

# **International labor migration and the status of migrants in receiving countries: the case of Japan**

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## **1. The Progress of Globalization through Immigration into Japan**

The progress of globalization, which means the shrinkage of the space and time of the world is accelerated by the development of technology. For ordinary Japanese, cheap, short time, massive transportation by aircraft has made possible to travel to the other parts of the world for sight-seeing. The telecommunication technology gives many informations of the world through TVs and newspapers, and especially by internet system recently. But these experiences and perceptions are only indirect because sight-seers travel in capsules they are enclosed in and the informations are just fragments cut up lacking the real complexity. The development of technology, however, also made it possible to carry mass flow of foreign immigrants into Japan. The result of it is the direct experiences of the world by ordinary Japanese by every-day contacts with foreigners in the working places, neighborhoods and even in their family lives.

As of January 1, 2000, there are 1,800 thousands foreigners residing in Japan and they compose 1.4% of Japanese population. Resident foreigners are divided into 500 thousands old-timers who arrived Japan mainly before and during World War II and 1,300 thousands newcomers who started to arrive in the end of 1970s and increased especially in the latter half of 1980s. Newcomers include 250 thousands illegals, and about 1,000 thousands of them are workers. The breakdown of newcomers by the major country of origin are as follows: China 330 thousands, Brasil 220 thousands, Korea 170 thousands, Philippines 150 thousands, Peru 50 thousands, and USA 40 thousands. It is clear, with the exception of USA, neighboring countries of Japan and Latin American countries are main senders of immigrants. As for Latin American countries, special acceptance of Japanese descendents are legally permitted by the revised immigration law in 1990. Here I would like to add that those who had stayed in Japan and returned to their home countries or moved to another countries already reached several millions.

Mass arrivals of foreign immigrants has given tremendous impacts on Japanese society. In the following, I will consider it from both aspects of power and culture.

## **2. The Transformation of Power Structure by the Arrival of Immigrants**

Foreign immigrants are placed at the bottom stratum of Japanese power structure. Political rights are important as it means participation for decision making. But the Supreme Court have denied the rights of voting or standing for office at the national level entirely. As for the local level, a law to give voting rights to settled foreigners is under discussion at the national diet presently. This might be the sign of decay of the idea of monopoly of the political rights only by the native people. Still, oppositions are so strong that the possibility of the enactment is very low.

Their position in the labor market is also at the bottom. Japanese labor market is characterised by the dual industrial structure and migrant workers are placed in the lower part of it. They work at the middle or small scale enterprises mainly in manufacturing, construction or service industries, engaging in three D(dirty, dangerous, demanding) jobs. Most of them are paid hourly and their employment is very unstable. As they are the safety valve for labor supply, under the present prolonged economic recession, unemployment among them is increasing together with shifting to the service industry from manufacture and construction.

In spite of their low status, their existence itself affects Japanese power structure. The most important phenomenon is the sway of the mono-racism. Mono-racism means Japanese nation-state is composed only by Japanese race sharing common blood originated from the Emperor lineage.

The history of nationalism in modern and contemporary Japan has passed following five stages.

- (1) national isolation before the Meiji Restoration.
- (2) Compulsory assimilation of Ainus and Okinawa people into Japanese race after the Meiji Restoration.
- (3) The formation of a multi-racial empire after the colonization of Taiwan and Korea. In these areas, no political right are given to the colonized people. The colonization induced the massive inflow of Koreans into Japan, numbered 2,500 thousands in the end of World War II.
- (4) Mono-racism after the defeat of the World War II. Under it, assimilation or exclusion policy for remained 500 thousands Koreans were enforced.
- (5) Sway of mono-racism after 1970's by the arrival of newly coming foreigners, as well as joining to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Mono-racism is still strong, however, and the boundary between Japanese and foreign nationals still exists. Notorious forced taking of fingerprints of foreigners were finally abolished for old-timers in 1991 and for others in 1999, but the duty to carry always foreigners' registered card remained. There is hierarchical discrimination among foreign nationals: foreigners given resident visa status and Japanese descendants who have no restriction on activities at the top, legal stayers other than Japanese descendants with some restrictions on activities to the next, and illegal stayers deprived of any rights at the bottom.

The effects of foreign migrants in Japan upon the power structure of their home countries are worth mentioning here. Approved political refugees are composed of 10 thousands Indochina refugees and surprisingly small less than 300 other refugees. But, in addition to this, there are many pseudo refugees like Burmese who fled Myanmar and formed several organizations in Japan against military dictatorship of Myanmar, or Chinese who participated in the opposition movements against the Chinese government at Tienanmen's incidence either in Japan or in China, or Iranians reached 40 thousands at the peak of early '90s, considerable portion of whom felt distance with the fundamentalistic Islamic doctrine of Iran. The movements of these approved or pseudo refugees in Japan surely contribute to change the repressive polity of their home countries, and after return, experiences of the air of freedom in Japan also will help the way to democratization.

### **3. Cultural Changes by the Arrival of Immigrants**

Here culture means behavioral patterns in everyday life in one way and higher level like religion, philosophy and art in another way. Before discussing cultural changes of Japan brought in by immigrants, it is necessary to see changes in immigrants themselves. Parents tend to preserve their original culture even in Japan. Medias like cabled TV or ethnic printed medias by the native tongue helps it. But children growing up in Japan rapidly forget their original culture. Japanese language teaching without original language education worsens the situation. By the way, 'Pythagoras' group from Brasil opened three schools for the children of Brasilians of Japanese descendants in Japan to give Brasilian style education, but high tuition fee limits the number of entrants.

Turning to the changes of Japanese culture in the behavioral pattern of everyday life stimulated by immigrants, most conspicuous one is the beginning of the collapse of Japanese groupism. Japanese groupism is composed of closedness to the outer world and authoritative hierarchy, as well as the conformity under group pressure. It suited for the mass production of few kinds of industrial products, and we have fresh memory of so loud advocacy of it in 1970s and 1980s. Japanese groupism is chiefly responsible for the fall of bubble economy, namely the breakdown of speculation chains for real estates as well as the loss of competence for international competition. Japanese groupism produced incapable but indulgent top leaders, obedient rank and files without initiative, and both of them lacked in the morality for the outer world.

Because of the participation of the immigrants for Japanese society, they are helping transformation from the principle of groupism to the one of networking considerably. According to the Comparative Value Research Survey that I conducted in 1997-1998 for ten ethnic groups residing in Japan, Chinese have the weak tendency for avoidance of uncertainty, Koreans and Americans have strong rejection for power difference, and Latin Americanos have high tolerance for other people's behavior. Those traits are surely incompatible with

Japanese groupism. By the way, Japanese reliability received high evaluation by immigrants, and will effect their home countries after their return because they respect it.

Turning to the high level of culture, expansion of religious activities are noticeable. Catholic churches attended by Philipinos and Latin Americanos started their services in multi-languages. As for Brasilians, they say three-fourths of them believe in the doctrine and one-fourth of them go to church. Protestant churches are activated by the presence of Koreans. In the concentrated areas of Koreans, new construction of churches as the branch of the sect in Korea are proceeding. Even the Islamic mosques numbered 40 all over Japan, attended by Pakistanis and Bangladeshes mainly. Seicho no Ie, which is the new sect of Shintoism origin characterised by the Emperor worship also absorb Brasilians. In Brasil, this sect is the largest among new sects of Japanese origin and 5% of Japanese descendents are believers. We can see the sharp contrast with the already established Shintoism and Buddhism institutions which are not so active where only native Japanese attend.

#### **4. The Possibility of Social Conflict**

It is noteworthy that conflicts between immigrants and native Japanese are so few. Some accusations from the native Japanese against a part of Iranians who became delinquents to sell false telephone cards or drug are not negligible. Another rare case were found in Toyota City where Brasilians are many. In June 1999, violent incidence occurred between Brasilian youngsters and Japanese reckless motorcycle riders together with a right wing group. The reason was the different way of living like the way of waste disposal or weekend amusement, but it calmed down in the autumn. As for chauvinist right wing agitations, few activities were in early 1990s, but after it they have been virtually no-existent, with the exception of obstructions by right wing group members in the meeting demanding special permission to stay for illegal overstayers in 2000 in Tokyo. As the result, even the Islamic mosques are accepted by neighboring Japanese peacefully. In the following, I will try to find the reason why not so much frictions are in Japan.

Firstly, historical experiences with resident Koreans has given precious lessons to Japanese society.

They were forcibly deprived of Japanese nationality in 1952, and put under severe surveillance and control by foreigner's registration system, together with extreme discriminations in social security, employment, housing, etc. Against their position, big protests were raised by resident Koreans and Japanese in 1970s and 1980s, and as the result, gradually their status has been improved. At present, naturalizations of resident Koreans are only 10,000 yearly, and many of them prefer to preserve original Korean nationality. The unhappy history taught not the discrimination but the co-existence is important.

Secondly, I want to point out that Japanese common people are generally kind and tend to accept foreigners. The increase of international marriage is the proof of the absence of the ethnic chauvinism. Now, 1 out of 30 new marriages are between Japanese and foreigners, and Chinese wives took the top position from Philipinas while American husbands exceeded Chinese to become most. The kindness of Japanese common people are shown in the development of Japanese language network where 300 volunteer groups teach Japanese to foreigners. 6,500 volunteers are mainly middle aged women with living experiences in foreign countries, and they function as counsellors to foreigners and become key-persons to connect the pupils of Japanese language with Japanese community. In addition to the Japanese language network, NGOs established with the purpose of relieving immigrants are active all over Japan. Contrary to the attitudes of central government, considerable number of local governments are eager to supply administrative services including offering chances to meet with native people.

Thirdly, religious tolerance inherent in the Japanese cultural tradition helps to diminish religious tensions. When Taoism and Buddhism arrived at the archipelagoes, they amalgamated with the already existing animistic pantheism of primitive Shintoism. The tradition of pantheism, although the leaders of Meiji Restoration oppressed Buddhism initially and Christianity later by artificially adopting State Shintoism, continued to survive until after the World War II when freedom of religion is secured, and presently all kinds of holinesses are tolerated by Japanese following the tradition. Prevailing existence of syncretism among new sects are another evidence of the tradition.

As a Conclusion, to show what is going on in contemporary Japan, I will introduce the case of Mogami Area, a typical rural area situated in northern Japan where it snows much in winter. Because Japanese women refused to become brides of men in the area, there emerged so many aged single men in later 1980s. To solve the problem, Phippinas were invited initially as brides under the initiative of local governments. Later, Koreans, Chinese and others joined and they have numbered several hundreds.

Most of them have loved their bridegrooms, and have given births to children and they have settled there. Their sole existence has given tremendous changes for everyday social lives. In the family life, the authoritative hierarchy and the groupistic pressure has started to disappear. In the village life, the closedness and the anonymous social pressures also started to disappear. As the result, Mogami Area has become one of the representative areas in Japan which have an open atmosphere to outer world.

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<sup>1</sup> Conferência de encerramento do X Congresso Internacional da Associação Latino-Americana de Estudos Africanos e Asiáticos (ALADAA), Universidade Candido Mendes, Rio de Janeiro, 26 de outubro de 2000.