These emigration brokers earned more than 100,000 Yen in each transaction and the network was deeply rooted in the Japanese community in Brazil. According to Mori (1991), sixty five per cent of the *Dekassegui* were recruited by these brokers. In July 1989 underground job brokers (job contractors) in Brazil and Japan were denounced as illegal and the authorities carried out arrests. As a result, some small and medium sized companies in Japan started to recruit workers directly. In Oizumi (Gunma Prefecture), for example, during 1989, seventy companies practised direct recruitment (Kitagawa, 1991).

After the 1990 legal reforms in Japan, companies started to offer better working conditions in order to keep the legal foreign workers. In 1992, with an inflation rate of 1,200% and the increase of unemployment, the number of Brazilians of Japanese descent emigrating to the country of their ancestors increased exponentially.

Socio-demographic portrait

The *Dekassegui* population who entered Japan between 1985 and 1988 was mainly composed of *Issei* (first generation)⁹. Since 1988 on it has been constituted by the second and third generation migrants, and in more recent years the proportion of

Sansei (third generation) has been increasing (Yoshioka, 1995: 132). According to the *Kaigai Nikkeijin Kyokai* survey, which gathered data from 1027 *Nikkeijin* in Japan in 1992, the great majority of Japanese-Brazilians doing unskilled jobs in Japan is from the middle-class population, in their 20s and 30s and well educated. It was revealed that half of them had attended secondary school and 41.8 per cent were university graduates. The survey indicated also that their occupations in Brazil were mostly white collar: about 48.1 per cent were company employees, 21.8 per cent liberal professionals and only 0.8 per cent were unskilled blue-collar workers.

As for their Japanese language ability, according to the same source, 13 per cent of the respondents rated themselves as fluent and 18 per cent considered their level as sufficient. However, the JICA's survey (in Komai, 1993: 146) reports different results. The percentage of people with relatively high ability in hearing, speaking, reading and writing Japanese was 43.5 per cent, 27.9 per cent, 14.0 per cent and 11.2 per cent respectively. The number of people with no ability at all was 14.1 per cent, 12.3 per cent, 14.0 per cent, and 24.6 per cent for the same categories.

Regarding their motivation to migrate to Japan, for 58 per cent the main reason was to save up money, and 25.4 per cent of them were motivated by the difficult situation in their countries. According to Mori (1991) who conducted research on *Dekassegui* who returned to Brazil, they can be divided into two groups. Those who returned to Brazil and do not want to come to Japan again and those who would like to come back to Japan. Comparing the two groups, the first one has a higher educational level, better salaries and a lower level of Japanese proficiency and came to Japan not especially for economic reasons such as to know the culture of their ancestors. The second group corresponds more to the typical migrant motivated by economic reasons.

Some Brazilian *Nikkei* come to Japan accompanied by the family, others with part of the family (father and children while the mother stayed in Brazil) but the typical *Dekassegui* comes alone and has short stays: at most 2/3 years. The proportion of those who come accompanied by their families has risen in recent years to one in three (Komai 1993b; 192 Sellek: 192) as well as the number of single *Sansei*.

Living conditions

Nikkeijin in Japan are concentrated in areas where subcontractors of manufacturing companies for large companies operate. Although present in all prefectures, they are in large numbers in Tokyo and its suburbs, Ota city, Oizumi in Gunma Prefecture, Kanagawa, and the Tokai region from Hamamatsu city to Kosai city in Shizuoka Prefecture, through Toyohashi city in Aichi Prefecture to Toyota city (Hiroshi Komai, 1993b: 25). The largest *Nikkeijin* community is in Hamamatsu city in Shizuoka Prefecture, where 6,313 Brazilian and 698 Peruvians resided in 1992.

9) However, according to Kajita (1994a: 154 in Sellek) this population was mainly composed of young male farmers who earned low incomes in Brazil.

As a result of the large concentration of manufacturing companies, local governments in these areas receive quite good tax revenues and, therefore, can assist foreign worker residents¹⁰. Indeed, the municipalities have been playing an important role in developing programs and advice centres in order to help foreign residents, especially those from South America with Japanese ancestry. These centres are intended to assist them with problems living in Japan, and some of them offer Portuguese and Spanish speaking staff and provide information and counselling on welfare, medical, labour and residential problems. The municipal authorities where *Nikkeijin* reside also publish pamphlets with useful information in Portuguese and Spanish about alien registration procedures, how to rent an apartment, the system of billing for gas, electricity and water and the method of rubbish disposal. In some municipalities Japanese classes are also provided at a nominal fee and cooking fairs, Carnival festivals, and football matches are organised. Other initiatives relating to their integration have also been taken: for instance, the campaign to get citizens to accept the *Nikkeijin* as family relatives come after a long absence, carried out by the mayor of Oizumi (Oka, 1994: 57).

Most of the *Dekassegui* live in apartments rented by the companies. For example, in 1991 in Oizumi, where 1,382 Brazilian *Nikkei* resided, 20 per cent of them were living in company apartments or dormitories, 57.1 per cent in apartments rented by companies¹¹. There is a tendency for living apart from the Japanese and contacts between them and their Japanese neighbours are restricted (e. g., Kajita, 1993).

Although the Japanese Ministry of Education has not yet established a plan to integrate children of *Nikkeijin* into Japanese schools, some teachers in charge of them have been making an effort to assist them either by learning some Portuguese or having the Japanese text books translated into Portuguese or Brazilian text books translated into Japanese. In some cases it has been possible to form a class only with Brazilian children. Two schools in Soja (Okayama Prefecture) are an example of what has just been said.

As for hospitals and medical centres, in localities with a large concentration of *Nikkeijin*, brochures with instructions about how to use their services written in Portuguese and Spanish are distributed. There are also cases of nurses who have been learning Portuguese in order to assist their Brazilian patients. However, these individual efforts do not have a great impact at a national level and many *Nikkeijin* who cannot speak Japanese face various difficulties when they have to see a doctor or go to the hospital. Usually they are advised to go accompanied by a translator.

10) The fact that municipalities are eager to assist *Nikkeijin* does not necessarily mean that there are no problems. See Kajita *Gaikokujin Rodosha to Nippon* (Foreign Workers and Japan). Tokyo: NHK books, 1993.

11) Symposium on *Dekassegui*, São Paulo, 8-10 November 1991.

Employment conditions

The Japanese government has been trying to solve the main problems that have arisen with the recruitment and employment of *Nikkeijin* in Japan. First, with the amendment of the immigration law, the government gave the same working conditions as for Japanese workers. Second, it created centres for job recruitment and placement to deal with unscrupulous brokers.

In August 1991 the Ministry of Labour, in order to offer vocational counselling and job placement for foreigners of Japanese ancestry, set up the Employment Service Centres to cover all the country. The Nikkei Assistance Overseas Association was created and various public employment agencies were opened in the prefectures with higher concentrations of *Nikkeijin*. For the purpose of informing and counselling those who want to come to Japan an employment service agency was also established in Brazil. In October 1992 the Workers Abroad Information Centre was set up in Sao Paulo to give information about jobs.

The *Nikkeijin*, like all migrants, take the jobs that local people do not want, the so-called 3K jobs (*Kitsui, kiken and kitanai*)¹². They are employed by small-to medium-sized enterprises and subcontractors processing work for larger firms, in metallurgy, manufacturing, auto and electrical industry, construction and service fields. According to the Employment Centre for *Nikkeijin*, in 1993, fifty one per cent worked on assembly lines in manufacturing, 25.1 per cent in the construction and 13.2 per cent in the service industry (Japan Immigration Association, 1994).

They are recruited through Japanese and Brazilian agencies in Brazil, directly by companies, and through networks of friends and relatives working in Japan. Although the *Nikkeijin Koyo Service Center* (Employment Centre for *Nikkeijin*) was established to help them in finding jobs, between 1991 and 1992 only 1,002 *Nikkeijin* used this service (Komai, 1993a). The *Kaigai Nikkeijin Kyokai* (Overseas *Nikkeijin* Association) survey revealed that 34.7 per cent were directly recruited by the company and 62.9 per cent were under contract with brokers. These brokers meet the workers at the airport, make accommodation arrangements and deal with hiring and firing. The employer usually pays the wages to the brokerage which deducts its fee and pays the worker. The use of brokers implies additional costs to the employers but, on the other hand, it places less responsibility on them than direct recruitment. When large companies need to hire large numbers of workers for a short period, they prefer to recruit them through brokers. If the use of brokers may be convenient for companies, it is not always good for workers. Many cases of unscrupulous behaviour by brokers have been reported, such as the confiscation of workers' passports and cuts of from 40 to 50 per cent from their wages (Watari, 1996: 155).

The majority of *Dekassegui* is contracted on a yearly basis. In many cases they cannot read the contract because it is written in Japanese and in some cases the

12) In English, difficult, dangerous and dirty jobs.

contract is not clear in how the payment is calculated either (Onitsuka, 1991: 82). Although the wage rate reflects the demand it is, in general, higher than that of illegal foreign workers and about the same as for Japanese part-time workers without bonus. The average hourly wage for a male migrant worker in all industries in 1992 was 1,130 yen while that of Japanese part-time workers was 1,044 yen. Men were paid per day between 8,000 to 10,000 yen on average, and women 6,000 yen (Japan Institute of Labour, March 1, 1992). The monthly income for a male worker was about 240,000 yen for all industries and 264,000 yen in the construction industry; on average they worked for 10 hours per day with 2 hours of overtime work. As temporary workers usually they are not paid the bonuses that Japanese workers receive.

Labour laws and the employment security law and other legislation are applied to all *Nikkeijin* who are working in Japan. However, not all are covered by the public medical insurance and a great number have just a tourist insurance (Watari, 1996: 157). Like other foreigners with temporary work they are not entitled to pensions. If they wish, they can receive a lump-sum payment when they leave Japan (Weiner, 1995: 13).

The voluntary turnover rate of these workers is very high. About 78.4 per cent had changed job according to *Kaigai Nikkeijin Kyokai* survey in 1992, and *Sansei* change more often than *Nisei* (Watanabe, 1991: 321). The high mobility of these workers is mainly motivated by wage differentials. As they came to Japan to accumulate savings, they are always seeking for a better income and there is a network (formed by relatives, friends and brokers) providing the necessary information to find new jobs. When a more attractive job situation is found, many of these workers just leave without informing the company where they had been working or, at best, they ring the company to inform that they are leaving. However, since 1991 with the recession, it has been much more difficult to change jobs.

Dekassegui, as other foreign workers, have more work accidents than Japanese workers (Onitsuka, 1991: 82). The main causes for these accidents are said to be the lack of training and knowledge about security rules, and communication problems because they do not understand Japanese. Another obvious reason is that they perform dangerous jobs such as manipulating unsafe machines. It should be noted that in spite of the high risk of accidents, according to Watari (1996: 162), the majority of job brokers do not pay work accidents insurance. In such a cases, when the worker is under broker recruitment if he/she suffers an accident does not receive any compensation.

Migrants are accepted as temporary workers outside the system thus are directly affected by the economic slowdown. Many companies are increasingly reluctant to renew contracts and the number of unemployed South-Americans has been increasing. This situation came to be particularly serious in certain regions and the Ministry of Labour issued a circular to local governments instruct them to refrain companies from dismissing them unconstrainedly (Komai, 1993a: 23, 14). However, from Komai's (1993b) point of view, it cannot be said the *Dekassegui* are being pushed into a situation of extensive unemployment. Looking at the number of people searching for work at the Employment Centre for *Nikkeijin*, in April 1992, from a total of 1,253 people, those

unemployed as a result of being laid off accounted for just one-third of the total. Moreover, after September the number of redundancies fell by 20 per cent.

Nikkeijin in Soja

In order to characterise better the population of *Dekasegui* we shall now present the main findings of some research conducted by the authors on *Nikkei* workers in Soja, an industrial area located in Okayama Prefecture. In 1992 Soja had a population of 55,407 with 449 foreigners, 90 per cent of them Brazilians and the rest mainly constituted by Peruvians.

A total of 315 respondents answered a questionnaire and 45 subjects were interviewed. The sample was representative in terms of demographics and occupational characteristics of the *Nikkei* population in Japan. Their ages ranged from 18 to 54 years old with the average being between 25 and 34 years old. Eighty one per cent were men. About 60 per cent were married or in a *de facto* relationship and 37 per cent lived alone in Japan. Of the total sample 3 per cent were *Issei* 59 per cent *Nisei* and 38 per cent *Sansei*. As for religious affiliations, 80 per cent were Roman Catholics, 7 per cent belonged to other Christian denominations and nine per cent had no religious affiliation. As for their educational attainment, 23 per cent had attended university, 50 per cent finished high school or technical school, and 6 per cent the elementary school or Junior high school.

Thirty-four per cent had studied Japanese language before coming to Japan, however only 24 per cent reported no problem in speaking and understanding Japanese. As might be expected, the second generation had a better command of the Japanese language than the third generation. Of the 32 per cent who were studying the language, 3 per cent attended Japanese classes provided by the companies and 30 per cent studied on their own.

Over half of the respondents (61 per cent) had been living in Japan for one to two years, and nearly all of them (90 per cent) intended to return to their country, but 40

Table 7 Major problems of *Nikkeijin* in Japan (%)

Problem	%
Feeling homesick	26
Japanese attitudes towards foreigners	21
Communication with the Japanese	10
Medical assistance	0.6
Japanese behaviour	0.6
Working conditions	0.5
Human relations at work	0.4
Japanese customs	0.3

Regarding premigration expectations, 54 per cent of the respondents found what they had expected, whereas 9 per cent were disappointed. Sixteen per cent of the respondents were well informed about Japan before coming, while 50 per cent had not much information.

per cent of them did not know when. These findings are at odds with other research, as it will be discussed later.

As indicated in table 7, the main problem *Nikkeijin* had to face in Japan was feeling lonely and homesick, followed by the Japanese language. When they had a problem 9 per cent consulted Japanese friends, while 13 per cent consulted compatriots and 40 per cent relatives.

Regarding premigration expectations, 54 per cent of the respondents found what they had expected, whereas 9 per cent were disappointed. Sixteen per cent of the respondents were well informed about Japan before coming, while 50 per cent had not much information.

Fifty per cent of the respondents were recruited and placed in a company by a broker and 49 per cent were working directly for the company. Ninety five per cent were working as blue collar workers. About 42 per cent had changed jobs since their arrival. The main reasons for the job change were low pay, lack of overtime work (34 per cent) and problems with the broker (11 per cent). Not surprisingly, there was a correlation between length of stay and voluntary turnover, which is higher during the period between one and two years.

Fifty-two per cent were doing a day shift and worked on average 41 hours per week (maximum: 62 hours and minimum: 24 hours) and 14 hours of overtime work (maximum: 31 hours and minimum: 2 hours). Ninety per cent were not allowed to choose the shift and 66 per cent had no option as regards working on Sundays and holidays. Seventy-three per cent had no work meetings to discuss work problems. Sixty-five per cent were covered by medical insurance and 60 per cent by work accident insurance as shown in the following table 8.

In order to explore respondents' perception of their Japanese co-workers, respondents were asked to describe them by selecting nine adjectives from a randomised list

Table 8 Company benefits (%)

Benefits	%
Medical insurance	65
Work accidents insurance	60
Economic rewards and incentives	40
Bonus	35
Option to work or not on Sundays and holidays	35
Unemployment insurance	25
Meetings to discuss work problems	22
Retirement pension	20
Transportation paid by the company	20
Recreational activities promoted by the company	15
Japanese classes	10
Job training	0.5

of twenty adjectives. No significant difference was found between generations in the selection of the adjectives. The relationship between the choice of adjectives and degree of satisfaction was also examined. Only five adjectives (traditional, naive, competitive, reserved and interesting) were not statistically significant. The selection of adjective was also analysed in relation to Japanese language proficiency and a significant difference was found with the adjectives 'suspicious', 'prejudiced' and 'boring'. According to the adjectives more frequently chosen (friendly, hardworking, polite and reserved) it appears that respondents had a favourable view of their Japanese workmates (Fig. 1).

Although the most important problem that respondents had to face in Japan was the language, there was not any evidence of an association between satisfaction and Japanese language ability. In fact, only 3 per cent of those who were more satisfied could speak Japanese. This may be due to the fact the majority of the respondents (58 per cent) could work without understanding Japanese.

Respondents were asked about their perception of the treatment received in the companies where they were working. About 66 per cent of them felt they were treated

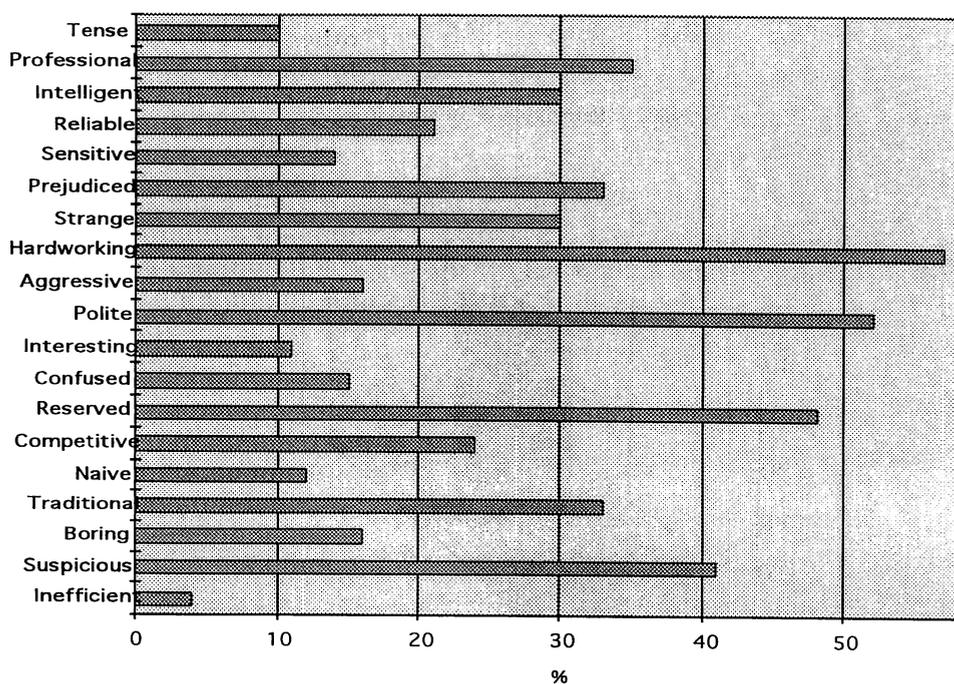


Fig. 1 Which of the following adjectives best describe the majority of your Japanese workmates? Percentage of respondents who selected the adjectives.

the same as their Japanese co-workers, as shown in figure 2.

Their degree of satisfaction with their working life in Japan in relationship with different variables was examined and results were reported elsewhere (Hamura and Carvalho, 1996). Results suggest that the majority of the respondents were satisfied with both management and the company. The relationship between being satisfied and consulting the supervisor was significant. Of those more satisfied, 45 per cent consulted their supervisors when they had problems, while 26 of the less satisfied did the same. The less satisfied complained more about the attitudes of Japanese toward foreigners than the more satisfied.

Nearly 64 per cent of the respondents reported that supervisors understood the difficulties of foreign workers and as shown in figure 3 and the majority (55%) had a good relationship with the supervisor (figure 4). For 65 per cent, supervisors placed equal importance on production, discipline and quality. However, none of the respon-

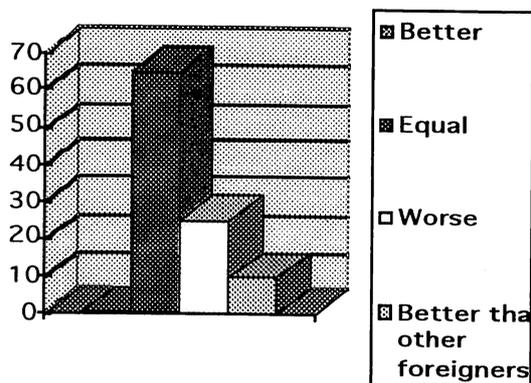


Fig. 2 Perception of treatment received

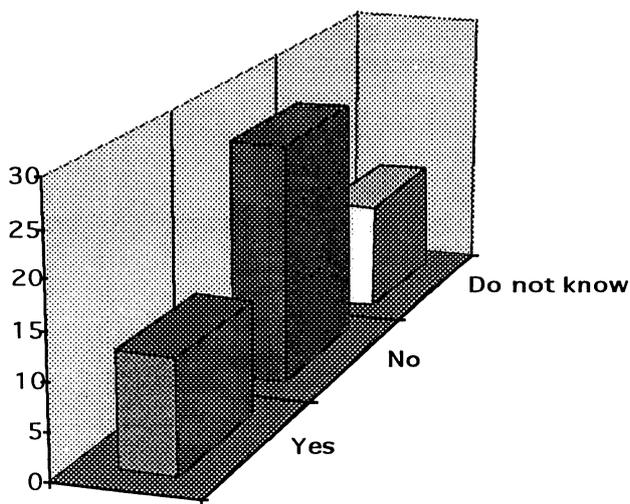


Fig. 3 "Do supervisors understand foreign workers"? (%)

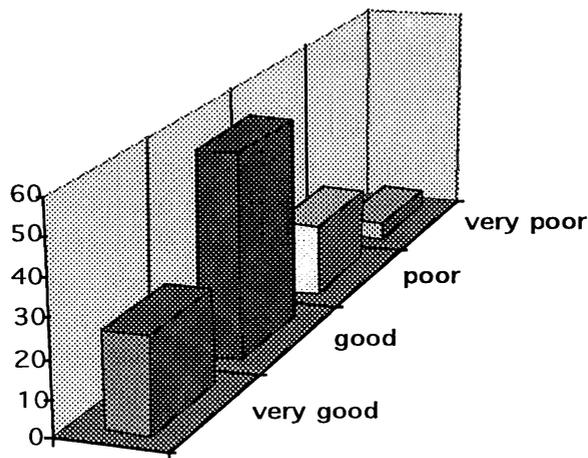


Fig. 4 Relationship with supervisor

dents thought that co-operation among the workers was important to supervisors.

Sixty five per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that the company where they worked had an equal concern for people and production and 81 per cent held a favourable opinion about their working experience in Japan.

Not surprisingly, respondents with a greater desire to return home were those who were less satisfied. Thirteen per cent of those who were more satisfied did not know if they would return to their countries, while 7 per cent of those who were less satisfied gave the same answer.

On the basis of the findings it may be concluded that the majority of the respondents were satisfied with their working situation. However, it should not be assumed that there were no problems. Interviews held with the respondents clarify some aspects of these findings.

Some interviewees reported some cases of mistreatment by supervisors but they added that they were treated the same as the Japanese workers. The following comment also expresses this idea: "We are treated as robots and so are the Japanese workers. The only thing that really matters here [Japan] is the work you do".

Other interviewees held a critical opinion about the company and management. A *Nisei* in his 40s observed that, "You cannot give any suggestion to improve the way you do your job. They have learnt one way to do it and that's the way you have to do it. You cannot change anything. In the beginning, I felt frustrated and I tried to give my opinion but now I don't care any more. After all this is not my country".

A frequent complaint was that in the company they were not called by their surnames although these were Japanese. Instead, supervisors used to say 'oi' to call their attention. Interviews also revealed that they were not well informed about their employment conditions not only they could not understand Japanese but also because the conditions were not clear.

Regarding Japanese co-workers, interviews responses are consistent with the questi-

onnaire results. However, when asked if they had problems with their Japanese co-workers, interviewees referred to cultural and educational differences as one point of friction. The fact that *Dekassegui* were very eager to do overtime work and receive net earnings or, at least, smaller tax deductions, was also mentioned to be a source of conflict between Japanese and South American workers. However, overall relationships with their Japanese co-workers were cordial in spite of the lack of communication and socialisation. Interestingly, some interviewees complained more about workmates from South American countries than about Japanese workmates.

The low number of people (3 per cent) who were attending Japanese classes provided by the companies could be interpreted as a lack of motivation to learn Japanese. However, interviewees revealed that they were very interested in learning the language but that those classes were not adapted to their needs. Therefore, some preferred to study on their own and others with the help of Japanese friends. All of them complained of difficulty in learning Japanese.

Considering the level of education attained by the respondents it might be expected that the best educated would feel more unsatisfied performing blue collar jobs; however, findings do not support this idea. This was explained by a *Nisei*, "In my country I was a teacher. I liked my job but I could not have a decent life. Here I have a very hard job but I can offer my family a better life. If I could afford to I would bring all my family to Japan".

One factor contributing to their satisfaction appeared to be their short stays that made them experience their life in Japan as temporary. They came to Japan to earn money to buy a car and apartment and to open a business and return after two or three years. Many of them came for the second time again to earn more money because in their countries the economic situation is difficult, it is not easy to find employment, and they did not know how to invest their savings. Their coming and goings give them the feeling of freedom to choose whether or not to be an immigrant, so to speak. A *Nisei* expressed this idea in the following statement, "I would like to stay longer because I need more money to open a business but if I can't stand it here I'll go back".

The general conclusion that emerges from this research is that *Dekassegui* are satisfied with their working conditions however, not enough evidence was found that showed intentions of settling permanently in Japan.

Nikkeijin: a new minority?

Since 1991 the number of new *Nikkeijin* entering Japan has decreased. Paradoxically, the number of those who return to Japan, the so-called 'repeaters', has been increasing (table 9). This trend has brought up the question of their possible settlement. According to Komai (1993b: 192 in Sellek 199) in 1993, about 26 per cent of the *Nikkeijin* with dependants intended to settle down in Japan. Kitagawa (1993) found that percentage to be between 30 to 40 per cent. However, in Soja, as we saw, 90 per cent of the respondents intended to return to their home country.

In order to discuss the future of *Nikkeijin* in Japan, we have to consider the process

Table 9 The Number of Brazilians entering Japan, 1986-1993

Year	Number	% *	New	Repeaters
1986	13,434		12,918	516
1987	12,126	- 9.7	11,479	647
1988	16,789	38.5	15,968	821
1989	29,241	74.2	27,819	1,422
1990	67,303	130.2	63,462	3,841
1991	96,337	43.1	83,785	12,552
1992	81,495	- 15.4	57,574	23,921
1993	70,719	- 13.2	44,804	25,915

* Percentage change on previous year.

Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice in Sellek, 1996: 261

of migration itself. To start with, immigrants regard themselves as guest workers and their commitments are to their countries of origin. Their lives are oriented by the idea of returning home and the host society is seen as alien. For this reason, poor living and working conditions may be tolerated and all the efforts concentrated on accumulating savings and sending remittances. As their interests are still in the country where they came from, there is no point in learning the language and culture of the host country or interacting much with the nationals.

As the time goes on, usually they realise it is not possible to become wealthy in a short period as they had first thought. Often it is at this stage that family reunion occurs. As well as this, social networks based on kinship or common area of origin and the need for mutual help are formed. The cultural links to their home country are maintained while they seek a better adjustment to the receiving society. It is then that the immigrants get more involved in the host society. They set up shops where they can buy products from their country, and establish religious centres, schools for their children, ethnic associations and the like.

The final stage is the permanent settlement which, depending on the migration policies and the society of the receiving country, leads either to an integration and eventual citizenship, or to socio-economic discrimination. The latter situation, may result in ethnic minorities being marginalised.

Based on the above considerations, it seems reasonable to say that Brazilian migrants in Japan have moved to the middle stage of the migration process. According to some Japanese researchers (e. g., Komai, 1993; Kajita, 1993; Sellek, 1996) it is likely that *Nikkeijin* will settle down in Japan or, at least continue as 'repeaters'. Their arguments are essentially based on the following. First, huge economic disparities between their South-American countries and Japan would make them reluctant to return to their country of origin. Secondly, *Nikkeijin* communities and other social networks in Japan fulfil their needs. Thirdly, modern communications shorten the distance between country of origin and Japan. Against all these incentives, the main

obstacle would be difficulties in educating their children.

Admittedly, in a very short period, *Nikkeijin* established their communities. They have their newspapers (e. g., *International Press*, *Folha Mundial*), radio programmes in Portuguese, Brazilian Television satellite, restaurants, shops where they can buy food and Brazilian products. All this undoubtedly facilitates their life in Japan and may attract other *Dekassegui* as well. One may also assume that the economic and social situation in Brazil make them hesitant to return home. This sort of understanding of migration does not take into account a number of significant factors. Migration can be reduced neither to the economic perspective nor to the migrant's perspective alone. It needs to be analysed as a social process with its own dynamics, involving the migrant as well as the receiving society. From this it follows that ultimately much depends on how *Nikkeijin* are treated by the Japanese government and Japanese society. In considering this question one has to think of the Koreans and the Chinese living in Japan and remember that they have been subject to discrimination in a number of different areas. Only very recently have Korean residents in Japan ceased to be required to undergo compulsory fingerprinting as part of registration and to carry alien registration documents.

The attitudes of the Japanese are central to the prospects of *Nikkeijin* or other immigrant group settlement. In this regard, national surveys give interesting insights into the attitudes of the Japanese towards foreign workers. In a national survey conducted by the Prime Minister's Office in 1990, only 14.1 percent of Japanese people were directly opposed to taking in foreign labourers. However, according to the Tokyo Immigration Office, complaints about foreigners, either by phone or letter, have reached 20,000 a year, a figure which is rising annually. The *Yomiuri Shinbun* surveys in 1991 and 1992 disclose an increase of 8.5 per cent in the number of people who thought that the troubles in local communities had been increasing. Other surveys cited by Komai (1994) also indicate a growing concern about crime and the lack of social security. In an overview of recent surveys it is apparent the degree of tolerance towards foreign workers has decreased. It is important to bear in mind that these surveys refer to foreign workers in general and up to this point none has been conducted specifically on *Nikkeijin*. In spite of their Japanese ancestry, one incident illustrates the complexity of the issue. In Hamamatsu and Hamanako (Shizuoka Prefecture), where there is a large concentration of *Nikkei* population, the distribution of pamphlets against their presence was reported (Watari, 1996: 158).

To conclude, it is important to point out that migrants are never welcomed when the social and economic situation is difficult. It is not impossible therefore that manifestations of animosity towards the foreign presence in general may occur in Japan.

Concluding remarks

From what has been argued above, we may conclude that, in a way similar to the experience of some West European countries years ago, Japan needs labourers and so people from countries in a difficult economic situation are migrating to Japan.

The Japanese government's decision to grant visas to unskilled workers of Japanese ancestry may be interpreted as an attempt to solve labour shortages and simultaneously protect the 'imagined' homogeneity, which would prevent social conflicts such as those occurring in some Western European countries. It is not clear whether Japan is trying to avoid the European "mistakes" by accepting only Japanese descendants as legal foreign workers or whether this political decision implies a xenophobic sentiment. Whatever the reason, the possibility of the *Nikkeijin* settling permanently has attracted attention and triggered a concern for the social problems that may arise due to cultural differences.

On the other hand, the acceptance of *Nikkeijin* as legal foreign workers did not prevent the entrance of foreigners without Japanese ancestry, as we saw, and migration to Japan shows no sign of ceasing. If this trend continues to develop Japan is on the same road as other industrial societies and will have to cope with the same problems as any other immigrant society. Ultimately, what is at issue is the redefinition of Japan's national identity as a racial and cultural homogeneous country. *Nikkeijin* may therefore contribute to reshaping a new Japanese ethnic identity.

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