From japonés to *Nikkei*:

The Evolving Identities of Peruvians of Japanese Descent

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates what defines the identity of third- and fourth-generation Japanese Peruvians and what is the current definition of *Nikkei* ethnic belonging on personal as well as institutional level. I look at the identity formation processes of Peruvians with ethnic Japanese background in light of the strong attachment to Japan as an imagined homeland, the troubled history of anti-Japanese discrimination in Peru and US internment of Japanese Peruvians during World War II, the consolidation of Japanese as a high-status minority, and ethnic return migration to Japan from 1990. Ethnicity has been assumed to be the cornerstone of identity in both Latin America where high sensitivity for racial differences results in intergenerational categorization and Japan where the essence of Japaneseness is assumed to run through one's veins and passed on to further generations even if they were born and raised abroad. However when ethnic returnees arrived to Japan they had to realize that they were not Japanese by Japanese standards and chose to redefine themselves, in the case of Japanese Peruvians as *Nikkei*.

I aim to explore the contents of the Japanese Peruvian definition of Nikkei by looking at existing literature and conducting video interviews through Skype and Messenger with third- and fourth-generation Japanese Peruvians. I look into what are their personal experiences as *Nikkei*, what changes do they recognize as the consequence of ethnic return migration, whether ethnicity has remained the most relevant in forming social relations, and what do they think about Japan now that return migration is virtually ended and the visa that allowed preferential access to Japanese descendants is not likely to be extended to further generations. Assimilation and transnational migration theories generally imply that immigrants eventually integrate and assimilate and Japanese Peruvians certainly did, yet they still strongly identify with their ethnic roots. As a result they developed a hybrid identity that incorporates both having Japanese heritage

and being Peruvian, also because after four generations the majority of Japanese descendants are ethnically mixed.

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Introduction

On the 3rd of April this year the Nikkei community celebrated the 120-year-long presence of Japanese immigrants and their descendants in Peru. I venture to say that most people are oblivious to the existence of ethnic Japanese communities in Latin America (Brazil being home to the largest Japanese diasporic community) which is probably due to the popular images of a homogeneous, unified Japan. [1] In reality around 1,000,000 Japanese had left the country after the end of nearly 200 years of voluntary seclusion and integrated into the societies of their countries of settlement.[2] Integration was not always smooth because of historical forces at play – populism, nationalist governments enforcing assimilation, and discriminative legislations during WWII – and in certain cases it took place more out of necessity than genuine desire. [3] However the first generation of Japanese immigrants managed to settle and passed on a firm sense of ethnic belonging to the ancestral land that was also interested in rekindling relations with its diaspora after diplomatic relations were re-established with the countries of South America after the war.

Sakura Maru, the first ship that delivered Japanese contract laborers to Peru arrived on the 3rd of April with 790 men on board. Its anniversary has been celebrated almost every ten years from 1959 on when the 60th anniversary was commemorated in the presence of six *issei* or first-generation Japanese immigrants who themselves had boarded that ship. As the strains of wartime persecution and internment were gradually alleviated commemorations escalated to full-scale celebration. The festivities involved expressions of gratitude towards the host society: on the 80th anniversary the Peruvian Japanese Polyclinic was inaugurated followed by the construction of the

[1] Keiko Yamanaka, "Return Migration of Japanese-Brazilians to Japan: The Nikkeijin as Ethnic Minority and Political Construct," no. 1 (2011): 65, https://doi.org/10.1353/dsp.1996.0002.
[2] James Stanlaw, "Japanese Emigration and Immigration: From the Meiji to the Modern," in *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents and Uncertain Futures*, ed. Nobuko Adachi (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 35.
[3] Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (University of Illinois Press, 2004).

Peruvian Japanese Theatre ten years later and the 100th anniversary of Japanese immigration was celebrated by the opening of the Centenary Clinic.

Such gestures already go back in time when Peru celebrated a 100 years of independence in 1921 a 5-metres high statue of the first Inca Manco Cápac was presented as a commemoratory gift from the Japanese community and it is still standing on the Plaza Manco Cápac in Lima.[4] For the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the capital Lima *Piscina Nippon* (pool Japan) was donated to the city; though it was built over in 1951 and no longer exists.[5] These signs of goodwill have been reciprocated by the Peruvian state. In 1989, a decree was enacted to hail the 3rd of April as the "Day of Peruvian Japanese Friendship" in honor of the 90th anniversary of Japanese immigration. This makes Peru the only country that has an official day to celebrate relations with Japan. In 2011 President Alan García offered an apology in the name of the nation for the injustices suffered by the Japanese community in Peru during WWII and members of the Japanese imperial family have been paying visits to the country to celebrate distinguished diplomatic occasions.[6] Even though after WWII Japan ceased to claim agency over its nationals abroad the state continues to cultivate ties with the Japanese diaspora because they are perceived to be an asset that could be mobilized for the benefit of ethnic homeland.[7]

When labor shortage hit Japan in the 1990s the availability of ethnic Japanese descendants seemed to offer a satisfactory resolution. About one-fifth of the Brazilian, one-third of the Paraguayan and Bolivian Japanese populations, and more than half of all Peruvian Japanese were

[4] Por Harumi Nako Fuentes and Asociación Peruano Japonesa / 27 Nov 2007, "Manco Cápac: Un Monumento Con Historia," Descubra Nikkei, accessed April 28, 2019, http://www.discovernikkei.org/pt/journal/2007/11/27/manco-capac/.
[5] Enrique Higa Sakuda / 6 Feb 2019, "120 Años de Inmigración Japonesa Al Perú: Recuerdos Contra El Olvido," Discover Nikkei, accessed April 28, 2019, http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2019/2/6/inmigracion-al-peru/.
[6] "La comunidad nikkei conmemora 120 años del inicio de la inmigración japonesa al Perú," accessed April 28, 2019, https://poramoralarte.lamula.pe/2019/04/03/la-comunidad-nikkei-conmemora-120-anos-del-inicio-de-la-inmigracion-japonesa-al-peru/poramoralarte/.
[7] Ayumi Takenaka, "The Rise and Fall of Diasporic Bonds in Japanese-Peruvian 'Return' Migration," *International Migration* 52, no. 6 (2014): 100–112, https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12147.

drawn to work in Japan by 2010 according to official statistics.[8] The flow of Japanese descendants to Japan was labeled "return migration" – despite that it was not the original migrants who went back to Japan – and it engendered diverse reactions among the ethnic returnees. Extensive scholarly attention has been dedicated to the case of Brazilian Japanese who went from self-identifying as Japanese in Brazil to re-identify as Brazilians in Japan and throwing samba festivals on the streets.[9] Japanese Peruvians had a different experience with their identity in Japan choosing to label themselves with the term *Nikkei* – which originally means "Japanese and descendant abroad" – expressing that they are not excusively Japanese nor Peruvian.[10] On the website of the Peruvian Japanese Association *Nikkei* is described as "everyone with Japanese descendency, including mixed ancestry", also quoting the *Nikkei* writer Doris Moromisato who defined it as "every person of Japanese ancestry who resides outside of Japan and forms part of a community and a way of life with distinctive characteristics".[11]

I believe that it is an interesting moment in time to look at the Japanese Peruvian case, not only for the anniversary but because the return migration phenomenon has been virtually concluded (or at least over it's peak)[12] and economic improvement in Peru has curtailed the incentive to take up factory work in Japan. More importantly, the ethnically preferential *Nikkei* visa is only available up to the third generation of Japanese descendants that is already starting to get above the reasonable age to migrate due to family and other responsibilities and the visa is not likely to be extended to further generations. Consequently Japanese Peruvians might lose this

[8] Wolfram Manzenreiter, "Living under More than One Sun: The Nikkei Diaspora in the Americas," *Contemporary Japan* 29, no. 2 (July 3, 2017): 193–213, https://doi.org/10.1080/18692729.2017.1351045.
[9] Takeyuki Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective* (Columbia University Press, 2003).
[10] Takeyuki Tsuda, *Diasporic Homecomings : Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 2009, 2009).
[11] "¿Qué Es Ser Nikkei? | Asociación Peruano Japonesa," accessed April 28, 2019, http://www.apj.org.pe/que-es-nikkei.
[12] Ayumi Takenaka, "The Rise and Fall of Diasporic Bonds in Japanese-Peruvian 'Return' Migration," *International Migration* 52, no. 6 (December 1, 2014): 100–112, https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12147.

means of facilitated access to the ethnic homeland. However, the *Nikkei* visa only enabled blue-collar factory work that generally meant underemployment and status loss for middle-class, educated Japanese Peruvians.[13] Since economic factors are no longer pressuring now they have more agency over what kind of relations they would like to foster with Japan while continuing to integrate into Peruvian society.

In my thesis I argue that Japanese Peruvians have a distinctive *Nikkei* identity that makes them unique within Peruvian society and also among other Japanese descendants from other countries. First of all, the community has a now 120-year long history that is collectively remembered, recorded and commemorated and the first generation of immigrants possessed a clear-cut Japanese ethno-national identity they passed down to their children and grandchildren.

Secondly, the Japanese acculturated but didn't fully assimilate to Peruvian society. They have self-differentiated as Japanese or Nikkei, and also have been treated as a high-status minority by Peruvians based on physical features and certain characteristics that are considered typical by virtue of ethnic descent.

Lastly, thanks to the ethnically preferential *Nikkei* visa that was designated for Japanese descendants it became possible to at least temporarily migrate to Japan up to the third generation. Consequently Japanese Peruvians were able to reconnect and gain experiences with the ethnic homeland directly or indirectly through relatives and friends who migrated. Even though return migration is now considered finished by Takenaka, it was a decisive experience for Japanese Peruvians who now collectively identify as *Nikkei* and claim the best of both worlds. Also the end of return migration doesn't mean that Japan has severed ties with *Nikkei* abroad, and they also actively seek opportunities to benefit from their Japanese heritage.

[13] Takenaka.

In my thesis I argue that Japanese Peruvian identity has been actively shaped by various factors, for which I am using a multidisciplinary approach with the involvement of the relevant literature in English, Spanish, and Hungarian. The thesis is divided into four chapters in which I trace the development of a strong ethno-national Japanese identity. For Japanese pre-modern and modern history I will be using *The Japanese Experience: A Short History* of Japan by W. G. Beasly, *Inventing Japan* by Ian Buruma and *Japan, a Modern History* by James McClain. For applying theories of ethnicity and nationalism I will be relying on the works of Fredrik Barth, Rogers Brubaker, Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith and Andreas Wimmer.

In the second chapter of the thesis I portray the arrival and settlement of Japanese immigrants in Peru, and the disruptive effects of WWII. In a large part I will cite Seiichi Higashide's autobiography *Adios to Tears* which is a unique account of the pre-war Japanese Peruvian community and wartime developments in Peru. For recounting Japanese immigration in Latin America, I will use *Japanese Diasporas* edited by Nobuko Adachi, *The Japanese in Latin America* from Daniel Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen and papers from Ayumi Takenaka.

The third chapter depicts post-war changes, the social and economic processes that produced the Japanese immigration policy revision which enabled Japanese descendants to return migrate and the experiences of Japanese Peruvian and Brazilian ethnic returnees in Japan. For assimilation, transnational and circular migration theories I will rely on the works of John Berry, Milton Gordon, Nina Glick Schiller, Antoine Pécoud, and Alejandro Portes. For the experiences of Japanese Brazilian return migrants I will use the works of Takeyuki Tsuda who has carried out the most extensive research on this group. For Japanese Peruvians I will cite papers from Ayumi Takenaka who likewise dedicated a large number of works to their history, experiences with return migration, and integration into Peru.

The last chapter will present the current situation and developments revolving around Japanese Peruvians in Peru, for which I am relying on recent papers and semi-structured interviews with third- and fourth generation Nikkei through Skype and Messenger. Besides the works of Ayumi Takenaka academic research on Japanese Peruvians is, to my knowledge scarce, especially on the matter of what happens after return migration has ended and what are the issues that younger generations currently experience.

First chapter – The development of the Japanese ethno-national identity

I wish to start my thesis by making an attempt to outline the historical and social processes that shaped the Japanese ethno-national identity in pre-modern and early modern times. I value the case of Japanese ethnicity to be especially worthy of scholarly attention, because at first glance it seems to be the textbook example of the primordialist approach when ethnic membership is considered to be naturally acquired at birth, and a given element of the social reality.[14] The Japanese immigrants arrived to the Americas with a strong sense of ethnic belonging that had not always been present in the history of the nation, not to mention that the Japanese had not constituted a nation for a long time. However I argue against the modernist approach of Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm who accounted for nations and nationalism as novel phenomenon.

1.1 The ambiguity of studying ethnicity

It is an amusing paradox of the social sciences that various core concepts that are so widely used are so hard to outline in a satisfactory definition as many scholars have already admitted to it: so did Benedict Anderson in his elementary work *Imagined Communities* remarking the difficulty to define nation, nationality and nationalism.[15] Rogers Brubaker outlined the ambiguity of concepts such as race, ethnicity, or ethnic group as in *Ethnicity Without Groups*, when they are used in terms of entities instead of means of perceiving reality.[16] In his other work *Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism* he pointed out that social theories that understood nationality, ethnicity and identity to be static have reached erroneous and

[14] Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks* (Oxford University Press, 2013), http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199927371.001.0001/acprof-9780199927371.
[15] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2016.
[16] Rogers Brubaker and Professor of Sociology and UCLA Foundation Chair Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004).

oversimplified conclusions that could not explain real-life occurrences.[17] There has been a remarkable academic endeavour to better understand and describe these concepts rather than just assume a general consensus about their meaning without further consideration but adjusting theoretical explanations of ethnicity and identity to real-life phenomena can be a challenge.

If the essential features of ethnic identity are miscalculated – or ethnicity is mistakenly conceived to be a predisposed part of identity in the first place – then it is undoubtedly difficult to explain why national identity remains dormant when it is expected to be raging.[18] On the other hand scholars can also find it puzzling why does ethnic consciousness lasts over generations – oceans and continents away from the ethnic homeland – when acculturation and assimilation is supposed to be the natural order of things according to the "melting pot" approach.[19] I believe that the most efficient way to learn about the general characteristics of ethnicity is to look at its specific variations in the process of making and also bear in mind that it is not static. The interpretations of being Japanese have evolved in different ways on the Japanese archipelago and the emigrant enclaves.

1.2 Myths and symbols

Over the course of its history Japan has demonstrated significant durability as a country: it has occupied more or less the same territory since its foundation (disregarding the colonial territories from the 20th century that were returned as a result of losing WWII) and the last country to be ruled by a head of state called "emperor". The Japanese archipelago consists of four main islands and hundreds of smaller ones scattered all over their coasts. It is not extremely

[17] Rogers Brubaker, "Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism," in *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, ed. John A. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 272–306, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511897559.013.
[18] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford University Press, 1999).
[19] Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997).

remote from the continent, but far enough to make crossing a formidable task for a long time. Even more so because of the typically harsh weather.[20] While the difficult conditions for traversing restricted contact with the outside world they proved to be an advantage at the times of military invasion. Two subsequent attempts by the Mongol army in 1274 and 1281 to subjugate Japan ended in failure thanks to rampant typhoons called *kamikaze* or "divine storm".[21] These events could foster a sense of divine selection or protection in the Japanese that is evidenced by the denomination of these natural phenomena.

Japan was for a long period incorporated into the Shino-centric order that dominated East Asia and during its early periods state leaders and the elite borrowed heavily from China and other neighbouring countries to lay down the fundamentals of Japanese statecraft and high culture. From its earliest point of written history Japanese language relied on Chinese script, which had been supposedly introduced by a Korean scholar in 405 AD. The foundational works of Japanese history and culture, *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* originate from the 8th century, the latter written entirely in Chinese. The founding myths of the world and Japan as a nation feature recurring elements from Chinese as well as Korean and Manchurian legendary. Nevertheless these chronicles continue to be recognized as valid points of reference for Japanese national identity.

The Japanese pantheon includes hundreds of gods, reigned over by a female deity – contrary to most other mythological pantheons that are headed by a male god – the sun goddess Amaterasu no Ōmikami. According to the legend her grandson, Ninigi no Mikoto descended to the Japanese archipelago together with three magical items, a mirror, a jewel, and the legendary sword Kusanagi to clear the land from evil deities and become the ruler of Japan. His great-grandson, Jimmu became the first human emperor in 660 AD and supposedly the Japanese

[20] W. G. Beasley, *The Japanese Experience: A Short History of Japan (History of Civilisation)* (University of California Press, 1999), http://gen.lib.rus.ec/book/index.php?md5=a382109f7fdde3be5b2cb4f82d97443b.
[21] James L. McClain, *Japan, a Modern History* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2002).

imperial house is a direct line of his descendants.[22] While the string of events described in the chronicles and the genealogy of the first emperors – with 80 years of reign each – seem rather detached from reality in the eyes of historians, the emperor has remained the object of unbroken respect. The emperor continues to be a symbolical, sacred figure whose primary role had been to conduct sacred rituals and sacerdotal acts and the Three Regalia have been preserved as the sacred symbols and accessories of legitimation (the sword once lost but eventually replaced by another).[23] These symbols – the emperor, the regalias and the founding myths – constitute an essential point of reference for Japanese ethno-national identity.

1.3 The antecedents of a unified Japanese ethnic identity

When writing about Japan, scholars tend to make simplified statements such as "[t]heir population has been largely homogeneous, little touched by immigration except in very early periods"[24] or "the Japanese today are the most thoroughly unified and culturally homogeneous large bloc of people in the world".[25] Moreover there seems to be a common consensus about the validity of such conclusions not just among the Japanese but the rest of the world. However, reaching such conclusions implies the overlooking of the historical events and social changes that Japan went through to become a nation.

The earliest records from Chinese travelers depict the Japanese as agricultural people living in a hierarchical social system who used facial tattoos and body painted designs to draw lines between peoples of different ranks.[26] The loyalties of people were local or regional rather than national and feelings of belonging were tied to status, not society as a whole. Status

[22] McClain.
[23] Beasley, *The Japanese Experience*.
[24] Beasley.
[25] Edwin O. Reischauer and Marius B. Jansen, *The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity, Enlarged Edition*, 3 edition (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1995).
[26] Beasley, *The Japanese Experience*.

differences were not only visually flagged via dress code, hats and hairstyles, but also racialized: lightness or darkness of the skin implied higher or lower social standing and the ancestors of Burakumin, a social caste undertaking impure occupations by religious standards (such as butchery or leather tanning) were thought to be not even human.[27] Given the fact that such great differences dominated for centuries, it seems obvious that there had to be a moment in time when, to borrow the Weberian phrase – the Japanese were turned from "peasants into Frenchmen".

The first attempts to foster a common national identity took place during the Tokugawa period (1603 – 1868) with limited success. Resources and political will were not sufficient to impose a ubiquitous sense of Japaneseness and while some proto-nationalist ideas could develop that repositioned Japan from the Shino-centric order and anti-foreign sentiments resonated with the population, the value differences between the ranks of the vertical social hierarchy were too well-articulated to give in without considerable pressure. As Gellner wrote, the rise of nationalism is neither an inevitable necessity nor an accident: certain social conditions are indispensable to make it happen.[28] In Japan's case the catalyst for the surge of nationalism was the arrival of the black ships of Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853 that supposedly opened up the country to the outside world.

1.4 The Meiji Restoration and the making of an ethno-national Japanese identity

In *Inventing Japan* Ian Buruma clearly outlines the fact that despite its voluntary seclusion for over two hundred years the Japanese were much better versed in the ways of West than the other way around, and even more knowledgeable than most other Asian countries, having accumulated extensive information about American and British politics, natural sciences,

[27] John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).
[28] Gellner, *Nationalism.*

medicine, history and geography. The borders of Japan were closed down with a series of decrees in the 1630s to exclude Christianity that was conceived of as a dangerous ideology. However Dutch ships were still allowed to approach the shores of Nagasaki and the studying of the Dutch developed into a whole discipline called *rangaku*. Scholars aspired to educate themselves in foreign studies so that Japan could outperform the West and eventually close up again but it would have been unrealistic to turn away the Americans without consequences given that the once omnipotent China recently had been turned into a British colony.[29] Japan needed to close the power gap with Western colonizing powers in order to avoid becoming a colony itself.

The opening of the country was quickly followed by the signing of a number of unequal treaties that sparked popular protest and discontent with the Tokugawa shogunate that was in fact helpless against foreign pressure. The financial strain caused by the treaties and Western-style rearmament led to severe inflation and downgraded living standards. Even though the shogunate made promises to rid the country of foreigners, it was obvious that they would not honor them. Consequently the samurai of Satsuma and Chosu overturned the shogunate and restored Emperor Meiji into power in 1868.[30]

When the imperial court was reseated in Tokyo it was the first time in a thousand years that the emperor and the government were located in the same center. There was a lot to do at once in order to instigate the modernization of the country: the class system was abolished, obligatory military conscription and standardized education were introduced and a new constitution was presented by the emperor. The constitution did not include many specifics besides declaring the emperor the source of heavenly and earthly power, but it followed the German political model in principle. Similar to Germany, Japan had to centralize a territory

[29] Ian Buruma, *Inventing Japan: 1853-1964*, Reprint edition (New York: Modern Library, 2004).
[30] Beasley, *The Japanese Experience*.

previously divided into feudal domains, likewise did not fancy liberal ideology and strived to forge a cultural and ethnic sense of belonging, just like the Germans who identified with their nation through shared language, culture and descent.[31]

Rushed modernization was far from painless – the new tax system, compulsory military service and industrialization sparked various popular riots[32] – but the Meiji regime was able to engender economic growth, erase social differences at least in name and foster national sentiments in opposition to the Tokugawa shogunate, thus it could meet the criteria for political legitimation.[33] The systematic variables to create nationalism were all present: the standardization of mass education and schools, the increase of multiclass literacy in a common language, the establishing of centralized bureaucracies, compulsory military service, national infrastructural works, the growth of industrial capitalism, the rise of middle classes, the increasing importance of trade, and military development.[34] However, two elements were the most defining for Japanese ethno-national identity. First, years of military service where they educated all soldiers for utmost and unquestionable loyalty to the emperor and no one else.[35] Second, strong anti-foreign sentiments were shared by virtually the whole population and united the people against foreign threats.[36]

Although the consolidation of a Japanese national identity happened as a result of the modernizing process, I would disregard the idea that it is the sole product of modernization. Chinese influence is usually remarked when talking about pre-modern Japan, but Chinese language and high culture were mainly confined to the elite. Since cultural imports were not

[31] Buruma, *Inventing Japan*.
[32] Stanlaw, "Japanese Emigration and Immigration: From the Meiji to the Modern."
[33] Gellner, *Nationalism*.
[34] Henk Dekker, Darina Malová, and Sander Hoogendoorn, "Nationalism and Its Explanations," *Political Psychology* 24, no. 2 (2003): 345–76.
[35] Buruma, *Inventing Japan*.
[36] Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*.

under political control, they could take roots or be discarded based on their usefulness or prestige. This also allowed indigenous cultural elements to remain relevant and coexist with the adopted ones, probably best evidenced by the religious syncretism of Buddhism and Shintoism. Japanese had already become the common spoken and written language by the 10th century, used as "the language of romance, humour, tales of war". Also, Beasly argues that the transformations after 1868 left Japan "more 'Western' now than it was ever Chinese".[37] Nonetheless, the import of Western values and customs was accompanied by stressing historical continuity and the reinvention or reinterpretation of classical traditions such as the *kabuki* theatre that used to be a form of obscene, low-class entertainment was refashioned into a refined performance art.[38] Throughout its history, Japan cultivated its customs according to its own taste instead of having them imposed and freely adopted new ones and refashioned previous ones that fit into its own self-image. As a consequence it constructed a culture that is unique to the country even if certain elements have distinctively foreign roots.

I argue that by the 20th century Japanese nationalism and national identity were strongly ethno-symbolic, building on already existing myths (*Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*), reinvented traditions, common symbols (the flag), shared cultural elements (language and religion), and attachment to the Japanese archipelago as the ethnic homeland.[39] At the same time previous or parallel occurrences that did not fit into the created national narrative had to be forgotten[40] (such as the subjugation of the indigenous Ainu living in Hokkaido or the Okinawans through which territorial integrity had been achieved[41]). Possibly as an outcome of uniting the two relevant

[37] Beasley, *The Japanese Experience*.
[38] Buruma, *Inventing Japan*.
[39] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*.
[40] Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. H. K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990).
[41] Lam Peng-Er, "At the Margins of a Liberal-Democratic State: Ethnic Minorities in Japan," in *Multiculturalism in Asia*, ed. Will Kymlicka and Baogang He (Oxford University Press, 2005), 223--243.

cultural systems – the religious community and the dynastic realm[42] –, Japanese ethno-national identity was accompanied by an imperial-dynastic sense of ethnic election.[43] The emperor embodied celestial power, being the mythological descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu, and represented a father figure to the nation to whom the people owe filial piety.

1.5 The beginning of migration

For the sake of achieving equal standing with the Western powers Japan felt obliged to overrule unequal treaties, succeed in military campaigns, build a colonial empire of its own, and achieve favorable international reputation in general. Victory in the Shino- and Russian-Japanese wars and the annexation of neighboring South-Asian countries – Taiwan (1895), Korea (1910), Manchuria (1931), and Singapore (1942)[44] – figuratively put Japan on the map but militarization and colonization put a considerable strain on the Japanese people, many of whom lost the family land due to being unable to pay taxes.

Popular discontent could find an outlet in emigration and after initial bans and restrictions the Japanese state chose to subsidize it. Funding the migration companies allowed the state to closely supervise the process of selection and preparation of emigres to make sure that they would project an appealing image of Japan in the country of destination.[45] Certain forms of adjustment to the host country were encouraged including preference for Catholic candidates and application for naturalization so that they would be better integrated. At the same time Japanese

[42] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
[43] Anthony D. Smith, "Chosen Peoples: Why Ethnic Groups Survive," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15, no. 3 (July 1, 1992): 436–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1992.9993756.
[44] Timothy Webster, "Insular Minorities: International Law's Challenge to Japan's Ethnic Homogeneity," *Faculty Publications*, January 1, 2011, https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/faculty_publications/106.
[45] Jonathan Dresner, "Instructions to Emigrant Laborers, 1885-94: 'Return in Triumph' or 'Wander on the Verge of Starvation,'" in *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents and Uncertain Futures*, ed. Nobuko Adachi (Routledge, 2006).

emigrants were under the obligation to register with the Japanese Consulate upon arrival, join the local Japanese association and keep conformity with Japanese laws and customs even in the receiving country.[46] It was not a contradiction in the eyes of the emigrants to firmly maintain their loyalties to the home country because they saw themselves as *dekasegi* or sojourners who would eventually return to Japan after gathering sufficient wealth.[47]

At the time of migration the Japanese already possessed a solidified ethno-national identity that rested on a strong symbolical foundation. Shared identity as well as the common experience of migration caused the first generation of Japanese migrants to band together which is the general reaction as pointed out by Wimmer.[48] Seeking relations with people of the same ethnic background helped to overcome difficulties in a new environment but at the same time ethnic closure was intentional because *dekasegi* did not wish to remain permanently abroad, and in the case of Peru migrants perceived themselves to be superior to the host population. These convictions led to dire consequences as it will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Second chapter – The Japanese settlement in Peru

[46] J. F. Normano, "Japanese Emigration to Brazil," *Pacific Affairs* 7, no. 1 (1934): 42–61, https://doi.org/10.2307/2750689.
[47] Christopher A. Reichl, "Stages in the Historical Process of Ethnicity: The Japanese in Brazil, 1908-1988," *Ethnohistory* 42, no. 1 (1995): 31, https://doi.org/10.2307/482933.
[48] Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*, 2013.

Immigration seemed a promising solution for the problems of modernized Japan: the state found an outlet for general discontent and overpopulation and the Japanese migrants could aspire for a better life that they would build as the reward for working hard abroad. Both parties assumed that migrants would return at some point which was a decisive element in how the Japanese state managed migration. Strong attachment to the homeland served as a valuable resource but later on it became the biggest disadvantage.

2.1 History of migration from Japan to Peru

Peru became a diplomatic and trade partner to Japan very early on: it was the first South American country to establish diplomatic relations with Japan in 1873[49] and a trade deal was signed in 1878.[50] Peru was also the first in Latin America to receive Japanese contract labor in April 1899.[51] However it had not been a primary destination during the initial phase of migration Japanese emigration.

The countries of North America and especially the US were the most popular but eventually these countries came to see the growing presence of Asians as the manifestation of the "Yellow Peril".[52] Finally the United States and Canada banned Japanese immigration completely between 1924 and 1928.[53] In anticipation of these bans Japan already looked for new partners and the countries of Latin America – especially Brazil and Peru – appeared to be appropriate candidates because of the ongoing economic development and shortage of manual labor after the

[49] Ayumi Takenaka, "The Japanese in Peru: History of Immigration, Settlement, and Racialization," *Latin American Perspectives* 31, no. 3 (2004): 77–98.
[50] João Federico Normano, "Japanese Emigration to Brazil," Pacific Affairs, 7, no. 1 (March 1934).
[51] Dale A. Olsen, *The Chrysanthemum and the Song: Music, Memory, and Identity in the South American Japanese Diaspora*, 1st edition (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2004).
[52] Erika Lee, "The 'Yellow Peril' and Asian Exclusion in the Americas," *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 4 (2007): 537–62, https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2007.76.4.537.
[53] Roger Daniels, "The Japanese Diaspora in the New World: Its Asian Predecessors and Origins," in *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents and Uncertain Futures*, ed. Nobuko Adachi (Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

abolishment of slavery.[54] It was expected that they would be able to accommodate a substantial number of workers and treat Japan as an equal in diplomacy.

Toraji Irie's historical account of migration to Peru cites the personal acquaintanceship between the influential businessman and later president of Peru, Augusto B. Leguía, and the Japanese emigration company official Teikichi Tanaka as the main catalyst of Japanese immigration. For this reason Leguía continued to favor the Japanese during his presidency. The first shipment of 790 Japanese workers arrived in 1899 of the ship *Sakura Maru* to fulfill 4-year contracts working on sugar plantations. The life of Japanese laborers was off to a rough start due to high mortality rates caused by diseases and conflicts with plantation owners.[55] Eventually it became a general tendency to desert the plantations. Workers either left for other Latin American countries or settled in the Lima-Callao region which was what the majority of the Japanese immigrants did.[56] In 1923 contract immigration ended and was followed by "free" or non-subsidized immigration and *yobiyose* which means that migrants were (as the Japanese term indicates) "called over" by relatives or for employment in Peru.[57] By 1925 the Japanese became the largest foreign group in Peru.[58] Though their numbers were not especially high their activities made them highly visible which also turned them into easy targets for discrimination.

2.2 The Japanese immigrant community in Peru

[54] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*.
[55] Toraji Irie and William Himel, "History of Japanese Migration to Peru, Part I," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 31, no. 3 (1951): 437–52, https://doi.org/10.2307/2509401.
[56] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*.
[57] James L. Tigner, "The Ryukyuans in Peru, 1906-1952," *The Americas* 35, no. 1 (1978): 20–44, https://doi.org/10.2307/980924.
[58] Takenaka, "The Japanese in Peru."

After that the first wave of immigrants settled and took roots in Peru the Japanese community continued to expand in size and wealth. We can learn a great deal about the pre-war period of the immigrant community through the intimate autobiography of Seiichi Higashide titled *Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps* in which he recounts his departure from Japan, settlement in Peru and years of detainment during World War II. He arrived to Peru in 1930 motivated by the lack of opportunities in Japan. However, he could not make use of his engineer training there. In order to pursue any profession one had to naturalize in Peru, graduate from a Peruvian institution and acquire a government-recognized license which caused even Japanese doctors to practice clandestinely. Nonetheless the Japanese community readily took care of newcomers: they were directed towards working opportunities or they were referred to an already established household that took them in as a "working guest". Higashide portrays the 1930s Japanese community as one big extended family whose members displayed an intimacy stronger than between siblings in Japan as a result of experiencing the same hardships.

The camaraderie of the first Japanese immigrants is still vividly remembered by Japanese Peruvians today. During my first interview with Bianca, a *sansei* or third-generation Japanese Peruvian professor she spent the first part of the conversation elaborating on the life of her grandparents who started working in agriculture and then successfully set up their own business.

> […] so we are talking about the 1920's. So in those times she was born here, the family worked in agriculture, and it was general at the time for the Japanese to have many children, my grandmother's family had 5 children, so they had resources, and they helped out among families, for example two siblings went to live with a family of friends who raised them in exchange for that they would help out around the house, it wasn't hard work. This is a very ingrained tradition, they helped each other out with work and food. This is

very important. If you are a *Nikkei*, they always ask you, they are concerned, if you are ill, they help you with food.

Another tradition from Japan was the *tanomoshi* which is a small-rotating credit union that neighborhoods pooled money into and collectively decided how to invest.[59] As I've been told in another interview this is still a living practice, just like looking out for each other as fellow *Nikkei*.

To Higashide's surprise the Japanese in Peru abandoned certain traditions, for example they discarded the use of *keigo*, the polite language – because everyone was family – or arranged marriage agreements without an official fixer. Also they adopted some Peruvian customs in turn like addressing people by physical defects such as "blind" or "bald". Derogatory names were not only accepted but taken as expressions of closeness and refraining from using them was taken as a lack of camaraderie. It became common to serve beer in households and organize gatherings either casually or to celebrate an occasion which allowed immigrants to deepen relationships, make new friendships and retain their identity as Japanese in Peru.

The gender ratio remained gravely imbalanced after four decades of settlement – there was about two men for every woman[60] – that sentenced many Japanese men to lifelong bachelorship. Higashide explains that going to Japan to get married and bring over the bride involved substantial costs and marrying a Peruvian was rare because of the self-confined nature of the Japanese community and general discrimination against Peruvians, the people of a "third-rate country". The only option was to marry *nisei* or second-generation Japanese girls but they often had a limited command of Japanese, spoke Spanish as their first language and were

[59] Takenaka.
[60] Daniel M. Masterson, "The Japanese of Peru: The First-Century Experience and Beyond," in *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents and Uncertain Futures*, ed. Nobuko Adachi (Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

socialized in Peru. They had only vague impressions of Japanese culture and society therefore they did not qualify to become traditional Japanese wives.

Besides the problem of gender imbalance immigrant children were also in a hard situation. They often lacked access to adequate education because they had to contribute to the family livelihood and household chores and organized recreational activities were not available. The local Japanese associations were responsible for managing and financing schools through compulsory "donations" from not only the parents but the whole community. Higashide was recruited to take up work as an elementary school teacher as it was customary for young, educated Japanese men in the first two-three years of their stay who could not pursue their profession in Peru. Except for the school in Lima that accommodated over 1,000 students and was the only designated overseas Japanese school by the Japanese Ministry of Education in South America, the rest of the approximately 30 schools had only 30 students and three teachers including the principal. Playing sports, especially baseball, became the main source of entertainment for Japanese children and groups were formed in every town to compete against each other.

After spending some time as a teacher and running a shop Higashide did what most of the Japanese in Peru did: went to a bigger town and started his own business, in his case selling hosiery. The Japanese quickly set foot in the urban centers first as street vendors or barbers using cards with basic expressions in Spanish for rudimentary communication with customers, then eventually opened their own shops and formed business associations. On the one hand Japanese entrepreneurs were extremely supportive of the new businesses of fellow Japanese by providing credit or merchandise, on the other hand if competition grew too troublesome businessmen would try to sabotage the competitor through the local Japanese association. The Japanese association

was the only respected authority for most Japanese next to the Japanese consul who was understood to have complete police and judicial powers over Japanese subjects.

2.3 World War II persecution and internment

By the end of the 1930s the general public turned completely against the Japanese for which Higashide cites various explanations. Firstly, there was the aggressive campaigning of the US government that was wary of the pro-Axis stance of Peruvian leadership and even resorted to sending FBI agents into the civilian population to promote pro-American and anti-Axis opinions. They also spread unsubstantiated reports about Japanese militarization in Peru that were soon taken to be true. Secondly, there was a group within Peruvian society that resented the fast economic successes of the Japanese that was highly visible due to their urban centralization. Higashide shows remarkable clear-sightedness and self-criticism by outlining the exclusiveness of the Japanese community that made no efforts to assimilate as the third reason.

Chantal Bordes-Benayoun argues that during the 19th century diasporas used to incite suspicion and rejection from the host society, in this sense xenophobia was equivalent to nationalism. The members of diasporas were accused of disloyalty towards the host country and maintaining underground links with their homeland, in the case of Japanese in the form of secret military bases in Latin America. They were also seen as "parasite strangers" that took advantage of the poor and exploited national resources.[61] The fact that this attitude persisted in the 20th century Peru could be attributed to the extraordinary circumstance of WWII and the deliberate self-isolation of the Japanese community.

[61] Chantal Bordes-Benayoun, "Contemporary Diasporas, Nationalism, And Transnationalism Politics," *The Call of the Homeland*, January 1, 2010, 47–58.

On May 13 1940 an anti-Japanese demonstration was staged after a Japanese man called Furuya had been ordered by the Japanese consul to be deported to Japan over a disagreement in the Japanese barber's association. In the process of his detainment a Peruvian servant was mortally wounded which sparked a two-day mobbing and looting of Japanese shops and homes. The incident resulted in injuries and 620 families reported financial losses, 54 of them so severe that they had no choice but to repatriate to Japan. Coincidentally there was a devastating earthquake just three days after the looting that many Peruvians believed to be divine punishment or that the Japanese emperor "pushed a button" to retaliate.

When Japan entered into war with the US Japanese associations were voluntarily dissolved and large gatherings cancelled to reduce visibility but in 1941 Japanese community leaders and those deeply involved with the local Peruvian establishment started to be blacklisted in the newspaper. Business activities, telephone usage and freedom of movement were restricted for the Japanese. However, transferring ownership to *nisei* or second-generation Japanese with Peruvian citizenship allowed many shops to keep operating.

The deportation of Axis nationals was requested by the US to exchange them for American prisoners of war but some of the Peruvian authorities were all too eager to comply and arrested Japanese regardless of appearing on the blacklist or not. Yet many people were able to avoid or at least delay deportation by bribing officers, paying a substitute, going into hiding or relying on the benevolence of friendly local authorities. Because of his position as a successful businessman and previous president of the local Japanese association Higashide was also singled out for deportation. After successfully avoiding arrest for a while he was first taken to Camp Kenedy, a camp for single men in southern Texas, and then he was reunited with his wife and five children in Crystal City not far from the Mexican border that was designated as the "family camp".

Higashide's account admits to both negative and positive aspects of life in internment. The unbearable heat and crippling boredom and the restlessness of those who had blind faith in Japan's victory escalated tensions among the detainees, but at the same time he found the abundance of food and free education and health services to be worthy of praise. Even though he had good impressions of their circumstances and their detaniers, he is being careful in not generalizing his own experiences to that of other detainees.[62] His words seem to reflect the same nostalgia that Attila Vargha noticed in his interviews with former Japanese internees – especially those who were there as children – who came to see their stay in the camps as a generally pleasant experience with the passage of time. This is probably also thanks to the parents' attitude to put up a front and make the best out of their situation in the concentration camps.[63]

During the war about 2,200 Latin American Japanese were deported to US internment camps, the overwhelming majority – approximately 1,800 people – consisted of first- and second-generation Japanese Peruvians.[64] The South American countries that deported Japanese formed an agreement not to take them back even though the US requested them to do so.[65] Only 79 Japanese Peruvians were admitted back who had citizenship earlier, about 900 detainess repatriated to Japan and another 364 people were able to remain in the US with legal assistance.[66]

Right after the war Japanese internees were considered illegal immigrants because they arrived to the camps without a visa. On the same ground they were denied compensation that Japanese Americans received in 1988 because they weren't US citizens or legal residents during the time of their internment. A lawsuit was filed and ten years later Japanese Latin Americans were also offered 5,000 dollars per person. However, it was less than half of the amount that

[62] Seiichi Higashide et al., *Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps*, 1st University of Washington Press ed edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).
[63] Attila Vargha, "Az Amerikai Japán Közösség Története" (Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2013).
[64] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*.
[65] Higashide et al., *Adios to Tears*.
[66] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*.

Japanese Americans were entitled to (13,000 dollars) so some of the Japanese Peruvian plaintiffs decided to refuse and continue demanding equal reparation.[67] The injustices that the Japanese suffered during World War II are part of the community's collective memory that continues to effect attitudes towards the rest of Peruvian society.

2.4 Integration into Peruvian society after the war

According to Takenaka the 1940 looting incident already opened the eyes of the Japanese that there is a necessity to integrate into Peruvian society.[68] After the conclusion of WWII many Japanese immigrants applied for naturalization but all of them were rejected outright.[69] Those who were not able to transfer business and assets to family members or intermediaries had to start over from scratch, but even after the deportations 80% of the Japanese community remained in Peru and with a strong determination Japanese immigrants able to make Peru their new home.[70]

Of course the integration of the Japanese in Peru was bound to take a different course than in the US that is the most prominent immigrant receiving country. The earliest assimilation theories that Gordon cites in *Assimilation in America: Theory and Reality* took the United States as reference and looked at the integration of Northern and Western European peoples with cultures, religion and physical appearance not greatly different from that of the Anglo-Saxon population. The complete internalization of Peruvian cultural patterns did not take place as in the "Anglo-conformity" explanation nor was Peru a "virgin land" where the Japanese could be "indiscriminately mixed" into the nation and emerge as part of distinctly new fusion according to the "melting pot" approach.

[67] Jaime Gonzalez de Gispert, "Japanese-Peruvians Recall US Internment," February 22, 2015, sec. Latin America & Caribbean, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-31295270.
[68] Takenaka, "The Japanese in Peru."
[69] Tigner, "The Ryukyuans in Peru, 1906-1952."
[70] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*.

"Cultural pluralism" would be more fitting to describe Japanese Peruvian integration since from the beginning they were looking to preserve elements of the native culture, maintain familiar institutions and provide mutual aid and protection against the hostilities of the receiving society. However the scope and significance of the Japanese ethno-cultural enclave haven't declined so much as the theory implies.[71] Japanese descendats constitute a distinctive minority in Peru even after three or four generations which consistently disproves rudimentary theories that did not consider integration without assimilation. Takenaka argues in her 1999 paper that the Japanese have acculturated to Peruvian society rather than assimilated. According to its elementary definition acculturation is the phenomenon of people with different cultural backgrounds coming into continuous first-hand contact. Contact induces changes in the original culture patterns of one or both groups though Berry adds that one group is likely to experience greater changes than the other.

Cultural distance between the society of origin and society of settlement and voluntariness to accommodate and to accept the accommodating group were all issues to work on. On the one hand Peru and Japan were on the opposite sides during WWII and the Japanese community suffered great injustices. On the other hand the reluctance to engage with Peruvian society made it hard for the two groups to foster mutual accommodation. A further drawback was the organization *Aikoku Doshi-kai* (Society of the Japanese Patriots of Peru), that was founded in the immediate post-war confusion of die-hard Japanese nationals who denied that Japan had lost the war. Though it was far less radical than its Brazilian counterpart *Shindo Renmei*, it had a damaging effect on the community's recovery because the host society would assume that Japanese loyalties still lied with their ethnic homeland.[72]

[71] Milton M. Gordon, "Assimilation in America: Theory and Reality," *Daedalus* 90, no. 2 (1961): 263.
[72] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*.

Finally the Japanese in Peru took the road to what in Berry's interpretation is called "creative acculturation" which involves stimulating new cultural forms that previously had not been found in either of the cultures in contact.[73] Over the generations Japanese Peruvians came to have Spanish as their first language and adopted the Catholic religion but continued to maintain an ethnic community and identity distinct from that of other Peruvians. This is most likely also influenced by having distinctive physical features even after various generations which is an accentuated marker for differentiation in racially sensitive South American societies: the Japanese Peruvians are still perceived as *japonés* (Japanese) or *chino* (Chinese) by the host society.[74]

By the end of the 20th century they reached the second phase of Gordon's assimilation theory and have achieved behavioral and structural assimilation.[75] However endogamy was still maintained in relatively high proportions and Japanese descendants believed to have preserved ethnic bonds with their ancestral country of origin.[76] As depicted by Higashide the second and third generations were already acculturating at the time of migration and Japanese traditions were overwritten either to match the actual circumstances or because it was not possible to recreate them. Just as family relations were replaced by ficticious ties and expectations for a traditional Japanese wife were discarded as *nisei* or second-generation girls grew up without cultural affinity. After the war Japanese Peruvians were determined to integrate but at the same time their experiences formed the basis of a collective memory. This was paired with the perception of

[73] John W. Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 46, no. 1 (January 1997): 5–34, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x.
[74] Ayumi Takenaka, "Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences: The Return Migration and the Transformation of Ethnicity of Japanese Peruvians," *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, no. 9 (June 1, 1999): 1459–74, https://doi.org/10.1177/00027649921954994.
[75] Milton M. Gordon, "Assimilation in America."
[76] Takenaka, "Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences," June 1, 1999.

external and internal – or so to say ethnic and cultural – differences which continued to foster a sense of distinctiveness within Peruvian society.

Third chapter – Return migration to Japan

After the war Japan was compelled to give up on its colonies and renounce any claims over its diaspora. However formal and informal connections persisted even though first-generation immigrants had committed to their host countries and second and third generations were growing up acculturated to the local culture. The longevity of Japanese ethno-symbolic identity and the boundedness of the Japanese Peruvian community that was founded on common ethnicity and shared experiences provided a symbolic capital that could be turned into tangible benefits for both the Japanese descendants and the ethnic homeland when the opportunity arised.

3.1 The post-war immigration regime in Japan

The development of an ethnically preferential visa in Japan that enabled the "return" of Japanese Peruvians to the ethnic homeland resulted from the specific constellation of circumstances. Post-war Japan experienced great changes from decolonization and several years of Allied occupation to the rebuilding of the country in a Westernized manner with a new constitution.[77] These alterations that took place in a relatively short period of time were accompanied by internal changes in the way the Japanese see themselves. Moving forward from post-war trauma and shame was necessarily accompanied by collective forgetting and reinventing of the national past.

Previously there had been a general consensus among Japanese historians that the Japanese were of "hybrid" ethnicity as a consequence of mixing with conquered populations. However the loss of colonies and the wave of an ethnic and cultural nationalism in the late 1940s caused the emergence of a new form of economic and cultural nationalism in the 1970s and

[77] Webster, "Insular Minorities."

1980s creating a novel identity for the now first-world, democratic and economically prosperous Japan. New narratives were developed under the scarcely scientific but highly popular field of study called *Nihonjinron* or "discussions of the Japanese" that was centered around the argument that the Japanese were and always had been a homogeneous group of people.[78] Such an interpretation of Japan being inhabited by no one but ethnic Japanese, and the implicit goal to preserve this state of affairs demonstrated itself in an exclusionist constitution linking human rights to a distinctly ethnic citizenship, refusal to accept asylum-seekers, and strict immigration regulation.[79] The creation of an ethnically preferential immigration regime was the natural consequence of defining national belonging based on ethnicity.

The aspiration to have complete control of its borders was not unique to Japan. Western societies have long been growing anxious over the increased mobility of people as illustrated by Antoine Pécoud who starts out his 2013 book by citing the WWII military term "Fortress Europe" that was refashioned into a concept in migration studies. The expression reflects the European governments' concern over the consequences of human mobility and their efforts to develop effective control strategies.[80] It was also not particular to Japan to develop a national ideology that builds on cultural unity and ethnic homogeneity. However, it is possibly the only country that has not discarded or given shades to this kind of national narrative due to the revitalization of local minority groups or conformity with international norms.[81] Though after the war Japan did aim to quickly ascend to first-world status, a more pressing reason was necessary to liberalize immigration guidelines.

[78] Keiko Yamanaka, "Citizenship, Immigration and Ethnic Hegemony in Japan," *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority Groups and Dominant Minorities*, 2004, 159–178.
[79] Webster, "Insular Minorities."
[80] Antoine Pécoud, *Disciplining the Transnational Mobility of People*, 2013.
[81] Dahil Melgar, "(Re)Etnización y Desetnización de Los Nikkei En América Latina y Japón: Entre Las Fronteras de La 'Pureza' y El 'Mestizaje': Conceptos y Prácticas de Etnicidad, Ciudadanía y Pertenencia," in *Dinámicas de Inclusión y Exclusión En América Latina*, 2015, 217–40, https://doi.org/10.31819/9783954872442-011.

At the onset of the economic boom Japan refused to allow work migration and rather exploited the overcrowded population, homogeneous mentality, internal migration, automation, outsourcing and extended working hours. This made Japan the only industrialized democracy that didn't rely on alien labor during its period of economic growth. Also previously unutilized sources of work force have been tapped – such as women and elderly –, inflation was allowed to increase and income was transferred from capital to labor.[82] Nonetheless the required conformity with international treaties and human rights' norms caused Japan to be also "disciplined" or "internationally 'socialized'".[83] Japan ratified the International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights in 1979 and the Refugee Convention in 1981 which was put into legislation in the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 1982. Agreeing to accept refugees was the influence of G7 summit member states on the one hand, the other reason was the concern to improve Japan's international identity and solidify its international position. Nonetheless the number of admitted refugees remains exceptionally low, between 1989 and 1997 it never exceeded single-digits.[84] This trend has not considerably changed as in 2012 the rate of refugee recognition was still only 0.6%.[85]

3.2 The making of the *Nikkei* visa

Simultaneously with the adaptation of international norms, continued economic expansion and labor shortage sparked the first discussions on having a more open immigration policy. From the late 1960s on the available sources of labor could no longer support the country's economic expansion and small- and medium-sized businesses were threatened to shut down. Demand for

[82] Yamanaka, "Citizenship, Immigration and Ethnic Hegemony in Japan."
[83] Pécoud, *Disciplining the Transnational Mobility of People*.
[84] Webster, "Insular Minorities," 574.
[85] Atushi Kondo, "Report on Citizenship Law : Japan," 2016, http://cadmus.eui.eu//handle/1814/43625.

unskilled labor attracted a large influx of illegal immigrants from the neighboring Asian countries who either engaged in activities not permitted by the type of visa they had been issued or did not leave Japan after the end of their designated stay.[86] They had abundant job opportunities in the unskilled sector and they were willing to take up the so-called "3D" occupations (dirty, dangerous, and demeaning) that were shunned by the Japanese.[87] The economic growth could not be maintained without these workers. However, it was not an acceptable solution for the Japanese government to rely on illegal immigrants that threatened the perceived homogeneity of Japanese society.

The situation called for the immigration regime's reform that was preceded by the lobbying of two opposing sides. *Nippon Keidanren*, the umbrella organization for large, medium and small businesses had been requesting the introduction of foreign labor force since the 1970s. It also submitted recommendations for legal and corporate reforms in order to expand the foreign labor market and improve the terms of quality of their employment. The sector was already strongly reliant on immigrant workforce and the rapid aging of the population, decreasing birth rates and the reluctance of Japanese to perform menial jobs made it likely that the need for alien labor would be permanent.[88] Since family businesses and small companies were the most vulnerable to labor shortages it was strongly in their interest to secure a stable source of workforce through immigration.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a number of other agencies also showed support for openly inviting foreign workers. However the Ministry of Justice – the department of state responsible for immigration – and the Ministry of Labor protested against it. Between 1989 and

[86] Yoko Sellek, "Nikkeijin: The Phenomenon of Return Migration," in *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, ed. Michael Weiner (London: Routledge, 1997).
[87] Tsuneo Akaha, "International Migration and Multicultural Coexistence in Japan," *The Journal of Asiatic Studies* 53, no. 2 (2010): 57–101.
[88] Akaha.

1992 both ministries released reports stating that allowing the immigration of unskilled workers would not be cost effective and the potential benefits would be outweighed by the disadvantages.[89] Finally concerns with preserving national unity vanquished support for a more open immigration regime.

The 1989 Revision of the Immigration and Refugee Act reaffirmed the ban on not admitting unskilled foreign workers and introduced severe penalties for employing illegal workforce. At the same time a number of side-door options were created to import unskilled labor under the visa categories of "trainee", "entertainer", "student" and *Nikkei*.[90] Tsuda points out that it was obvious to Japanese government officials that the Nikkei would solicit the visa primarily for economic reasons and relieve the labor shortage in Japanese factories. Nonetheless the official discourse upheld the argument that they were not unskilled labor but ancestral returnees who were coincidentally not restricted in taking up employment. The underlying assumption was that Japanese descendants were culturally similar even if they were born abroad therefore the labor shortage could be effectively treated without disrupting ethnic homogeneity.[91]

3.3 Who migrated to Japan and why

The revision of the Immigrant Act was coincidental with an overarching political and economic crisis in Latin America. Brazilian economy suffered from the effects of the disastrous Plan Collor.[92] Brazil is also home to the biggest ethnic Japanese community outside of Japan with

[89] Hiroshi Komai, *Migrant Workers in Japan* (K. Paul, 1995).
[90] Sellek, "Nikkeijin: The Phenomenon of Return Migration."
[91] Takeyuki Tsuda, "Japanese-Brazilian Ethnic Return Migration and the Making of Japan's Newest Immigrant Minority," in *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, 2nd ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 206–27.
[92] Pauline Cherrier, "Japanese Immigrants in Brazil and Brazilian Dekasseguis in Japan: Continuity of the Migration's Imaginary vs. Reality," 38, accessed May 11, 2019, http://www.academia.edu/11200392/Japanese_immigrants_in_Brazil_and_Brazilian_Dekasseguis_in_Japan_Continuity_of_the_Migrations_Imaginary_vs._Reality.

approximately 1.2 million members in 1988 so naturally they constitute the bulk of ethnic returnees in Japan.[93] In Peru hyperinflation set off in August 1990 under the presidency of the *nisei* Japanese Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori to make up for the economic decisions of the previous president Alan García who had subsidized the Peruvian economy. As a consequence of "Fujishock" prices skyrocketed, the price of gasoline increased thirty times overnight and the cost of basic products like bread and milk also went up.[94]

Furthermore the presidency of Fujimori was also a motivation for migration in itself because it exposed the Japanese Peruvians to more attention than preferred. After the regrettable occurrences of WWII – in part attributed to the high visibility and unassimilative disposition of the Japanese – those who remained in Peru strove to blend in and keep a low profile. For this reason they were not pleased with his candidacy and even accused him with "un-Japanese" behavior. Fujimori himself did not associate with the Japanese Peruvian community but posed as the representative of Peru's little people, the indigenous and mestizo population, he wore traditional indigenous attire during his campaign and embraced the nickname *El Chino* that most Japanese Peruvians loathe. The educated, middle-class Japanese Peruvians naturally affiliated themselves with the conservative candidate Mario Vargas Llosa. Despite this the victory of Fujimori caused the Japanese Peruvians to become the target of racist, populist discourse the first time since the 1930s. Physical attacks also took place.[95] Though the economic incentive was probably stronger, a new wave of anti-Japanese sentiments must have invoked bad memories in the community that contributed to the attractiveness of the *Nikkei* visa.

[93] Sellek, "Nikkeijin: The Phenomenon of Return Migration."
[94] Santos Ikeda Yoshikawa, "My Experience as a Dekasegi," accessed May 10, 2019, http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2014/10/27/mi-experiencia-como-dekasegui/.
[95] Eve Kushner, "Japanese-Peruvians: Reviled And Respected The ParadoxicalPlace of Peru's Nikkei," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 35, no. 2 (September 1, 2001): 29–32, https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2001.11724585.

In general ethnic Japanese enjoy an above-average economic status as middle-class professionals and business owners in Brazil and Peru. As Tsuda describes in his works the Japanese Brazilians take pride in their heritage and have developed a strong Japanese identity in accordance with the rise of Japan as a First World economic and political power. They regularly re-enact Japanese festivals, food and dress that gained popularity among non-Japanese Brazilians as well who became attracted to Japanese culture, either traditional or pop. Furthermore positive qualities came to be associated with the Japanese by virtue of descendance such as "hard-working", "honest", "intelligent" and "calm".[96] Japanese Peruvians likewise possess a middle-class background, graduate high school or university, usually attend Japanese schools and affiliate themselves with Japanese associations.[97]

Melgar points out that migration to Japan required economic capital as well, therefore it was not the poorest of the poor who migrated or at least not until the appearance of migration brokers.[98] Those who migrated usually did not have their financial existence seriously undermined by the economic crisis because of their relatively high social status but precisely for this reason they were less inclined to put up with underemployment and existential insecurity in their host countries.[99] Glick-Schiller also points out that the deterioration of living standards motivates unskilled workers as well as skilled workers and professionals to flock to global cities and countries.[100] As educated and middle-class people they even fit in better to the official

[96] Takeyuki Tsuda, "When Minorities Migrate: The Racialization of Japanese Brazilians in Brazil and Japan," *Ethnic Identity : Problems and Prospects for the Twenty-First Century*, 2006.
[97] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*.
[98] Dahil Melgar, *Entre El Centro y Los Márgenes Del Sol Naciente. Los Peruanos En Japón (Libro Completo)*, 2015.
[99] Takeyuki Tsuda, "Why Does the Diaspora Return Home? : The Causes of Ethnic Return Migration," in *Diasporic Homecomings: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Takeyuki Tsuda (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 21–43.
[100] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48–63, https://doi.org/10.2307/3317464.

agenda of the *Nikkei* visa that promoted them as ancestral returnees seeking to reconnect with their roots.

Ethnic return migrants had primarily instrumental goals – save up for a new car, a business, or the fees of higher education for themselves or their children – but non-economic incentives also played a part such as attraction to Japan as a first-world country and desire to discover ethnic and cultural roots.[101] Although they originally intended to stay for a limited period of time – for which they also got labelled *dekasegi* – they expected to be welcomed back as fellow kinsmen but their reception did not quite turn out as anticipated.

3.4 The issue of selectivity in ethnically preferential legislations

Again it is not particular to Japan to try and "manage" migration as Pécoud phrased it. "Managed migration" refers to the goal to "both strictly control human mobility and organize it in a way that makes it compatible with a number of objectives pursued by both state and non-state actors". Controlling the mobility of people in a way that only the "desirable" foreigners enter and the "undesirable" ones are kept out requires a range of methods from external coercion to internal persuasion. Ideally potential migrants develop a sense of "self-discipline" so that they only migrate when they meet the necessary criteria and they stay for as long as their presence is desired. Some are entitled to long-term settlement, others are expected to come when they are needed and then leave (and come back again) and others shall never enter.

Pécoud highlights the utility of self-discipline in relation to the fact that it is not possible to thoroughly inspect all potential migrants. However this strategy produced ambiguous outcomes. Those who are not eligible to enter by default might choose to try and create an

[101] Sellek, "Nikkeijin: The Phenomenon of Return Migration."

appearance that conforms to eligibility criteria instead of giving up on migration.[102] In the case of ethnically selective regulations appearing eligible can be even more of a challenge because one is expected to possess particularities – physical traits and/or specific documentation – that might have been lost through generations or they never had it in the first place.

Jaeeun Kim's book *Contested Embrace: Transborder Membership Politics in Twentieth-Century Korea* features various examples that problematize policy guidelines that supposedly assess the genuineness of one's claim for entry. In the 1990s China and South Korea established diplomatic relations that enabled Korean Chinese – the descendants of Japanese colonials who either forcibly or voluntarily settled in the then-Japanese colony Manchukuo – to apply for "coethnics abroad" status that facilitated access. However the standards for qualifying were deliberately placed high as a gatekeeping strategy. Candidates were required to submit colonial-era family documents and the official equivalent issued by the Chinese government which could be nonexistent if the ancestor migrated before the standardization of the family registry system in Korea or if they destroyed it out of fear for persecution. They were also required to recite the family tree to minuscule detail which could also cause candidates to fail if they accidentally mix up or forget something under the stressful situation of being interrogated. Even if South Korean relatives could be located their assistance had to be bargained which was also a humiliating experience for some Korean Chinese. As a consequence of unrealistic requirements that were supposed to repel frauds many applicants turned to immigration brokers who stole or forged documents, memorized the family history and recounted it to the immigrant official over the phone in the candidate's stead.

Marriage between Korean Chinese women and South Korean nationals has become another way of simplified access but also sparked general concern over "sham marriages". The

[102] Pécoud, *Disciplining the Transnational Mobility of People*.

South Korean state brought forth the expectation that international couples foster an "intention" to form a union that matches the "commonsensical" definition of marriage. Consequently these couples have been kept under scrutiny by immigration officials to determine if the marriage is "genuine". Kim cites an example of a woman whose application for naturalization was rejected on the basis that she admitted to having an affair even though she protested that all of her South Korean co-workers did so as well. Domestic violence is also an issue in the case of immigrant wives. However working abroad also empowered women as they become the main breadwinners of their household in China.[103] Applicants for the Nikkei visa went through similar experiences.

In her book *Entre el centro y los márgenes del sol naciente. Los peruanos en Japón* [Between the centre and margins of the rising sun. The Peruvians in Japan] – which is the only academic book so far that is dedicated entirely to the topic of Japanese Peruvians in Japan – Dahil Melgar offers valuable insight on the circumstances of migration to Japan. First, the Japanese understanding of the term *Nikkei* was different from what the *Nikkei* have of themselves: for Japanese policymakers the *Nikkei* constitute the immigrated Japanese from the first to the third generations, while for Japanese descendants the first generation was the *dekasegi* and the *Nikkei* incorporated the next generations from the second to the sixth. Also Japanese descendants usually conceive their Japanese legacy in terms of internal characteristics such as trustworthy, hard-working and intelligent, but migration to Japan required documentation as proof and the appropriate physical features.

One way of negotiating eligibility was to follow the most convenient line of descent. If Japanese immigrant parents registered their children as Japanese at birth they would ascend a generation. Marriage between the members of different generations also enabled their children to

[103] Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace: Transborder Membership Politics in Twentieth-Century Korea*, 1 edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016).

be included in the *koseki* or family registry of the parent which is more beneficial. Ultimately family registries could be modified illegally as well. Immigration officials attempted to counter these practices by imposing a requirement to provide additional papers: certificate of authority for the documents, photos and family trees. Nonetheless this measure placed Japanese descendants at a disadvantage because not all have information about their family history or preserved old photos. Wartime destruction in Okinawa, where many Japanese Peruvians originate from, was also a reason for the absence of documentation.[104] Those who did not meet the official criteria for the *Nikkei* visa would resort to purchasing Japanese surnames, forging family registries or becoming undocumented migrants.[105]

Additionally many Peruvians of non-Japanese origin took interest in working in Japan under the *Nikkei* visa. One way to do so was to marry a *Nikkei* and migrate as spouse of Japanese descendant but in this case the person became dependent on the *Nikkei* spouse to have their visa periodically renewed. Others paid to be adopted into a Japanese family registry or to assume the identity of a relative in the registry – either living or dead – or turned to networks that sold forged family registries. The most radical measure was to undergo plastic surgery in order to gain Asian features.[106] Although I haven't encountered any estimates about how many people resorted to such a measure I believe it is in itself particular to Japanese return migration.

Non-Japanese Peruvians that migrated to Japan are singled out as *Nikkei chica, bamba, truchos* or *falsei* or "fake Peruvians" to differentiate them from proper ethnic returnees, or as *peruanos-netos, peruano-peruano* or *perujin* which refer to being "Peruvian Peruvian". Japanese Peruvians are generally resentful of these Peruvians because they are abusing what they consider

[104] Ayumi Takenaka, "Ethnic Hierarchy and Its Impact on Ethnic Identities : A Comparative Analysis of Peruvian and Brazilian Return Migrants in Japan," in *Diasporic Homecomings : Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Takeyuki Tsuda (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 269.
[105] Melgar, *Entre El Centro y Los Márgenes Del Sol Naciente. Los Peruanos En Japón (Libro Completo)*.
[106] Melgar, "(Re)Etnización y Desetnización de Los Nikkei En América Latina y Japón."

their own privilege and they believe that fake *Nikkei* affect their public image negatively by committing crimes and displaying low-class behavior. Another issue concerns Peruvians who stay in Japan as spouse of Japanese descendant might resort to threats, coercion and domestic violence to maintain their legal status and renew their visa.[107] It is not exactly the same as the case of Korean Chinese women who were reliant on their South Korean husbands and had to endure abuse in order to maintain their visa but it appears that women are more vulnerable in general at the time of migration even if they are the ones who are originally eligible.

Melgar points out that as a consequence the ethnically preferential *Nikkei* visa produced the ethnic revitalization of Japanese descendants who rediscovered their ethnic origins, not because they were previously unknown but because it ceased to be just a nominal category. Those who had been previously excluded or voluntarily abandoned ethnic associations due to low economic status or the loss of Japanese surname found new opportunities provided by their ethnic origin. They also challenged the image of authenticity that the authorities had about the "right" type of *Nikkei*. Some applicants did not have a Japanese surname but possessed a family registry that proved their Japanese descendance. In other instances applicants had their Japanese origin called into question by migration officials for having a divergent physical appearance – skin color, facial features, hair texture or eyes different from the expected – and Melgar recounts the case of a *Nikkei* with African heritage who had his application rejected on the basis that "black descendants don't exist".[108]

It has also happened that migrants accidentally sabotaged their application in an effort to conform to the imagined standards. As I've been told in one of my interviews it is common for Japanese Peruvians to be registered with a Spanish first name at birth which is virtually never

[107] Melgar, *Entre El Centro y Los Márgenes Del Sol Naciente. Los Peruanos En Japón (Libro Completo)*.
[108] Melgar, "(Re)Etnización y Desetnización de Los Nikkei En América Latina y Japón," 232.

used besides bureaucratic affairs and they are called by a Japanese name in everyday life. On the blog *Discover Nikkei* one Japanese Peruvian return migrant narrates the story of his migration to Japan that ended prematurely because of "bad documents". He decided to correct his father's name in the *koseki* from Antonio to Kinsuke, his Japanese name, so that his eligibility is not questioned – even though he possessed a valid family registry and was racially unmixed Japanese to begin with – but the migration office discovered the modification and sent him back to Peru.

This story reveals the multiple sources of frustration that the Japanese Peruvians experienced during the migration process. They would resent Peru because there they are called names like "Chinese", "slanty eyes" or "dish face" and other Peruvians abuse the Nikkei visa. On the other hand they would also harbor a grudge towards Japan for making migration and financial existence more difficult for them and treating ethnic returnees as *gaijin* or foreigners. Another article on the *Discover Nikkei* blog mentions that during the first years of immigration some of the *Nikkeijin* who were able to locate actual family relatives reported to have been turned away, presumably out of concern for "what their neighbors would think" or potential requests.[109]

Furthermore the presence of fake *Nikkei* would also cause suspicion towards the legitimacy of other applicants: the author of the story remarks that from the group of 30 applicants only one got a visa who didn't have Asian features at all.[110] Though he implies that this applicant was probably a fraud he also could have been a Japanese descendant without the appropriate phenotype. The experience of Japanese Peruvians through application and migration to Japan affected how they negotiated their place in Japan and what strategies they used to maximize benefits while distancing themselves from what they considered "undeserving" migrants as it will be described below.

[109] Célia Abe Oi, "The Multiple Identities of the Nikkei Community: The Myth of the Eternal Return," accessed May 11, 2019, http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2008/11/18/multiplas-identidades/.
[110] Ikeda Yoshikawa, "My Experience as a Dekasegi."

3.5 Ethnic return migrants in Japan

At the peak of return migration in 2007 over 380,000 Latin Americans were registered residents in Japan which included 317,000 Brazilians and 60,000 Peruvians.[111] Japanese Argentinians, Bolivians and Paraguayans have also migrated but in significantly smaller numbers.[112] For this reason I will be concentrating on the first two groups.

Upon their appearance in Japanese society the South American Nikkei were integrated into various structures. The revision of the Immigration Law resulted in a stratified labor market in which the *Nikkeijin* were placed on the top as legal migrant workers with the highest wage level while illegal migrant laborers from Asia remained on the bottom. However, they found themselves in a subordinate position in comparison with Japanese full-time employees who also receive benefits like bonuses, regular wage increase and promotion in accordance with the length of their employment.[113] This was already a reflection of the fact that they were not acknowledged as Japanese *per se*.

Tsuda explains that the expectation of ethnic returnees to be accepted and welcomed into Japanese society was confronted by the ethno-national conception of Japaneseness that requires complete linguistic and cultural proficiency besides Japanese descendance. Because they lacked the cultural affinity they were labelled as *gaijin* or foreigners and became a new minority in Japan.[114] Even though many Japanese know about the existence of *Nikkei* – most of all Brazilians – because of extensive media coverage they are usually represented in a way to conform to the Japanese idea of "ethnicity equals culture". Programs usually feature *Nikkei* who speak fluent Japanese and engage in traditional activities which gave Japanese viewers the idea that ethnic

[111] Takenaka, "The Rise and Fall of Diasporic Bonds in Japanese-Peruvian 'Return' Migration," December 1, 2014.
[112] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America,* 238.
[113] Sellek, "Nikkeijin: The Phenomenon of Return Migration."
[114] Takeyuki Tsuda, "Crossing Ethnic Boundaries: The Challenge of Brazilian Nikkeijin Return Migrants in Japan," in *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents and Uncertain Futures*, ed. Nobuko Adachi (Routledge, 2006), 204.

descendants in Latin America have retained Japanese language and culture.[115] The conflicting interpretations of what constitutes being Japanese led to the deliberate renegotiation of identities by Japanese descendants.

In the case of Japanese Brazilians they develop a dual identity: they are Japanese in Brazil, but feel and act Brazilian in Japan as a way to defy mainstream ethno-cultural standards in Japan and resist assimilationist pressures. They actively display subtle and not so subtle signs of difference: they dress in the colors of the Brazilian flag or flag-patterned clothes, grow facial hair, speak loud Portuguese and greet each other by hugging and kissing, that is to say they behave in an exaggeratingly Brazilian way which they never did in Brazil. They also make a point of introducing themselves with a Portuguese name (even if they are called by a Japanese first name in Brazil) and write their name with *katakana*, the Japanese syllabic script used for writing foreign words, instead of *kanji*, the Chinese symbols used for Japanese language. The most extreme display of conveying Brazilian sentiments took form in samba festivals organized in Japan that now regularly take place in multiple locations.[116] Their case is similar to second-generation Greek Americans and Greek Germans who grew up with a strong Greek identity but reaffirmed the United States or Germany as their homeland after getting disillusioned upon their diasporic return to Greece which results in "reverse transnationalism".[117]

Considering that this type of behavior takes place in Japan while they continue to be perceived as *japonés* in Brazil I would argue that they provide an example for the situationalist view on ethnicity that is endorsed by Andreas Wimmer. This means that individuals identify with different ethnic categories based on the changing logics of the situation and the characteristics of

[115] Takeyuki "Gaku" Tsuda, "Domesticating the Immigrant Other: Japanese Media Images of Nikkeijin Return Migrants," *Ethnology* 42, no. 4 (2003): 289–305, https://doi.org/10.2307/3773830.
[116] Tsuda, "When Minorities Migrate."
[117] Russell King and Anastasia Christou, "Second-Generation 'Return' to Greece: New Dynamics of Transnationalism and Integration," *International Migration* 52, no. 6 (2014): 85–99, https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12149.

the people interacting.[118] In this sense they are never Japanese Brazilians but one or the other depending on which one is preferable in the given situation.

The presence of a substantial number of Japanese Brazilians caused the mushrooming of ethnic businesses concentrated in the living areas of ethnic return migrants which incorporate Brazilian restaurants, food stores, clothing stores, discos, churches, and labor brokers offer extensive employment, housing, transportation and other services mainly in Portuguese. Though state guidelines had not been prepared for the accommodation of ethnic returnee workers local governments developed their strategies to take care of them by providing information handbooks, health insurance and emergency medical coverage, consultation services, language classes, translation services and educational programs for their children.[119] The fact that most of these services were tailored to Japanese Brazilians affected the situation of Japanese Peruvians as migrant workers in Japan.

3.6 Becoming *Nikkei* in Japan

Takenaka portrays the Japanese Peruvians in Japan as less inclined to advertise their Peruvian nationality. On the one hand they could not find similar points of connection with their country of origin that they could emphasize positively due to the association of Peru with "poverty, crime and terrorism". The fact that Alberto Fujimori's presidency ended scandalously in Peru also fostered a preference among Japanese Peruvians not to be associated with "the broken image of a fallen president".[120] On the other hand racial mixing and lack of Japanese language skills were overrepresented among Japanese Peruvian migrants, even more so because of the presence of visa abusers who did not have Japanese origins. Because of the high number of

[118] Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
[119] Tsuda, "Japanese-Brazilian Ethnic Return Migration and the Making of Japan's Newest Immigrant Minority."
[120] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America,* 276.

"false *Nikkei*" among Peruvians, Japanese Peruvians were under more pressure from authorities to prove their legitimacy and general suspicion that fell on all workers with Peruvian nationality that possibly deterred working opportunities for them.[121] This was a justifiable source of resentment towards non-Japanese Peruvians and led to the formation of an ethnic hierarchy in Japan.

On the one hand Japanese Peruvians were integrated into a hierarchy of *Nikkei* workers in which Brazilians were on the top: they spoke relatively good Japanese that placed them in the better paying positions and acted as interpreters and labor brokers. Japanese Peruvians chose to adapt by learning Portuguese to use Brazilians as intermediaries and because more information and resources were available in Portuguese than in Spanish.[122] According to Marcelo Higa's chapter on Japanese Argentinians they were not particularly sympathetic to *Nikkei* from other Latin American countries either: while Brazilians were "nice" in the opinion of Argentinians and got along with bosses, Peruvians were considered "idle" because "they've always lived well and aren't used to working".[123] This view was probably linked with the middle-class and intellectual background of Japanese Peruvians who were indeed not accustomed to blue-collar work.

Takenaka argues that there was also an internal hierarchy that was in fact equivalent to the hardening of already existing divisions among racially unmixed Japanese or "*Nikkei Nikkei*", racially mixed *Nikkei* and non-Japanese Peruvians. Interestingly migrants of mixed descent realized in Japan that they are *Nikkei*: in Peru the term used to be applied exclusively for racially unmixed, middle-class ethnic Japanese but in Japan it was a legal category based on "blood". This re-categorization provided them with a legal privilege and right to stay in Japan and because

[121] Marcelo G. Higa, "The Emigration of Argentines of Japanese Descent to Japan," in *New Worlds, New Lives: Globalization and People of Japanese Descent in the Americas and from Latin America in Japan*, ed. Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Akemi Kikumura-Yano, and James A. Hirabayashi (Stanford University Press, 2002), 273.
[122] Takenaka, "Ethnic Hierarchy and Its Impact on Ethnic Identities : A Comparative Analysis of Peruvian and Brazilian Return Migrants in Japan," 271.
[123] Higa, "The Emigration of Argentines of Japanese Descent to Japan," 273.

Japanese surnames were conceived of the primary markers of *Nikkeiness* mixed descent Japanese Peruvians started using them even if it came from maternal descent and they did not use them in Peru.[124] This is also a prevalent sign of that Japanese Peruvians asserted difference on an ethnic basis instead of a national one as Brazilians did.

3.7 The disruptive effects of migration

When I asked my interviewees if family members and acquaintances who travelled to Japan with the *Nikkei* visa have returned since the answers delineated three patterns: migrants would return to Peru (usually household heads), settle down and have families in Japan or visit periodically and then return to Japan. Migration from Peru started to decline after 2008, as the economic crisis hit the *Nikkei* were the first to lose their jobs and the government launched a repatriation program that offered monetary incentive to return to Latin America upon the condition that they would not return to Japan.[125] Another cause for return was the triple disaster of March 2011 but Ana Sueyoshi points out that 70% of Peruvians who migrated to Japan – in majority Japanese Peruvians – have been still going back and forth during the last decade.

In 2016 Peruvians constituted the second largest Latin American immigrant population in Japan with 47,670 members and the sixth largest group of all foreign residents. Return migrants could choose to return or remain in Japan if savings were dried up, the family had unexpected expenses or if they could not secure a job in Peru.[126] Because many return migrants remained longer than they originally intended they were not prepared for the consequences of long-term stay. One such consequence was family separation over being apart for a long time because of

[124] Takenaka, "Ethnic Hierarchy and Its Impact on Ethnic Identities : A Comparative Analysis of Peruvian and Brazilian Return Migrants in Japan," 274–75.
[125] Takeyuki (gaku) Tsuda, "Ethnic Return Migration and the Nation-State: Encouraging the Diaspora to Return 'Home,'" *Nations and Nationalism* 16, no. 4 (2010): 630, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2010.00444.x.
[126] Ana Sueyoshi, "Intergenerational Circular Migration and Differences in Identity Building of Nikkei Peruvians," *Contemporary Japan* 29, no. 2 (July 3, 2017): 230–45, https://doi.org/10.1080/18692729.2017.1351047.

work. However the divorce has to take effect in Peru which is a quite prolonged process there. For this reason if separated couples formed new relationships and had children, they could not be legally registered.[127]

Another problem was the indeterminate status of children brought over from Peru or born in Japan who would not receive citizenship under the *jus sanguinis* legislation, but might grow up to be Japanese speakers, go through Japanese education and feel Japanese.[128] Because of long working hours parents would not have the chance to speak Spanish or Portuguese with their children that produces a language gap.[129] For the sake of accommodating their children immigrant parents could either choose to naturalize in Japan or return with the whole family to Peru, or send their children back alone to a country where they are exposed to a language and culture that is often new to them.

Being in a transnational family requires sacrifices from all members including that not everyone within the same household benefit from migration to the same extent.[130] In the case of the children of Japanese Peruvian return migrants they often had to spend a substantial amount of time separated from their parents and mature quickly. Portes argues that thanks to new technologies and air travel contemporary immigrants possess remarkable resources which are also supposed to facilitate maintaining family relations over different continents.[131] However the accounts of two Japanese Peruvian boys who grew up with their parents in Japan and then returned to Peru somewhat disproves this idea because when return migration first started distance calls were too expensive to be made too often. Though the Internet is now widely

[127] Toshiko Elena Onchi Japanese Peruvian in Japan, accessed May 20, 2019, http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/interviews/profiles/131/.
[128] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 259–71.
[129] Tsuda, "Japanese-Brazilian Ethnic Return Migration and the Making of Japan's Newest Immigrant Minority," 223.
[130] Schiller, Basch, and Blanc, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant."
[131] Alejandro Portes, "Introduction: The Debates and Significance of Immigrant Transnationalism," *Global Networks* 1, no. 3 (2001): 181–94, https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0374.00012.

available as a cheaper alternative, return migrant parents might not be very computer-literate, family members choose to keep in touch through less modern means like writing letters. Long-term separation possibly deteriorates affection between parents and children or between siblings, but working in Japan is recognized as a necessary sacrifice for which children are grateful.[132]

In conclusion, the life of Japanese Peruvians as return migrants in Japan was not short of hardships. Contrary to expectations they were denied their place as fellow kinsmen in Japanese society and became labeled as foreigners instead. They were in an unfavorable position compared to other *Nikkei* as well due to the lower international standing of Peru as a country, scandals around the Fujimori presidency and the influx of Peruvian visa abusers without Japanese descent. Nonetheless return migration allowed for the *Nikkei* category to expand and incorporate those who had previously not seen themselves as such. Now instead of referring to "pure" Japanese descendants it describes a "unique blend" of being neither fully Japanese nor Peruvian but both at the same time.[133] As mentioned before return migration is now considered concluded but it has influenced all Japanese Peruvians in individual perceptions and in the structuring of the community.

[132] "Children of Dekasegi, Bilingual and Educated in Japan: The New Generation of Nikkei - Part 1," Discover Nikkei, accessed May 20, 2019, http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2010/11/17/hijos-de-dekasegi/.
[133] Takenaka, "Ethnic Hierarchy and Its Impact on Ethnic Identities : A Comparative Analysis of Peruvian and Brazilian Return Migrants in Japan."

Fourth chapter – Japanese descendants in Peru now

4.1 Conducting interviews with Japanese Peruvians

In this chapter I am looking at the identity of third- and fourth-generation descendants and ethnic associations that have transformed in a way to accommodate the changes in the community. For my research I used snowball sampling to gather interviewees and conducted semi-structured interviews. My position as a complete outsider has proven to be both an advantage and a disadvantage that certainly resulted in limitations of the research. During my search for interviewees I have encountered a number of difficulties given the self-confined nature of the Japanese Peruvian community, my first attempts to establish contact through social media groups and blogs have all failed even though language barrier was not a problem because I speak fluent Spanish. Fortunately I had a chance meeting on campus with a Peruvian student who happened to have friends with Japanese ethnic background and after that I was more or less on track.

I conducted the first two interviews last summer, and other four in April and May this year. At the end of the interviews I asked my respondents if they can recommend me any further contacts which is how I got from one interviewee to the other. One of them even posted a call for participation on her Facebook page however it did not yield more than one volunteer. The difference in time zone was a bit of an inconvenience which required coordination and flexibility but I was willing to do absolutely anything to conform to my respondents (even get up in the dead of night for a 4 am interview) so in most cases this difficulty could be bridged. In all cases I asked and received permission in advance to record the conversations.

In order to complement my interviews I incorporated material from the blog *Discover Nikkei* which shares the life experiences of Japanese descendants all over the world and served

me greatly with self-accounts of Japanese Peruvians from different walks of life. Also I found the Youtube channel of a fourth-generation Japanese Peruvian girl who produces videos about her own experiences in Peru and Japan which were highly valuable additions to my interviews. Because she is a returnee from Japan her in-between position is much more accentuated than for those who have been born and raised in Peru and she also has some unique insights about the community because she joined it at a later point in her life.

I always started with asking the interviewee to briefly introduce him/herself and then let the conversation flow in a direction that the respondent preferred. This allowed me to explore what the interviewees found relevant to share about themselves and the ethnic institutions and I would only ask the prepared questions when they felt that they ran out of topics or I referred to things I've read or heard in previous interviews to ask for confirmation or their opinion in the matter. I also had some common ground with my interviewees who study Japanese because I completed my bachelor's degree in Japanese studies, but for the most part employing active listening was the most rewarding. Because I was an outsider my respondents generally assumed that I don't have profound knowledge about community affairs (which was not incorrect) and gave me thorough explanations, and they didn't feel like they had to conform to a pre-disposed image. Also I was offered various written materials like papers and book titles though I could not access all of them because certain books were not available.

During our personal consultation Professor Brubaker has pointed out that I should strive to balance my interviews so that not all of them involve "professional Japanese" though I definitely had more luck recruiting them as interviewees because they were keen to educate about their community. Furthermore all my interviewees affiliate themselves with ethnic associations, which is a common feature of Japanese Peruvians but those who have a profession that incorporates their ethnic background – and thus qualify as "professional" – constituted half of all

respondents, so the rate was not unbalanced. The interviewees' profiles are the following (I have changed the names in accordance with whether they have a Japanese or Spanish first name):

1. Bianca – *sansei* or third-generation *Nikkei* with a Japanese father, professor in the Japanese Peruvian university Colegio La Unión where she had also graduated from, she is from Lima

2. Roberta – *sansei Nikkei* with one Japanese grandfather, graduated from Colegio La Unión, has a daughter and is from Lima

3. Hideo (male) – *sansei Nikkei* with a Japanese father, anthropology student researching the construction of identity of the *Nikkei* beginning from the historical process of Japanese immigration, he has Okinawan heritage, from Lima

4. Tomie (female) – *sansei Nikkei* with a Japanese father, photographer who incorporates *Nikkei* and Japanese topics into her art, from Lima

5. Hatsue (female) – *yonsei* or fourth-generation *Nikkei* with Japanese grandparents, lives in Lima but was born in a rural town

6. Shigeo (male) – *yonsei Nikkei* with a Japanese father, has Okinawan heritage, from Lima

In the following I am presenting the effects of return migration, ethnic associations and the means of cultivating ethnic ties in the Japanese Peruvian community through the relevant literature, most of all the works of Ayumi Takenaka, and my interviews as well as self-accounts and interviews from *Discover Nikkei*.

4.2 The effects of return migration on the Japanese Peruvian community

Takenaka claims that a primary consequence of return migration was that Japanese Peruvians have switched to the term *Nikkei* to refer to themselves instead of "Japanese".[134] In truth the descendants of Japanese immigrants don't constitute a coherent group due to socioeconomic differences and the level of ethnic mixing and assimilation.[135] However Takenaka consistently speaks in terms of a "community" or *colonia* as it is called in Peru by which she means an extensive set of institutions and the Japanese Peruvian community in Lima that is the most sizeable and consists of over 70 voluntary associations.[136] Throughout the chapter I use the word "community" under the same understanding.

During return migration it happened at certain points that one fourth or one third of Japanese Peruvians were staying in Japan which is considerable in the case of a community of approximately 80,000 members.[137] The relatively small size of the ethnic Japanese community possibly facilitated the conveying of migration experiences that produced the change in self-perception but it also has to do with the challenges that the community faced during the time of vast outmigration.

Takenaka recounts that the massive outflow of people gravely undermined community activities which could not be organized due to lack of participants. Several associations suffered from a huge drop in membership, attendance at Japanese schools and Peruvians universities likewise declined, shop owners could not find coethnic staff and endogamous marriages became

[134] Ayumi Takenaka, "Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences: The Return Migration and the Transformation of Ethnicity of Japanese Peruvians," *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, no. 9 (June 1, 1999): 1459–74, https://doi.org/10.1177/00027649921954994.
[135] Raúl Araki, "An Approach to the Formation of Nikkei Identity in Peru: Issei and Nisei," in *New Worlds, New Lives: Globalization and People of Japanese Descent in the Americas and from Latin America in Japan*, ed. Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Akemi Kikumura-Yano, and James A. Hirabayashi (Stanford University Press, 2002), 76–89.
[136] Ayumi Takenaka, "The Mechanisms of Ethnic Retention: Later-Generation Japanese Immigrants in Lima, Peru," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 29, no. 3 (May 1, 2003): 467, https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830305615.
[137] Takenaka, "The Rise and Fall of Diasporic Bonds in Japanese-Peruvian 'Return' Migration," 2014.

hard to arrange because of a lack of partners.[138] Over 30% of migrants were college graduates, many others were professionals and business owners and upon their leave community leaders feared from a serious brain drain.[139] This situation was an incentive for them to extend the boundaries of the community in order to preserve it.

First, the Japanese Peruvian Association in Lima started reaching out to rural, mostly racially mixed and poor Japanese Peruvians to cultivate a *Nikkei* consciousness in them by organizing cultural seminars. While many of these descendants got interested in their ethnic origin because they wanted to work in Japan and were mainly curious about how to collect the necessary documentation, the Association's activities were aimed at conveying how to cultivate ethnic ties with Japan *and* Peru. Takenaka explains that the ultimate goal was to invoke a *Nikkei* identity in the descendants who didn't have one before and thus raise the status of the community.

Second, return migration brought a new hype for Japan in Peru, in part because Peruvians themselves were interested in migrating, but it helped to increase the number of Japanese language students in the community-managed schools.[140] The Japanese Peruvian Association positioned itself to spread Japanese culture and opened up to non-Nikkei audience. Hideo has remarked to me that 20 years ago there was no way for Peruvians to become associates but now they are accepted. This is most likely related to the fact that intermarriage has become a much more widespread phenomenon.

McDowell asserts that Japanese Peruvians started intermarrying after return migration had been initiated. However partner choices usually follow the principle of maintaining ethnic coherence. She describes that in cases where return migration was possible *Nikkei* might marry non-*Nikkei* (also it was not necessarily the *Nikkei* spouse who migrated as women tended to be

[138] Masterson and Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America*, 241.
[139] Takenaka, "The Rise and Fall of Diasporic Bonds in Japanese-Peruvian 'Return' Migration," 2014.
[140] Takenaka, "Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences," June 1, 1999, 1463–64.

left behind in Peru) but in case migration couldn't take place marriage unions aim to increase ethnic identity affiliations. The meaning of *Nikkei* has evolved so that it is not solely limited to biological descent therefore a non-*Nikkei* marriage partner who possesses Japanese cultural and linguistic knowledge and has experience with migration to Japan is more of an "ethnic choice" than a Japanese descendant who doesn't have documentation of heritage or return experience.[141] *Nikkei* households have chosen strategically which member would benefit the family by migrating or by staying behind which is in line with Glick-Schiller's assertion that transnational families strive to maximize the utilization of labor and resources in multiple settings to ensure financial stability.[142] I've been told that there hasn't been one certain model for Japanese Peruvian migration: in some cases the first son would go, leaving behind their own studies or career to provide for the family, in other cases one or both parents would leave or the whole family.

Return migration has brought substantial benefits both via remittances and transnational businesses that provided services like remittance sending, the sale of Peruvian products and air tickets, translation services, correspondence courses for the children of immigrants and even real estate brokering for those migrants that wished to purchase land or estate upon their return. Transnational services would employ coethnic workers which also benefitted the community. Economic revenues allowed return migrants who came back from Japan to fulfill their instrumental goals and buy a car, a house or move to upscale neighborhoods in Lima.[143]

According to Sueyoshi migrants could derive emotional satisfaction out of fulfilling their role as breadwinners and being able to provide for the economic needs of the family which

[141] Garrett Alexandrea McDowell et al., *Eating Potato Chips with Chopsticks: Nikkei Latin Americans Making Home, Shaping Family and Defining Selves* (Temple University Libraries, 2009), http://cdm16002.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p245801coll10/id/46251.
[142] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48, https://doi.org/10.2307/3317464.
[143] Takenaka, "Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences," June 1, 1999.

compensates for their hard work in Japan.[144] Though women earned much lower wages than male *Nikkei* workers, migration could become a source of empowerment for them. Many migrant women in their forties and fifties earned their first wage in Japan and the experience of leading independent lives and earning their own money encourages them to reject their previous roles and get a divorce upon return.[145] However Melgar also depicts the instances of symbolic and physical violence, the objectification of workers and the criminalization of immigrants which caused severe hardships for return migrants.[146] Working in Japan has taken its toll on return migrants physically as well as mentally.

Even though none of my interviewees have been in Japan as return migrant workers all of them had at least one but generally several family members and friends who had worked in Japan whose experiences have permeated the consciousness of the whole community in Peru. Consequently my interviewees had a clear picture of the adversities of working in Japan: social and cultural alienation, anxiety, stress and depression caused by long working hours and family separation, lack of social mobility and discrimination. It was even said that "working in Japan is compared to working in a salt mine". When asked about their intentions to go or not go to Japan, they would cite these as reasons for not wanting to stay for a longer period of time but at the same time they are also aware of the upsides of living in Japan such as orderliness, security and cleanliness.

In conclusion becoming a migrant worker in Japan is no longer considered an attractive option even for *sansei* or third-generation Japanese Peruvians who are eligible for the *Nikkei* visa. Generally they have academic or professional aspirations which they feel enabled to pursue due to the improvement of Peru's economy. For this reason the Latin American working population

[144] Sueyoshi, "Intergenerational Circular Migration and Differences in Identity Building of Nikkei Peruvians."
[145] Daniela de Carvalho, *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: The Nikkeijin* (Routledge, 2003).
[146] Melgar, *Entre El Centro y Los Márgenes Del Sol Naciente. Los Peruanos En Japón (Libro Completo)*.

in Japan is increasingly replaced by immigrants from other countries for example the Philippines, though many Japanese Brazilians and Peruvians continue to reside in Japan or periodically repeat their stay.

4.3 The current role of ethnic associations

It has been elaborated above the Japanese community has went through a transformation over the last 20 years, the institutions as well as the people have become much more open to the majority society and the process of acculturation is continuing. Nonetheless there is still a well-articulated effort by the associations as well as the members to preserve the *Nikkei* community and engender a sense of ethnic belonging in the younger generations.

There are three major ethnic associations, the *Asociación Peruano Japonesa* (Peruvian Japanese Association), *Asociación Estadio La Unión* (Union Stadium Association) and the *Asociación Okinawense del Perú* (Okinawan Association of Peru). The *Asociación Peruano Japonesa* or APJ was founded in 1917 and defines itself as a cultural institution which aims to unite Japanese descendants, represent the community on a national and international level, diffuse Japanese culture, promote cultural, technologic and scientific exchange between Peru and Japan and care for the wellbeing of the community in general which involves fostering an integrating and harmonious atmosphere with the Peruvian majority society.[147] It mainly hosts activities that involve the traditional side of Japaneseness such as ikebana (flower arrangement), calligraphy, dance and food, and for this reason it is more frequented by the older generations, while younger *Nikkei* prefer Asociación Estadio La Unión or AELU which has a different profile. According to its website the main goal of AELU is to support the integration and wellbeing of

[147] "Nosotros | Asociación Peruano Japonesa," accessed May 17, 2019, http://www.apj.org.pe/quienes-somos/nosotros.

Japanese descendants via sports, recreational, social and cultural activities but also pledges to "transmit values".[148] Hideo has described them as the following:

> […] the principal organizations of *Nikkei* is the Association of Peruvian Japanese that replaced the Central Association of Nikkei, and congregates the descendants of Japanese. But at the same time there are differences between generations, now gatherings are not based on descendance but age group, the young ones prefer to go to another institution that does not represent the community, it's a club mainly for Japanese descendants but that has a different purpose. Also there are cultural events like matsuri (festival in Japanese), but they're not an official representation of the community, the younger generation prefer going to the club and the older ones prefer going to the Association because there are events like ikebana (flower arrangement), calligraphy, dance, food, more Japanese stuff.

The Okinawan Association was founded in 1910 and is likewise a cultural institution that strives to preserve the art, rituals and cuisine of the immigrants from the prefecture of Okinawa. Okinawa had previously constituted a separate kingdom before its annexation to Japan therefore it has a distinctive culture from that of the Japanese mainland. In my interview with Bianca (whose grandparents were non-Okinawan) I've been told that at the time of immigration there was a break between Okinawan and other immigrants from the Japanese mainland despite that the former constituted the majority:

> […] most of the immigrants were from Okinawa, but my grandmother was not from there. My grandmother loathed Okinawa a lot, because it's an island, and she referred to Okinawans as provincial people without education, she was very racist. She and my grandfather were from a minority that did not belong to this group of immigrants from Okinawa […]

[148] "AELU – Asociación Estadio La Unión – Un lugar de encuentro e integración familiar," accessed May 17, 2019, https://www.aelu.com.pe/.

Nonetheless I've been repeatedly reassured that there isn't any discrimination anymore, though it might not be the case in other Japanese Latin American communities as remarked by Hideo:

> […] even though Okinawa had its own culture, here in Peru Okinawans are not counterparts of the Japanese, being *Nikkei* is a culture in itself, now there aren't many differences between Okinawans and Japanese. As far as I'm concerned in Brazil and Argentina there is a major differentiation, but in Peru if you're a *Nikkei* it's not important which part you came from.

Takenaka contends that Okinawans and Japanese became a coherent group over their common experience of migration to Peru and community leaders used shared Japanese ethnicity as the means to create a united group to cope with their situation in Peru.[149] Though there is no separation now, Okinawan descendants are conscious of their roots and so they have their separate association which proudly announces on its main site that 70% of the Japanese Peruvian community is of Okinawan descent.[150] Shigeo who has Okinawan heritage also commented to me that he prefers the Okinawan Association because it is more open and it doesn't involve fees.

Due to return migration the APJ have gradually opened up for non-*Nikkei* audience as well to accommodate the current demands which also results in that certain activities become too detached from their original contents. Tomie has mentioned that she hasn't been to the *matsuri* for 2 years now because it became too commercialized and it lost its intimate character. Nonetheless formal and informal membership requirements are tailored to involve a certain (preferable) group of people. The official criteria of the Association for being "Japanese" is possessing at least one paternal or maternal Japanese surname, and this understanding is duplicated on an informal level as well. *Japeruana* who grew up in Japan and returned to Peru at the age of 15 has made a video about the *Nikkei* Peruvian community in which she asserts that

[149] Takenaka, "The Mechanisms of Ethnic Retention."
[150] "Asociación Okinawense Del Perú," accessed May 17, 2019, http://www.aop.org.pe/.

when two *Nikkei* Peruvian meet they have the curious habit of asking each other's family name first. She notes that due to the tight-knit nature of the community people have an extensive knowledge about internal relations and last names are used for positioning the other as belonging to this-and-this family and being the sister/niece/other of this-and-that.[151]

Peruvians without a Japanese family name can be admitted to associations upon the conditions of being recommended by two members and paying extra fees. This ensures that new members have sufficiently close ties with *Nikkei* so they are well-received. Roberta told me enthusiastically that her husband, who doesn't have any Japanese heritage, is treated as if he has been "adopted" into the community. At the same time Takenaka mentions that people without Japanese phenotypical features are likely to be stopped at the entrance. Bianca has pointed out to me that mistrust has not faded:

> […] all the kids who are culture fanatics and are not from the Japanese community go to these places, they are now more open to the public. But now they are charging money for it, the mistrust has not gone away completely. When it's a Japanese Peruvian family it's all free because everybody knows each other, but Peruvians are charged, and certain precautions are taken, because this mistrust is still there.

Poorer *Nikkei* might also be excluded because they don't find membership appealing due to the associated fees and choose not to affiliate themselves but altogether about two thirds of Japanese Peruvians are estimated to have affiliations with community institutions.[152] Monetary investment in ethnic associations can be conceived of as a sign of dedication towards the community that in turn provides cultural and social capital for members and the affirmation of their *Nikkei* identity. Another important characteristic of the associations that has been pointed

[151] Japeruana, *¿Japoneses Que Son Peruanos En Perú? NIKKEI♡Japeruana*, accessed May 19, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VH2afFGLX9k.
[152] Takenaka, "The Mechanisms of Ethnic Retention."

out to me by Roberta is the sense of emotional as well as physical safety that being in the association provides which is an important pull factor because of the low level of public safety in Peru. Bianca has also remarked:

> Nikkei […] are so fixated on the idea of being a community, like being a family. It has also been like that with classmates at the university, the mum of your classmate has always been your „aunt", always „uncle" and „aunt", like a big family. The lady who works in the grocery in front of my house, she's a *Nikkei* from Okinawa, and she's always concerned about me, she treats me like a niece, because I'm *Nikkei*. Such a thing is a privilege.

4.4 Preserving the Japanese language

When I asked about their Japanese language skills my interviewees recounted the use of a number of words usually related to family relations like *haha, chichi, obaa, ojii* (mother, father, grandma, grandpa), everyday objects like *hashi* (chopsticks), terms referring to Japanese customs as *butsudan* (Buddhist altar) and greetings. Group labels – especially if derogative – also tend to be expressed in Japanese. Takenaka asserts that the majority of the Japanese words used by Japanese Peruvians count as obsolete in the contemporary Japanese vocabulary, but they are an important marker of difference from Peruvians. More importantly, the mixing of Japanese and Okinawan words into Spanish speech is a significant symbol of the hybridity of *Nikkei* culture in everyday interactions.[153]

Those of my interviewees who go to Japanese language class were hesitant to claim Japanese knowledge over a basic level which probably also has to do with the manner of teaching that will be elaborated below. On the other hand the Japanese language has lost from its appeal since return migration is virtually over, and parents of *Nikkei* students have developed a

[153] Takenaka.

preference for English teaching in Japanese schools.[154] When I asked Roberta, who herself went through Japanese school in Peru and is very enthusiastic about being part of the Japanese *colonia*, if she wants her daughter to go to Japan. She expressed her wish for her child to go abroad, however not necessarily to Japan (her daughter also attends Japanese as well as English language classes). Hatsue who has cited the difficulty of the Japanese language as a reason for not wanting to reside in Japan for a longer period of time also mentioned that the Japanese language course she is attending has substantially more Peruvian students than *Nikkei* who aspire to learn Japanese out of academic interest or love for Japanese pop culture.

While Japanese fluency is relatively rare Japanese Peruvians make well-articulated efforts to cultivate Japanese language through attending language courses and singing in Japanese during performances even though they don't understand the lyrics.[155] Shigeo has explained to me that it is important not to lose the language in order to maintain the culture. From this perspective it is clear that Japanese language is not treated as a pragmatic asset – or not anymore – but a cultural symbol and a distinctive form of expression that is unique to the Japanese Peruvian community.

4.5 The return migration of immigrant children

When migrant choose to return to Peru the education of their children plays a primary role in making the decision. Because Peruvians were fewer in number in Japan they had more limited options for schooling their children in Spanish, a number of Peruvian schools have been opened but they are not accredited by Japan or Peru. While parents could rely on these schools or

[154] Yuri Yamasaki, "Conflicted Attitudes Toward Heritage," *Critical Asian Studies* 42, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 89–110, https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710903537506.
[155] Takenaka, "The Mechanisms of Ethnic Retention," 468.

autodidact learning because of they deemed their stay in Japan only temporary if they stayed longer than expected the children would have limited options for further education or employment. Those who were enrolled into Japanese schools would often be subjects to *ijime* or bullying which is a nation-wide phenomenon in Japan among young people and students of foreign or mixed descent easily become targets.

Japeruana has a video titled "Being different in Japan was hard" in which she recounts how all of her real or perceived flaws and differences were explained with *gaijin dakara* (because she is a foreigner) and caused her to be singled out during her entire school career in Japan.[156] Another label that immigrant children face if they are of mixed descent is *haafu* or half referring to the fact that they are half-Japanese. This term has a number of stereotypes attached to it such as they must speak English or have better English pronunciation for being "half".[157] These perceived attributes are similar in nature to the ones that Japanese Peruvians have in Peru and while they are not necessarily bad in the end they enforce differentiation for not being Japanese proper.

As mentioned in the previous chapter if immigrant children attend school in Japan they might not develop any Spanish language skills or not acquire fluency neither in Spanish nor Japanese.[158] Therefore even if the school system is considered superior in Japan parents are more inclined to have their children educated in Peru. This preference is based on the size and substance of the Japanese Peruvian community that developed an excellent education system in Lima with Japanese language and culture-centered school options.[159] These children who were

[156] Japeruana, *SER DIFERENTE /JAPÓN ｊｐ| La Japeruana*, accessed May 20, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lKqZrYYiNc.
[157] Japeruana, *Cosas Que Me Pasaron En Japón Al Ser Half ♡ | La Japeruana*, accessed May 20, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fzGRot0czU.
[158] Melgar, *Entre El Centro y Los Márgenes Del Sol Naciente. Los Peruanos En Japón (Libro Completo)*.
[159] McDowell et al., *Eating Potato Chips with Chopsticks*.

born and raised in Japan became returnees in Peru where they are naturally drawn to the Japanese associations and their first-hand knowledge of Japanese culture and language has the potential to become an asset for their peers in Peru to gain agency over activities in the community.

Sueyoshi says that returnee children experience a cultural shock upon arriving to Peru and the majority of them show preference for life in Japan but fortunately *Nikkei* schools and associations could serve as bridges for their integration both emotionally and in terms of education.[160] They are bound to have difficulties with language on the one hand because they need to improve their Spanish or learn it from scratch and on the other hand because their Japanese language skills tend to be criticized. In school they are required to attend Japanese language classes even if they are not interested because don't think the language is useful in Peru or because they already think that they are fluent. Also they are automatically placed into the advanced level group even if they don't have advanced language proficiency.

The most interesting issue is that in language classes their language usage is often corrected by the teacher for being "inappropriate". While returnee students would use colloquial forms and rely on their sense of proper word choice teachers stress the formal version which they consider important for Japanese scholarship applications and they also deter their questions or comments about language structure so as not to confuse the other students. Japanese language education is centered on the memorization of a fixed vocabulary set and grammar forms and involves teaching material that had been donated by the Japanese Embassy or visiting teachers from Japan, most of which contains obsolete information. For this reason there is no room to incorporate the returnee's personal knowledge and experience which often frustrates them because they are compelled to re-learn the language.

[160] Sueyoshi, "Intergenerational Circular Migration and Differences in Identity Building of Nikkei Peruvians."

Returnee students might choose to rebel against this pressure by refusing to participate and engaging in other activities during class. Another way is to cooperate with other students to hijack the class and make it more interesting, for example by convincing the teacher to screen Japanese TV shows. Students have also started taking over the organizing of school and festive activities: as Yamasaki mentions the choreography of the dance show that takes place during the annual athletic festival is now coordinated by students and not teachers, and instead of traditional music they are choosing Japanese pop songs which reflects their own preferences.[161] These instances of mobilization imply that returnee children prefer to mobilize instead of being relegated into a passive position in community activities and they might assume active roles in schools and associations later on as well.

4.6 The identity dilemma of subsequent generations

Comaroff and Comaroff assert that "[e]thnicity is far from being a unitary "thing", describes both a set of relations and a mode of consciousness, its meaning and practical salience varies for different social groupings according to their positions in the social order".[162] As it has been already pointed out Japanese descendants in Peru experience their identity very differently and in different ways depending on their class status, the level of racial mixing, living area and whether they have return experience or not. Those with a lower social standing and without Japanese phenotype and surname might feel less welcome in ethnic associations and choose not to become affiliates while middle-class, educated *Nikkei* living in Lima are almost certain to be members of Japanese associations and have gone to Japanese schools.

[161] Yamasaki, "Conflicted Attitudes Toward Heritage."
[162] John & Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography And The Historical Imagination*, 1 edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 54.

There are also differences between "professional Japanese" as pointed out by Professor Brubaker during our consultation which constitutes those whose occupation is closely linked to their ethnicity, and those who are only occasionally mindful of their *Nikkei* origin. More importantly, how one perceives their own ethnicity diverge depending on which generation one belongs to, but it doesn't mean that identities are homogeneous within the same generation either. Hideo has asserted that the grandparents' generation still identify as Japanese despite living in Peru. Because *issei* or first-generation immigrants were usually too old to travel to Japan when the *Nikkei* visa was introduced they could not experience first-hand social and cultural changes in Japan and believe that they preserved a "pure" Japanese culture that originates from the pre-WWII period.

As Smith argues the preservation of symbols, traditions and culture has been the key for ethnic survival.[163] And while they did preserve them to a certain extent they might not realize that their linguistic and cultural knowledge would be now considered obsolete in contemporary Japan. Because of this they would still "imagine" themselves to be Japanese to borrow Anderson's renowned term and continue to have an ethno-national or ethno-symbolic identity. Takenaka mentions that Japanese Peruvians perceive their web of institutions "a 'natural' product of their ethnic ties inherited from their ancestors".[164] This is in line with another point made by the Comaroff brothers that "ethnicity is the product of specific historical processes, it tends to take on the 'natural' appearance of an autonomous force, a 'principle' capable of determining the course of social life".[165] But return migration has challenged this perception of ethnicity as a natural and static entity.

[163] Anthony D. Smith, "Chosen Peoples: Why Ethnic Groups Survive," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15, no. 3 (July 1, 1992): 436–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1992.9993756.
[164] Takenaka, "The Mechanisms of Ethnic Retention," 472.
[165] Comaroff, *Ethnography And The Historical Imagination*, 60.

Those second- and third-generation descendants who have worked in Japan as *dekasegi* have faced discrimination by Japanese society and consequently repositioned themselves as *Nikkei* which is neither exclusively Japanese nor Peruvian. Hideo has commented that for this reason there is a cultural discontinuity between older and younger generations which cuts down the transmission of this traditional, turn-of-the-19th-century culture. While he admitted that this is sad he also pointed out that Japanese Peruvians have gained great material benefits from migration because they were able to establish a middle-class or upper-class existence.

There are also new perceptions emerging that challenge the collective memory constructed by previous generations. This collective memory emphasizes that the Japanese are a distinctive group that went through common sufferings and having overcome these hardships emerged as a thriving community. The economic, academic and cultural achievements that resulted from working together also reinforced the perception that ethnicity was the only available basis of self-definition as highlighted by Comaroff.[166] The outcome was a monologic imagery that excludes "unfitting memories" which is now discreetly tackled through new narratives like Augusto Higa, the most renowned Japanese Peruvian writer's short story about a Japanese man who falls in love with a Peruvian woman and suffers double exclusion from the Japanese community and Peruvian society.[167]

It has been explained to me during my interviews that the first instance of dismantling self-perceived ethno-cultural continuity happened when the *dekasegi* realized in Japan that they were not Japanese by Japanese cultural standards and turned to a hybrid identity. This identity change took roots in the whole community via the circulation of *dekasegi* experiences but

[166] Comaroff, 62.
[167] Shigeko Mato, "Unsettling the Japanese Peruvian Legacy of Suffering: Madman in Augusto Higa Oshiro's 'Polvo Enamorado,'" *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 23, no. 3 (September 2, 2017): 207–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/13260219.2017.1452681.

presumably also in accordance with ongoing global processes underlined by Bhabha that redefined the concepts of national homogeneity or "organic" ethnic communities.[168] Besides reframing their ethnic identity as *Nikkei* a general move happened away from the singularity of race as the cornerstone of identity.

Tomie has phrased that while the second generation of Japanese Peruvians had an identity crisis over ethnic belonging, the third and fourth generations face a different challenge because of *mestizaje* or racial mixing. It was a common trait shared by all my interviewees that they had Japanese lineage either through one parent or one grandparent which is likely to foster acceptance for a hybrid identity that incorporates both sides of descendance. On the other hand Takenaka accentuates the fact that Peruvian national identity is rather weak because of regional, cultural and socio-economic divisions which make identification as Japanese Peruvian or *Nikkei* appealing.[169] Bianca and Roberta who went to the Japanese university in the 1990s both told me that they welcomed the changes that took place in the Japanese *colonia* after return migration. They both felt that the self-reservedness of the Japanese community was distressing and evaluated the opening up of the community as a positive development. Bianca became a professor in the same university precisely because she aspired to make changes from within:

> I became a professor in the very same college, because I had the aspiration to change many things from within the university and open the minds, change the form of the educational system and open the mind of the kids to the world, and teach them to express themselves more, find more resources, be more analytic, know their homeland more and feel more identified with it as well. Because there is a lot of conflict of identity, you don't know what to identify with, the Japanese or the Peruvian and often there isn't a clear idea about what is happening in your country, they don't have a clear cut Peruvian identity, because they are distracted or confused.

[168] Homi K. Bhabha and Professor of English and African-American Literature Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Psychology Press, 2004).
[169] Takenaka, "The Mechanisms of Ethnic Retention."

Throughout the interview she depicted her position as half-Japanese and half-Peruvian as a significant asset that allows her to have an intermediary position and affirm the positive and negative aspects of both worlds. However *mestizaje* might be also a source of confusion among younger *sansei* or *yonsei*. I've been told by Tomie that ethnic mixing has engendered two variations: in one case descendants might not have Japanese physical features but have a Japanese surname and cultural fluency, in the other Japanese family name has been lost through intermarriage and they don't have cultural knowledge but they possess Japanese phenotype. In both cases there is an uncertainty about "who am I", but she asserted that the concept of *Nikkei* also incorporates this ambiguity.

The ethnic associations have been highly efficient in reaching out to Japanese descendants and educating them about their ethno-cultural roots while also spreading Japanese culture among the non-*Nikkei* audience which ultimately serves the integration of *Nikkei*. Hatsue has told me that in rural areas *Nikkei* are fewer and for this reason stand out more in contrast to Lima where the majority of Japanese Peruvians is concentrated. She commented that "before it felt like everyone would be looking at you like you were a *bicho raro* [oddball]", but now this is not the case because her local Japanese association has opened up to the public to advertise Japanese culture and obtain funds for a Japanese school, and therefore people have become more familiar with the community.

Attending Japanese courses and participating in one or multiple associations is a common feature among my interviewees but it is not the primary factor for shaping social relations. Those who pursue activities that are related to their ethnic background and/or go to Japanese university have admitted to having more *Nikkei* friends than non-*Nikkei*, but they constituted a minority among my respondents, and I believe that even in their case it is not necessarily the manifestation

of having a preference for *Nikkei* friends. I support Andreas Wimmer's argument about questioning racial homophily which he exemplified through the case of supposed Asian homophily among Asian students. Wimmer argues that shared interests and cultural dispositions are more important attractors in the process of friendship generation than the experience of being classified as "Asian"; furthermore befriending the same-race friend of your same-race friend might also create the impression of homophily despite that it is a social phenomenon.[170]

Hatsue who comes from a rural area has told me that she has more non-*Nikkei* friends than *Nikkei* for the simple reason that growing up she befriended people from her birthplace where not many *Nikkei* live and therefore she was more likely to have non-*Nikkei* friends. Nonetheless she has also mentioned that she connects more easily with other *Nikkei* at first meetings because they instantly recognize each other as similar and show affinity towards one another. When I asked interviewees if conversation topics are different with *Nikkei* and non-*Nikkei* I received a general answer that while topics are the same, but they have a distinctive mode of expression which involves mixing Japanese words into Spanish as referenced above.

Regarding the question of when does one feel *Nikkei*, besides "professional Japanese" who is conscious of his/her ethnicity most of the time, the majority of my respondents have claimed that they feel *Nikkei* when they gather in one of the associations, participate in a performance or speak Japanese. This behavior is similar to the "ethnic revival" in America that Gans identifies as not an actual revival but another phase of acculturation and assimilation that relies mostly on symbols which third- and fourth-generation ethnics use to express their identity. This "symbolic ethnicity" allows them to choose any ways of expressing their identity that they

[170] Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making*, 2013.

find fitting and foster pride in culture and traditions without necessarily incorporating them into everyday behavior.[171]

The symbolic ethnicity of *Nikkei* Peruvians involves values that have been reinterpreted to include not only stereotypes prevalent among Peruvians – such as honesty and responsibility – but other positive attributes that they perceive as no longer present in contemporary Japanese society like spirit of mutual help and respect for the elderly.[172] My respondents have showed varying degrees of identification with these stereotypes: while one of them expressed frustration with being attributed any characteristics just for having Asian origins, someone else presented these attributes as a part of the Japanese heritage that he aspires to live by.

Japanese descendants can also be reminded of their ethnicity by majority society when they are called out *chino* – which is still common – or when there is a cultural discord, for example when one has Japanese first and/or last name. Japanese Peruvians can have both Spanish and Japanese first names and they might use one or the other depending on the context. However besides Bianca and Roberta who both have Spanish first names, my other *sansei* and *yonsei* interviewees are all registered with their Japanese first names on Facebook. Hatsue always uses her Japanese first name and she complained to me that she always has problems with people mispronouncing her name (because "h" is silent in Spanish) or not being able to determine her gender because they are not familiar with Japanese names. In the end she concluded that "these are things you fight with" even though she could also choose to use her Spanish name with non-*Nikkei* and avoid inconveniences. Shigeo commented to me that in the fourth generation there is a

[171] Herbert J. Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 1979): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1979.9993248.
[172] Takenaka, "Transnational Community and Its Ethnic Consequences," June 1, 1999.

renaissance of Japanese names which might be seen as a counterbalance to the identity crisis among third- and fourth-generation descendants.

Japanese Peruvians consider themselves a distinctive group not only *vis-à-vis* Peruvians but other *Nikkei* Latin Americans. Though most of my respondents don't have any *Nikkei* acquaintances, Tomie has worked in a joint art project with other Japanese Latin Americans and thus had first-hand impressions. She has argued that Japanese Brazilians are too dispersed to form a substantial community and other *Nikkei* Latin Americans are generally too few in number and lack places of reunion. The Japanese Peruvian community is indeed objectively outstanding in structure and organization, it is likely to keep expanding as it has been despite all difficulties and ethnic associations continue to provide a solid basis for identification for further generations, which are likely to turn to them.

Conclusion

I would like to start the conclusion with a picture of what symbolizes the current generation of *Nikkei* Peruvians the best in my eyes. Because many of my interviews took place via Messenger I became Facebook friends with the majority of my interviewees which also allowed me to view their Instagram stories. One day I clicked on the story of Shigeo, who titled his story カラオケ (karaoke in Japanese), and in the video he was in a karaoke booth similar to the ones in Japan, singing with friends at the top of their lungs – in Spanish.

The Japanese in Peru have come a long way from their ethnic homeland both physically and figuratively. In the first chapter I attempted to trace back the origin of ethno-national Japanese identity which has taken a divergent path in the Japanese mainland and in the Americas. While it continued to evolve and solidify in Japan until it became the foundation of the self-perception of a completely homogeneous nation it took a different route in migrant communities. In the second chapter I depict how certain traditions were preserved or reinterpreted and how the Japanese community took roots in Peru. Though I concluded that they chose to commit to their host land, the first generation of Japanese migrants still strongly identified with Japan, and their children and grandchildren inherited this strong sense of belonging despite being born and raised in Peru and having only scarce Japanese cultural and language knowledge.

The return migration phenomenon described in the third chapter induced a change in the self-perception of Japanese descendants. However it has not been homogeneous among *Nikkei* from different countries and *Nikkei* Peruvians either. Those who themselves have travelled to Japan with the *Nikkei* visa were able to assert the discordance between how mainstream Japanese and Japanese descendants defined ethnic belonging and chose to reposition themselves as *Nikkei*.

Their experiences were transmitted to friends and family back in Peru which diffused this identity change.

In the fourth chapter I presented the Japanese Peruvian identity which is far from unified: on one end of the scale some still feel and see themselves as Japanese and on the other end Japanese descendants claim themselves to be "as Peruvian as anyone else". Regardless of these differences the Japanese Peruvian community incorporates all variations of feeling *Nikkei*, but the acculturation of the third and fourth generations is steering it towards a general self-perception of being Peruvian with an occasionally invoked feeling of Japaneseness. Nonetheless these occasions are regular and well-organized that take place in an institutional frame: schools, associations, performances, festivals, conferences, or scholarships.

The case of Japanese Peruvians is divergent from the assimilation theory of Gordon as they have acculturated but haven't completely assimilated after four generations. Also what is described as an "ethnic revival" among third generation immigrants by Gans might go differently for Japanese Peruvians as Takenaka has underlined the fact that community activities are gaining more momentum with the passage of time. Ethnic return migration and globalization processes have reinterpreted the understanding of ethnicity as completely static and biological so that both the Japanese and the Peruvian parts of their heritage can be accommodated without discordance. It is not yet clear how the identity crisis of the fourth and further generations – who are losing Japanese features and family name but retain the culture or possess the phenotype and last name but without cultural knowledge – will be resolved, the above mentioned theories imply that at one point immigrants are bound to assimilate into mainstream society. However the community seems capable of fostering an environment that integrates all variations so that descendants don't lose touch with their ethnic origin.

The Japanese Peruvian community is exceptionally well-structured, but in the biggest part it derives its appeal from the advantages that affiliation offers. Tangible benefits have become fewer with the subsiding of return migration, but symbolical benefits are probably more important as ever to have a solid footing in terms of identity. Japanese descendants can choose from a wide range of options for activities through which they can engage with their ethnicity, from pursuing a profession in any of the associations, academia or arts, to more casual undertakings such as practicing traditional instruments or attending language courses. Looking at the present state of the community I argue that the *Nikkei* Peruvian *colonia* has all the resources and the common intention to preserve itself for the coming generations that will seek out the sense of safety, emotional and institutional belonging and source of pride that the community provides now and most likely will continue to do so.

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