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## MIGRATION

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### **A RISE AND PROGRESSION OF MIGRATION AND ETHNICITY STUDIES IN JAPAN'S SOCIOLOGY**

A RISE AND PROGRESSION OF MIGRATION AND ETHNICITY STUDIES IN JAPAN'S SOCIOLOGY

РАЗВИТИЕ МИГРАЦИОННЫХ И ЭТНИЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ В ЯПОНСКОЙ СОЦИОЛОГИИ

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to provide an overview of migration and ethnic studies in Japan's sociology and gives primary attention to some well-known sociological works. A dramatic change to the way ethnicity and related matters are understood in Japan occurred in the late-1980s due to a significant increase in the arrival of foreigners to the country. This encouraged the field of migration and ethnicity

**Аннотация.** В данной статье представлен обзор миграционных и этнических исследований в японской социологии. В середине 1980-х гг. в Японии произошла переоценка понятия этничности и связанных с ней категорий, что было связано с резким увеличением числа прибывающих иностранцев. Это способствовало росту исследований в области миграции и этничности, и се-

studies, and such research has flourished ever since. In what can be described as a 'new dawn' for this specific field of studies, there have recently been various examples of the ethnographic documentation of fieldwork conducted in Japan's ethnic communities. Prior to these more recent developments, the primary focus of migration and ethnicity studies was in the social lives of many Korean residents in Japan throughout their successive generations. However, the development of the study to focus upon 'newcomers' as newly arrived foreigners, has in turn brought about a sustained re-focusing upon the 'old-comers.' Now issues of migrant-intake have become public concerns, and the Japanese government's policies have recently become more open than those in previous periods.

**Keywords:** migration, ethnic studies, transnationalism, sociology in Japan, urban studies

годня они ведутся достаточно активно. «Новый рассвет» этого направления выражается в разнообразии этнографических полевых исследований, проводимых в этнических сообществах на территории Японии. До «рассвета» основное внимание уделялось социальной жизни корейских граждан в Японии на протяжении нескольких поколений. Но необходимость изучать «прибывших» иммигрантов вынудила переосмыслить фокус исследований давно «осевших» иностранцев. Сегодня проблемы приема мигрантов стали общественными, а политика японского правительства по этим вопросам — более открытой, чем прежде.

**Ключевые слова:** миграция, этнические исследования, транснационализм, социология в Японии, городские исследования

## Introduction

The objective of this paper is to overview migration and ethnic studies in Japan's sociology. Of course, it will be difficult to summaries in one article to contain the diversity of approaches and views on migration and ethnic studies in Japan's sociological sciences. Thus, my intention in this paper is to review some distinguished and illustrious work of Japanese sociologists. When compared to some 'nations of immigrants' namely the United States of America, Canada, or Australia, immigration inflow to Japan is not so large in terms of numbers or proportions, but dramatic change has occurred in the mid-1980s. With this change migration studies in Japan have received new impetus.

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan was a notable 'nation of emigrants'. The main destination was the United States of America, followed by Brazil. However, for Japan to acknowledge itself and be recognized abroad as a 'nation of immigrants' a transformation of national self-understanding had to take place, owing to various kinds of migrants-intake.

## Deliberations of Ethnicity Issues

Before the mid-1980s, ethnicity and related matters of public interest — immigration, multiculturalism, and national identity — did not figure highly in the contributions

made by Japanese sociologists. But from the late 1980s, these concerns have become a major focus. By saying this, I do not suggest that ethnicity studies have only been around for 30 years, since Japan's cultural anthropology and sociology has been concerned with studies of race and ethnic community prior to that time. But with the *en masse* inflow of foreigners from the mid-1980s, many of whom have arrived from neighboring Asian countries, their presence in various inner-metropolitan areas of major cities has been a stimulus to migration and ethnicity studies, including empirical fieldwork research into the metropolitan concentration to these ethnic communities.

With the increase in foreign population since the 1980s, contemporary Japanese communities have grown diversity with respect to the socio-cultural backgrounds of residents. Such ethnically-related social change has not only fostered academic and scientific interest by sociologists, but also media coverage, and directional shifts in some local government policies. The question of whether the country is 'closed' or 'open', has long been part of political discourse. The idea of the 'closed country' can be traced back to the Edo period, when Shogunate, Iemitsu Tokugawa introduced the policy in 1633—1639, banning foreign relations with no permission for foreigners to enter and no Japanese allowed to leave the country. Of course, there were some trade-relations with China and the Netherlands [Mizukami, 2016], and thus it was actually not a totally closed country at all. But the act as a political intention was indeed effective until 1854, the year the Convention of Kanagawa, the Japan–US Treaty of Peace and Amity, was concluded.

And with that as 19th century background, we note that the debate has been still alive since the 1980s, as the 'foreigner population' has constantly increased. The issues as to how to accept or to restrict foreigners from coming into Japan has become, more and more, a public and political concern, and thus academics have also had to deal with the issues in their research and in their teaching. Some scholars have taken account of urban ethnic communities, others have focused upon national or local government policies in relation to foreign residents and their presumed place in Japanese society. Other studies have been concerned with migration and nationalism, and there are many other aspects of this significant development in Japanese social life that require careful empirical investigation.

### **Background Developments for the Formation of Ethnic-Communities**

From the 1980s, Japan has increasingly become involved in the global migration movements and trends. The key factor for attracting migrant workers from foreign lands was Japan's so-called "Bubble Economy." It was in 1985 that an agreement was made by the Group of Five (United States of America, Britain, Germany, France, and Japan) in the face of the accumulating the United States trade deficit. This was the "Plaza Accord" signed at the New York Plaza Hotel. It changed the exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the Japanese Yen, which was up-valued from 240 to 120 yen against the dollar. From then the Yen has been kept at that high value, and that was basic a factor to the subsequent induced migrant-inflow [Mizukami, 2009]. Changes we soon after apparent in several city centers. Tokyo, in particular, has become a center from where newly-arrived foreigners developed their ethnic businesses. And so, the establishment of ethnic communities and their settlement has become a major topic

for Japanese Sociology, though ethnicity studies had not been a chief academic focus before that time, as I have previously mentioned. These newly-arrived foreigners were designated 'newcomers,' in sociological research, in contrast with 'old-comers' who mainly consisted of Koreans, the most numerous of Japan's sub-population prior to the recent rapid increase of Chinese who now outnumber them, partly due to naturalization of Korean population.

In fact, this is part of a period in which we can say that sociological studies on nationalism, ethnicity, migration, and related issues, have flourished. This was Sociology's 'new age,' and these sub-disciplines became academic 'newcomers' to investigate the *en masse* inflow of newcomers into Japanese communities. This has also, correspondingly stimulated a previous topic of Japanese ethnicity studies, e. g., a reconsideration of the past treatment of, and prejudice toward, 'old-comers', those who are mainly of Korean background.

Some consistent patterns have been noted in the characteristics of these ethnic concentrations, in some inner areas where the newcomers from foreign lands have congregated, making use of the convenience of facilities for the single persons in taverns, public bathhouses, coin-laundries, small restaurants, and even ethnic grocery stores [Mizukami, 2008]. After the Second World War, various inner-city areas of Tokyo have revived with the emergence of black market activities arising from within the wide stretch of burnt-out ruins. Some studies have surprisingly disclosed that this development experience from the black markets is associated with the tendency of newcomers to prefer this site for their own residency.

In the mid-1950s, due to Japan's high economic growth, the sub-title of a White Paper gave expression to the emergent sentiment: 'Japan is no longer in the post-war [period].' The rapid post-war urbanization, notably with the construction of infrastructure, was supported by a domestic population movement from agrarian villages to metropolitan centers. There is a striking difference between Japan and other industrially developed countries, such as North America, and Western Europe which have also absorbed large scale foreign workers into their populations for their post-war economic growth. By contrast, Japan's major urban areas obtained the large-scale labor force in its own *domestic* population movements. Guided by the government's development policy, the influx of new settlers from northern to southern islands meant a strong gravitation to the Tokyo metropolitan area, especially from regions contiguous with its neighboring prefectures [Okuda, 1993]. "In periods of high economic growth, some inner areas of Tokyo attracted a number of single dwellers from the provinces, such as students and impoverished single workers. In addition, these areas have convenient terminal railway stations nearby, and sufficient low priced, if poor quality, accommodation" [Mizukami, 2008]. However, due to the oil crisis of 1973—1974, Japan's active domestic population movement halted, and for a time experienced stable economic growth. Following the suburban development, these newcomers from all over Japan moved to the outskirts of Tokyo, particularly when they married and formed households. With the development of suburbanization, various inner areas in Tokyo encountered problems associated with inner city decay and an aging population. But in the 1980s, a new pipeline of human movement has appeared from neighboring Asian countries [Okuda, Tajima, 1991].

## Empirical Researches in Urban Sociology

Some inner areas have developed because of their attraction to young bachelors, and so convenient conditions have already existed for a new influx of single male newcomers from overseas. For example, there have been advanced shopping facilities with the availability of low-priced and dilapidated accommodation. Furthermore, the advanced businesses offer numerous jobs in service industries. They have brought about an expansion to the work-age population in what has hitherto been an older aged inner-city Tokyo [Mizukami, 2008]. In addition to these conditions, “the anonymity of the city has a positive effect for newcomers, in that their lives are not disrupted by any over concern from local residents with the newcomers from foreign lands” [Okuda, Tajima, 1991]. In particular, some areas, such as a part of the Ikebukuro district in central Tokyo, some shop-owners were from black market, building up their shops, and were not too concerned with the newly-manifested heterogeneity from foreign lands. The findings from Okuda and Tajima’s book [Okuda, Tajima, 1991]. showed that the majority of these foreigners found accommodation through their relatives and friends of the same ethnicity and, in most cases, several people lived together in a small room. This was the main complaint of the owners of houses because, according to the contract, the room was rented by one person, so the inhabitants were not allowed to live with others. On the other hand, the positive influence of these foreigners noted by the shop proprietors and house owners was the expansion of consumption and the occupation of vacant rooms. In fact, the decay in the inner-city area, the dilapidated in rental accommodation as well as the increase in the aged population, have been counteracting factors to accept the foreign newcomers. Especially, as the Ikebukuro area has been lacking a particular age group of the 20s and 30s, these ‘newcomers’ have covered this productive age group. As this kind of research was not known in Japanese sociology in the 1980s, such investigation must be seen as ground-breaking research.

And so such empirical research continues into the social life of Asian newcomers; the first research was conducted in 1988—1989, then further investigation was undertaken in 1994, clarifying the fact that the growth of diversified source countries in the region, with previous newcomers mediating between local communities and their newly arrived foreigners [Okuda, Tajima, 1995:18]. And there has been further research in 1997—1998, confirming that in the area the source countries of foreigners have further diversified [Okuda, Suzuki 2001]. After the initial research, Okuda and associates have extended the focus upon inner-city Tokyo, and intensive research was conducted in the Okubo area, in Shinjuku ward, too [Okuda, Tajima, 1993; Okuda, Suzuki, 2001]. In fact, since the late-1980s, various ethnographic studies into the communities of immigrants have been undertaken in major inner-city areas, where newly-arrived migrants tend to cluster around.

Strong and unambiguous evidence, demonstrating the popularity of the ethnic and migration studies, was found in an academic conference held in the mid-1990s. At June 1994, annual conference of *Nihon toshi shakai gakkai* (The Japanese Association for Urban Sociology), there were many presentations which chose both domestic and international ethnicity issues. Moreover, in 1995 the annual journal of the association took for its theme “The Contemporary City and Ethnicity.” Although the name of the

journal is “Annals of the Japan Association for Urban Sociology,” the Association highlighted the focus upon ethnicity in urban areas by making it the sub-title for the issue and indeed the vast majority of articles were concerned with international migration and resultant ethnic communities in urban areas. Indeed, there has been a growth in ethnographic research into ethnic communities in Japan’s urban sociology. In terms of the inner-city in the Osaka district, Tani and his group [Tani, 2002; 2015] have conducted extensive research, and have attempted to classify the various research findings and the relevant theories that arise from examination of the empirical data. “The ethnic concentration in metropolitan areas is explained in terms of a synergy between job opportunities and accessibility of settlement services not only from governments but also from the community efforts offered by compatriots of the same ethnic background” [Mizukami, 2000]. Thus, we can see some particular areas where quite visible ethnic communities exist.

### **The Change in Immigration Directions and the Increase in Japanese Descents**

In response to the increasing foreign population, which included many undocumented migrants, the amended Immigration Act was introduced in June 1990. This aimed to rigidly restrict unskilled labor migration, while at the same time it opened the door for people of Japanese descent from Central American countries such as Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina. In addition to the amendment, this Act instituted penal regulations for Japanese employers who hired undocumented foreign workers. Those migrants of Japanese descent could gain lawful employment even though they are unskilled laborers due to Japan’s blood-relation policy. Such policy is an exception to the rule that considers a migration applicant in terms of birth place. In other words, there is a legal contrast in accepting foreigners; Japan takes an account of Japanese descent, which is the basis on *jus sanguinis*, in contrast to the right to citizenship of individuals born in a territory, as *jus soli* [Mizukami, 2000]. With the amendment of immigration policy of 1990, many Japanese who had migrated into South and Central American countries, in the pre- and immediate post-war period, as well as their descendants, some second or third generation, began to return to Japan for their employments. An unskilled labor force of Japanese blood was officially approved, even though the majority of them were non-Japanese speakers. They too were classified as ‘newcomers.’ The amendment of the policy encouraged significant migration from South and Central America, especially Brazilians, to migrate to Japan.

In terms of emigration movements from Japan, the official Japanese labor migration from Japan to Brazil commenced at the early 20th century, and continued until August 1941. That involved almost 190,000 Japanese persons emigrating to Brazil [Nihonimin 80nenshi hensaniinkai, 1991: 140]. These migrations were constantly maintained until the outbreak of the Pacific war, and after the War, the official migration to Brazil re-commenced in 1953 until 1973 when the last migration ship was to transport Japanese laborers. Then, when we look at the statistics regarding the intake of Brazilian nationals, the number in 1988 was only 4,000. It increased the next year to about 14,000, but by 1990, the number had increased to about 56,400. Afterwards, the number has constantly increased until 2007 it has reached more than 310,000. After the 2008 financial crisis, the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, the number of

Brazilians has gradually decreased. These Brazilians have concentrated in particular areas. For instance, Toyota city in Aichi, Hamamatsu city in Shizuoka, and Oizumi town in Gunma prefectures have embraced large populations from Brazil. These cities have some common characteristics: they have all developed industrial towns with factories of outstanding industries. These Brazilian communities, and some other South-Central Americans, have therefore featured prominently in sociological research.

One of the outstanding works onto Japanese Brazilians is *Kao no mienai teijyuka — Nikkei Burajirujin to kokka/shijo/imin nettowaku [Invisible Residents: Japanese Brazilians vis-à-vis the State, the Market and the Immigrant Network]*, written by Kajita, Tanno, and Higuchi [Kajita, Tanno, Higuchi, 2005]. After systematizing relevant literature, including the theories and characteristics of migration, the presentation of the statistical data on Japanese Brazilians, they have described the patterns of their communities and settlement, including their changing status in Japanese labor markets. They are like a facilitating valve in the labor markets, when domestic labor force comes into the periphery area of work with low payments, they are foreclosed. According to them, migrant workers tend to settle as invisible labor force in the society. They exist, but their social existence is only recognized by the local community from their non-participation in social life. They are called 'invisible residents' [Kajita, Tanno, Higuchi, 2005: 72]. In Hirota's work, *Ethinishithi to toshi [Ethnicity and City]* [Hirota, 2003/1997], the author gathered ethnographic data on newcomers as Japanese descendants in Yokohama, Kawasaki, and Oizumi cities, clarifying characteristics of informants' lives in local communities, their socio-cultural impact onto host Japanese society. He particularly concerns with transnational perspectives. On the other hand, Miyajima and Ota [Miyajima, Ota, 2005] has focused upon 'fushugaku' which means non-school-attendees amongst foreign children in their book, *Gaikokujin no kodomo to nihon no kyoiku — Fushugaku mondai to tabunkakyosei no kadai [Foreign children and Japan's education system: Problems of non-school attendees and subjects of multicultural living together]*. There have been various problems in some foreign families, such as economic, cultural, and conventional barriers preventing some foreign children from participating properly in schools.

### **Global Sociology and Transnationalism**

In relation to the increase in migration and ethnicity studies, Japanese sociology has established a new sociological domain that is '*Kokusai shakaigaku*.' The direct translation of this term is 'International Sociology,' but when the text book of '*Kokusai shakaigaku*' was published in 1992 [Kajita, 1992], the editor, Kajita, attached its English title as 'Transnational Relations.' However, under contemporary circumstances, this can be equivalent to 'global sociology' as the contents of the text book includes ethnicity, international migration, world cities, multicultural society, nationalism and so on. Afterwards, some text books on '*Kokusai shakaigaku*' have been published, including one of the same title, '*Kokusai shakaigaku*' [Miyajima., Sato, Ogaya, 2015]. Its English translation is now 'Transnational Sociology.' The subject of '*Kokusai shakaigaku*' has been introduced in the teaching of some universities since the 1990s. The Japan Association for Migration Policy Studies, established in 2008, is not only for academics from Universities or Research Institutes, but also includes lawyers, members from

non-government organizations and non-political organizations as well as international organizations, and has been active in its publishing and work.

In terms of sociological research, the transnational approaches have become a major means by which the settlement of migrants has been publicized. The vast majority of first generation migrants have strong ties with their homelands while living in this new environment. They persistent involvement in transnational networks. In this decade, various empirical research projects into ethnic or migrant communities in Japan have adopted a transnationalism frame of reference. In addition, some English academic books on transnationalism or ethnic studies and other relevant studies have been translated for the Japanese language publication. Examples are *Global Sociology* [Cohen, Kennedy, 2000] translated in 2003; *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation* [Portes, Rumbaut, 2001] translated in 2014; *Transnationalism (Key Ideas)* [Vertovec, 2009] translated in 2014, and others.

Apart from the volumes of ethnic community fieldwork in Japan, there has also been some research in foreign lands by Japanese sociologists. Some empirical researches by urban sociologists are as follows: *Ekkoyoshatachi no rosanzerusu [Strangers in Los Angeles]* (Machimura 1999); *Ajiamegasithi to chiikikomyunithi no dotai — Jyakaruta no RT/ RW o chuusin nishite [An Asian Mega-City and the Dynamics of Local Community: Centre upon RT/ RW in Jakarta]*. [Yoshihara, 2005]; *The Sojourner Community: Japanese Residency in Australia* [Mizukami, 2006]. Under the progress of Japanese governments' concern regarding globalization, these studies are expected to further develop.

## Concluding Remarks

The debates about the manner in which Japan receives and accepts foreigners continues. Does it start from the people's recognition of newcomers from foreign lands as migrant laborers? Was it first a tolerance of those who would be returning to their homelands after a few years or so? However, when some have extended their stay, how has that tolerance developed? Many local governments have introduced new systems and policies since the mid-1980s to take into account their foreign population. This is an aspect of Japanese society that cannot easily be ignored.

Regardless of the length of time of their residence, the research must take the process of human settlement into account. The research clearly demonstrates a variety of settlement patterns within the host Japanese community. Many did indeed return to their home country, while some have become transnational migrants who have retained a strong tie with their country of origin while living in Japan. Others have become rooted to Japanese society, marrying and developing their Japanese families. Japan has faced the shortage of local labor, owing to a rapidly ageing population and low birth rate. And this is actually related as a vital matter to the migration and 'newcomer' debate. As the Japanese government's policies have tended to become more open than previously, migration patterns and conditions of ethnicity must change, and thus, the studies will also have to change in their research frames in order to adequately explain social life.

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