

Migration of Latin American *Nikkei* and Chinese Trainees to Japan*

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Abstract

In this paper it is introduced the case of Japan immigration of Latin American Japanese descendants (*Nikkei*) and Chinese *cursillistas*. It is explored how the new migratory market is opening for Latin Americans and the competition of chinese labour introduced as *cursillistas* located in the small and medium enterprises (SME). It is reported some research results carried on in Japan, 2002. The increasing pattern of the entrance of this non-skilled labour suggests: a) SME competitiveness is based on low labour cost; b) the government is supporting actions to disguise cheap labor through training programs, contributing to precarious working conditions for *nikkeis*. The Marshallian concept of citizenship allows us to perceive migration of workers as the pursue of the social right to work beyond national frontiers.

Key words: labor migration, latin american migration, citizenship, chinese workers, *nikkei*.

Resumen

Migración de nikkei latinoamericanos y de cursillistas chinos al Japón

Este artículo presenta el caso de inmigración al Japón de descendientes japoneses (*nikkei*) nacidos en Latinoamérica y de *cursillistas*** chinos. El artículo explora cómo se está abriendo este nuevo mercado migratorio para los latinos y la competencia que encuentran en las PYME con los chinos clasificados como *cursillistas*. Reporta algunos resultados de un proyecto realizado en Japón en 2002. La creciente entrada, desde 1990, de estos trabajadores no calificados sugiere que: a) la competitividad de las PYME se basa en abaratar los costos de mano de obra; b) el gobierno apoya la entrada de manera disfrazada, a través de Programas de Entrenamiento, de mano de obra barata que estimula condiciones precarias de trabajo para los *nikkei*. El concepto marshalliano de ciudadanía nos permite percibir la migración de trabajadores como la búsqueda de este derecho más allá de las fronteras nacionales.

Palabras clave: migración laboral, migración latinoamericana, ciudadanía, trabajadores chinos, *nikkei*.

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, it has been observed an increasing entrance of non-skilled workers to Japan. This paper focuses on two types of immigrants, the so called legal and the disguised workers or *trainees*. The former refers to the Japanese descendants who are allowed to enter to Japan

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** The term *cursillista* is translation from the word 'trainee'.

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as non-skilled labour since the amendments of the 1990 Immigration Control and Refugee Law. The latter, the disguised ones, do not correspond necessarily to the term 'illegal' since they enter with permission of the Government. However, far from the original purpose for their entrance, to receive training in the use of technology, the trainees are pointed as performing repetitive tasks as non-skilled workers. This paper explores some reasons for these two groups to enter to Japan. It is done in five sections.

The first section introduces the problem. It focuses on the current context in which the immigration of the two groups is taking place. Regarding Japan, as a receptor country, it is characterized by ageing population, low birth rate and economic crisis (*Heisei*). Such demographic characteristics strongly suggest shortness of cheap labour force for local companies in general and Small and Medium sized companies (SME) in particular. The temporal context of the research on which this paper reports is twelve years after amendments to the 1990 Immigration Control and Refugee Law that allowed Japanese descendants from all over the world, including those of Latin-America, to enter to Japan as non-skilled workers. Regarding China, as sending country, the export of labour force has been part of the reform's launched in the late 1970s to relief the unemployment rate provoked mainly by the rising population. Regarding, Latin America, as a sending country as well, the highly discussed economic and social vulnerability are contributing to taking the decision to emigrate to new migration markets, such as Japan. The second section introduces the theoretical framework. It explores briefly the Marshallian orthodox concept of citizenship in which work is regarded as a social right. Regarding migration, the paper's perspective is to interpret it as a result of two factors. As a response of the needs and movement of capital and, as the result of a socially constructed alternative for migration. The third section introduces some results on the exploration of the case of increasing entrance of Chinese trainees and Latin American *Nikkei* to Japan. In the case of the Chinese trainees the programs are managed by Japanese organizations such as AOTS, JITCO, and OVTA. Despite these organizations are officially in charge of training programs they are recently perceived as a way to disguise cheap workers to Japan, addressed mainly to SMEs. The section introduces figures on the increasing entrance of Japanese descendants from Latin America and includes some words of the informants regarding precarious working conditions that are encounter in the Japanese labour market.

The last section introduces final remarks. The increasing entrance of these two groups of non-skilled labour, and the inherent competition, as non-skilled workers, for the 3D's type of job, suggests the SMEs' competitiveness relays on low labour costs instead of up dated technology. On the other hand, governmental actions to disguise cheap labour to Japan through Training Programs suggest precarious working conditions as prevailing in some national industries. A question emerges out of this paper, how to protect the immigrants' rights in a such transnational context?. The findings point at the need to extend social rights beyond national boundaries in order to implement and preserve some minimum working conditions fulfilling the social right to live the life of a civilized human being. However, a social policy problem emerges, who will be in charge of providing social benefits in such a transnational context, since both groups of workers are excluded of benefits that national workers are entitle to enjoy in Japan?

The problem

An extensive study on international migration to APEC member economies recently published (Hayase, 2000:333) argues that Japan has not only shown an increasing trend on immigration¹ but also a diversification of nationalities of origin of the immigrants. Such an increasing entrance to Japan might be explained by the ageing population and low birth rate. The median age of Japanese population has risen from 22.3 in 1950 to 40 in the 2000. According to the report *Elderly Population of Japan* (Statistics Bureau, 2001) about 23 per cent of the population, almost one in five, is 65 and over. It is expected by the year 2050 Japan will have one of the highest ageing population. On the other hand, the special birth rate² has declined from 2.75 in 1950 to 1.35 in the 2000 (Japan Almanac, 2002: 61). These demographic problems are affecting the ratio of working population to retirees from 12.2. in 1950 to 3 in 2000. As a result it is obviously a shortage of labour force needed by the enterprises still located in shores. It is safe to suggest not only problems to afford benefits to the retirees but also critical problems to provide services to the ageing population.

¹ Immigration has risen in most OECD countries since the mid-1990s. The USA and Germany received the highest numbers of foreign migrants in 2000. Japan is placed along with the UK, Italy and Canada as absorbing more than 200 000 legal immigrants (OECD, 2002: 82).

² The average number of children one woman gives birth to in her life (Japan Almanac 2002: 61).

As a response to such shortage of labour force, the 1990 Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law granted to Japanese descendants, along with spouses and children, permission to work legally in the country. According to the 2002 Statistical Bureau report *Registered Foreigners by Nationalities*, South American people (Argentine, Brazil, Peru and *others*) and Mexican people (classified as belonging to the group of North America) totalised 310 764. This figure does not include an estimate of 300 000 illegal foreigners.³ As a result of the amendments the pattern of entrance of Latin Americans has been increasing⁴ despite it was thought as decreasing because of the current economic crisis in Japan (*Heisei*). Such an increasing entrance suggests that the Japanese labour market has been in increasing demand for this labour force regardless. It is important to remember that the unemployment rate was rising from 2 in 1990 to 4.9 in 2000 (OECD, 2002: 20). Thus, the increasing entrance might suggest that the type of work the immigrants are doing is the one nationals avoid to take, the 3 D's type (dirty, dangerous and difficult).

On the other hand, in the same decade, 1990s, meanwhile an official window was opened to allow Latin American *Nikkei* to enter Japan legally as non-skilled workers, apparently the best option to satisfy increasing demand for non-skilled workers, another window, was re-opened: the Training Programs.⁵ According to the Osaka Symposium of Foreign Workers (Japan Times, 2003) a figure as high as 54 000 trainees from China, Indonesia and other Asian countries, are currently in Japan. Organizations such as the Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS), Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) and Overseas Vocational Training Association (OVTA), are in charge of Training Programs lunched to support technology transferring to less developed countries. These organizations are actually pointed at as in charge of disguising cheap labour into Japan.

This paper intends to respond to the question of how might be interpreted the increasing entrance of legal foreign workers, *Nikkei* from Latin America, and the trainees from China (in the context of the Japanese demand for cheap labour force) from the theoretical framework of citizenship where work is regarded as a social right? From this theoretical perspective such a mobilization would

³ www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/zuhyou/b0215000.xls.

⁴ It is interesting that the same increasing pattern has been observed in other developed countries such as USA and Germany (OECD, 2002:82).

⁵ There has been an increasing concern about the rise in crimes by foreigners and the xenophobic comments of some politicians

imply serious social policy problems in order to extend benefits to those immigrant workers beyond their national frontiers. In the case of *Nikkeis*, it is observed they tend to stay permanently, turning their immigration from being a solution, for the shortage of labour force, to become a more complex problem. How to respond to the ageing of immigrants? How to satisfy the needs of social services and benefits this population will demand?. The case of trainees are more safeguarded as temporal, in general up to three years of stay, though it has been said that through many immigration procedures trainees could stay up to seven years in the Japan.

Theoretical framework

*Work as a Social right: exclusionary?*⁶

The Marshallian concept of citizenship as basic equality embodied three elements: civil rights, political rights and social rights.⁷

By the social element I mean the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live a life of civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society. The institutions most closely connected with it are the educational system and the social services (Marshall cited in Bulmer and Rees, 1996: 5).⁸

Out of this definition work arises as means to access to a “modicum of economic welfare and security”. Marshall defines work as: “The right to follow the occupation of men’s choice in the place of one’s choice subject only to legitimate demands for preliminary technical training” (Marshall, 1964: 75).

However, rights included in citizenship overlap according to the perspective we observe them. Work appears to be central to civil rights (formative period

⁶ This section is based on a report of the project published in 2003 by the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE) of the Japanese Trade Organization (JETRO).

⁷ Placing social rights as a ‘coronation’ of civil and political rights arose criticisms. Claus Offe regrets this progressive characterization arguing that ‘social rights are not a smooth coronation but a result of political struggle to achieve them’ (Offe, 1984: 94).

⁸ This orthodox perspective on citizenship was debated by the so called *New Right* that defined citizenship in terms of duties to the State, a citizen was expected to become an active citizen in order to deserve the status of citizenship (Kymilica and Norman, 1994). However, two experiments had showed the inappropriateness of such a perspective, the American case in Reagan administration and the English case with Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister. In both cases the New Right proved inefficient regarding the diminishing of poverty, those excluded. On the contrary, the so called *underclass* emerged to define those under the poor class. Having left to the market the selection of the ‘good’ the *New Right* over estimated people potential and sub estimated the global market changes.

in the nineteenth century) the right to follow the occupation of one's choice but it also appears as central to the achievement of the social right (formative period in the twentieth century) of getting a modicum of economic welfare. For this paper, work will be regarded as a social right since it leads *to live a life of civilized being*. Such an inclusionary attribute allows us to perceive work as a bond between citizens and society. It explains why citizens are expected to become workers at some time in their life. Otherwise, it would mean they are excluded from society? Marshall refers to work *as an attribute of the membership of society* (Marshall, 1964: 211), such a membership recalls for a homogenous status for every member. At this point of the discussion the first premise arises for this project: those who are deprived of the social right to work are 'excluded' from society.⁹ Therefore it is safe to state that those who emigrate to Japan in the search of work might be perceived as citizens from other countries in the search of fulfilling its social right to work beyond their national frontiers, at the receptor country.

Boundaries of citizenship in the Nation-State?

This section intends to provide some arguments for re-thinking the concept of citizenship from the space delimitation of nation-state to a transnational scope. Such a possibility emerges from Marshall's postulate on the definition of citizenship as *national* limited. A merit of the Marshallian concept of citizenship is it embraces social change to the evolution of the three elements of citizenship. From that merit, the possibility to expand the concept from national boundaries to transnational scope seems to be worthy of consideration to respond to the needs of a globalized world: "In the medieval towns... examples of genuine and equal citizenship can be found. But its specific rights and duties were strictly local, whereas the citizenship whose history I wish to trace is, by definition, national" (Marshall, 1964: 95).

⁹ There are several arguments about the function that social rights fulfil in society. Some scholars see social rights in a favourable light as Peter Alcock who argues that social rights have a cohesive function 'they unite those whom the market inevitable divides (1994: 107). Despite Alcock pioneered the idea of having 'universal welfare state' he delimited the discussion within national boundaries. Similarly, France Twine (1994: 35) attributes to social rights an integrative function for those who are excluded by market forces.

¹⁰ The scholar Ronald Dore call to '*redefine the social significance of work and the concept of a right to a job*' due to the rising rates of unemployment in industrialized countries (Dore, 1994: 10).

From this quotation it is safe to say that the concept expanded from the town to the nation's boundaries at interwar time when the reconstruction of nation-state was a priority to Europe. However, the same process of expansion might be thought in a current global world where technology and finance markets have already surpassed national frontiers but in which the social debate on citizenship is still nation-state constrained resulting on apparent contradiction of current needs and tendencies of the world.¹¹

Two main positions are in the debate regarding boundaries. David Thelen (2000) proclaims that the boundaries of citizenship is placed on nation-state. Therefore, according to this position when we talk about inclusion we should think on terms of including groups, that traditionally have been excluded, to the citizenship boundaries within limits of the nation-state. The other position is calling for a *transnational citizenship* (Bauböck, 1994) but at the same time it questions the convenience to re-thinking citizenship in *global state*. Therefore, such a position is still constraining citizenship but in a step forward called *transnational*, a sort of midway between national and global state dimensions.

From the above, it might be possible to re-think the concept of citizenship. The second premise is that expansion of the concept seems to be necessary in the globalized world where a great deal of population is leaving the frontiers of their nation-states of origin in the search of better terrains for living. Those who are identified as included in their countries of origin decided to shift to the attribute of excluded, through the process of emigration to a country that is lacking of provisions to protect them. Ultimately, the issue is how to include them in the new society in need of them as workers. It is clear that functional expansion of citizenship should take place to respond to the geographical expansion that is taking place in the very act of mobilization of million of migrants in the world. It is evident that such an expansion should be done beyond national boundaries, how extensive such expansion must be, global or transnational, is still not clarified.

Migration of workers: some explanations

Regarding international migration of labour, scholars have been moving from simple cause-effect explanations to a more complex array of factors intertwining

¹¹ Some scholars argue that the central theme in the social theory is to deny the 'social' through the replacing of the 'community' (Delanthy, 2000: 103).

in the mobility of labour. Watanabe Satokō (2000) pointed to some deficiencies in simplistic cause-effect approaches. Watanabe introduces the autonomy of the migrant in the decision to migrate as relevant element observing that neo-classical economic approach¹³ lacks of the element of preferences in the process to emigrate. In orthodox push-pull theories, wage differential is a key factor. On the other hand, Marxist approach interprets migration of labour as a result of capital controlling labour¹⁴ manifested in uneven development between core and peripheral countries (Aragonés, 2000). However, both approaches underestimate circuits of information and community solidarity,¹⁵ workers seem to respond merely to external conditions. Out of these interpretations the migrant emerges as no possessing preferences on the search of better *chances to recreate and improve their life*. Out of these criticisms Watanabe proposes to incorporate the autonomy of the migrants as an important element to be considered when we study on migration of labour. I would like to clarify that autonomy exists 'to certain extend'. Watanabe calls this interpretation as *two-side Marxist Theory*: "(It) perceives migration as a self-activity of workers who seek out better terrains for life and struggle, as well as one of capital's efforts, at the international organization and reorganization of labour"¹⁶ (Watanabe, 2000: 5).

Therefore, the third premise is related to the role of the so-called *push-pulls* factors in the migration process. In this research these factors are treated as contributing to take such a decision instead of being pointed out as determinant causes to emigrate. Saskia Sassen (1998, 2000) argues that *there is not a systematic relationship* between migration of workers and the existence of factors such as overpopulation, poverty and economic stagnation (Sassen, 1998: 33). Sassen argues that experiencing these factors is not enough to turn them into *push* factors; *the option to migrate itself is socially produced* (Sassen, 1998: 55). Therefore, the decision to emigrate is the result of a social process developed out of a familiarity between the receptor country and the sending country given mainly through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In our cases, it is observed familiarity between Latin American and Japan, in both social and economic influence. According to the Ministry of Finance, out of the total of Japanese

¹² Japanese name are written last name followed by the given name.

¹³ Watanabe describes the neoclassical economic approach of international relations to capital mobility; the migration is motivated by the difference in abundance of resource between nations.

¹⁴ This approach is exemplified in De Gaudemar (1976) where the term is described as dynamic, defining movements related to working places, working tasks, geographical localization, etc.

¹⁵ Such solidarity was fully observed in the sample.

¹⁶ The term would be, *people treated as human capital*.

foreign investment about 11 per cent went to Latin America, and 12 per cent to Asia (Japan Almanac, 2002: 93). It is worthy to bear in mind that Japan has also been historically linked to China. Other theoretical explanations are related to mobility of production's factors. This explanation was widely discussed in the case of international migration to Asia Pacific. Mayumi Fukumoto (2002: 40) argues that due to constrains on labour mobility imposed by receiving or sending governments FDI has been thought as significant in the contention of migration; it provides job opportunities. Through cross-country analysis with regression Fukumoto finds that FDI has not significant impact on migration, contrary to exports. In this research we found that the factor of job opportunities it is not the only one for Latin Americans to take the decision to stay in Japan¹⁷ instead of going back to the country of origin when the expected benefits are not encounter workers decided to stay.

Therefore, the third premise for this paper is that migrants could be perceived as autonomous, to certain extend, in the search of improving their life¹⁸ when taking the decision to emigrate it comes to be the result of a social process, the process includes the selection of the target market. Push-Pull factors contribute to take the decision but are not the reason to emigrate.

Up to here we have stated three premises for this paper. The first is that work is a social right which deprivation will result on social exclusion from society. The second is that the concept of citizenship must be expanded beyond national boundaries; at least to transnational scope, in order to respond to the current human-geographical expansion involved in the increasing migration in the world. The third is that migrant's decision to emigrate is a socially constructed decision responding to push-pull factors. This last premise may be useful to explain why Latin American *Nikkei*, participants in this research, pointed at some 'good' reasons, no financial ones, to stay in Japan, such as the *safety* of the country for their children and low criminal offences.

Thus, Latin American workers seem to posses certain autonomy in their decision to emigrate and to decide to stay in Japan. It is not clear yet to what extend Chinese posses that autonomy. However, it is clear that the socially produced decision to immigrate to Japan is influenced by the relationship between Japan and Latin America and China. Therefore, the decision to migrate, and to stay in Japan, may be seen as the result of many intertwining

¹⁷ In the case of the informants, they pointed at the safety environment in Japan, especially regarding children and women, as determinant to stay there.

¹⁸ She refers to community solidarity and social circuits as vital in this autonomous process.

factors. The autonomy of workers is manifested in taking *the option to emigrate*, in the search to improve their standard of living, and in a context of certain familiarity between Japan and countries of China and from Latin America.

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS AND NUMBER
OF ENTERPRISES

SMEs Industries	SMEs		Large enterprises		Total	
	Number of enterprises	% of total	Number of enterprises	% of total	Number of enterprises	% of total
Number of establishments	6 139 735	99.3	45 094	0.7	6 184 829	100.0
Number of enterprises	4 836 764	99.7	14 340	0.3	4 851 104	100.0

Source: compiled from Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, Establishment and Enterprise Census of Japan (1999).

According to the Small and Medium Enterprise Agency, small and medium-sized companies are corporations capitalized at 300 million yen or less or with 300 or less employees, or private companies with 300 or less employees (Japan Almanac 2002: 91).

Some results

Where to work?

According to the 1999 Establishment and Enterprise Census of Japan the Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) ¹⁹ count for the 99.3 per cent of total establishments, providing for 64.9 per cent (44 904 751) of all employees, see table 1 and table 2 shows the relevancy of the participation of SMEs in the Japanese labour market and consequently in its economy.²⁰

Table 2, shows the number of employees reported in the 1999 Establishment and Enterprise Census of Japan the Small and Medium Size Enterprises. To the 2001 Establishment and Enterprise Census, the total number of persons engaged

¹⁹ Unfortunately in Japan, small and medium size companies are clustered in one classification (SME). The criteria is as follows: for manufacturing and others, a capital up to 300 million yen and up to 300 employees; for wholesale, a capital up to 100 millions and up to 100 employees; for retail and services, a capital up to 50 million and up to 50 employees in the former and up to 100 in the latter (www.sme.ne.jp/policies/08_kihonhou/kihonhou.html).

²⁰ http://www.sme.ne.jp/policies/07_tokei/1_table.html#01.

reached 60 158 044. It is notorious the number of establishments²¹ increased to a total figure of 6 350 101.²²

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

SMEs Industries	SMEs		Large enterprises		Total	
	Number of employes	% of total	Number of employees	% of total	Number of employees	% of total
Manufacturing and others	13 987 603	64.9	7 577 497	35.1	21 565 100	100.0
Wholesale	2 733 853	70.9	1 120 608	29.1	3 854 461	100.0
Retail	7 835 166	72.2	3 012 074	27.8	10 847 240	100.0
Services	6 640 797	76.9	1 997 153	23.1	8 637 950	100.0
Total (non-primary industries)	31 197 419	69.5	13 707 332	30.5	44 904 751	100.0

Source: compiled from Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, Establishment and Enterprise Census of Japan (1999).

Therefore, it is safe to say that foreign workers and Trainees are to satisfy the needs of SMEs labour market. It seems that *Nikkeis*, along with Trainees, legal and disguised foreigner workers, are important in sustaining the economy of Japan providing a cheap and flexible labour force vital to sustain Japanese competitiveness in the world market.

Diversification of foreign entrances

Regarding the diversification of foreigners' entrance to Japan table 3, shows some figures for the year 2001. For that year, *Trainees* represented the two per cent of the total and the status of *spouse or child of a Japanese National* was about 16 per cent. *Nikkei* category belongs to the latter status. Both categories are increasing more than 100 per cent in comparison with the previous year, 2000. Even when it seems that trainee's category is small, it is important to bear in mind that it represents the cheapest labour for enterprises in Japan. As we will discuss, the allowance trainees receive is so low that it could be seen as an

²¹ Establishment is defined as a single physical location where an economic activity is conducted.

²² www.stat.go.jp/data/jigyoku/kakuhou/zenkoku/zuhyou/a002.xls.

‘indirect’ subsidy from government to companies in the search of keeping some local industries in national territory.

TABLE 3
REGISTERED FOREIGNERS BY VISA STATUS

	No. of people	Component ratio (%)	Comparison to previous year (%)
Total number	1 778 462	100.0	105.5
Permanent residents	684 853	38.5	104.1
Non-permanent residents	1 093 609	61.5	106.3
Spouse or child of japanese national	280 436	15.8	100.3
Long term resident	244 460	13.7	102.9
College student	93 614	5.3	121.6
Dependent 7	8 847	4.4	108.2
Entertainer 5	5 461	3.1	103.0
Pre-college student	41 766	2.3	110.5
Specialist in humanities/international service 4	0 861	2.3	117.6
Trainee 3	8 169	2.1	105.4
Others 21	9 995	12.4	110.4
Compiled at end of 2001			
Unit: persons			

Source: Jitco: <http://www.jitco.or.jp/eng/index.htm>. It includes all nationalities.

According to Hou Wenrou (2000: 162) paper presented in the *International Workshop on International Migration and Structural Change in the APEC member Economies* in Taipei, export of labour has been on since the China's Reforms launched in 1978. There are two main channels of exportation of workers, international labour contracts and inter-companies agreements (Chinese and abroad located companies). Export of workers is necessary to ease the employment pressure of the largest populated country in the world, with high urban unemployment rate and population in the search of job. The main official goal is to attain introduction of new science and technology. It is important to remember that in the mid-1990s state-owned enterprises have passed through processes of restructure. The result is a considerable number of workers laid off and redundant workers that turns into inefficient some companies.

TABLE 4
CHANGES IN FOREIGN TRAINEES ENTERING JAPAN BY
NATIONALITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH 2001

	No. of people	Component ratio (%)	Comparison to previous year (%)
Total number	59 064	100.0	109.3
Asia subtotal	53 967	91.4	109.8
China 32	894	55.7	118.2
Indonesia 5	817	9.8	93.4
Philippines 3	768	6.4	101.1
Vietnam 3	238	5.5	117.1
Thailand 3	184	5.4	107.1
Malaysia 1	163	2.0	90.5
Others 3	903	6.6	90.2
Africa 1	603	2.7	101.9
South America	1 237	2.1	88.4
Europe 1	021	1.7	119.6
North America	727	1.2	116.9
Oceania 427		0.7	114.2
Others 82		0.1	96.5
Unit: persons			

Source: <http://www.jitco.or.jp/eng/index.htm>.

There are five categories to differentiate export processes of workers; we will not discuss them here. According to Wenrou, the data from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation reports that the number of workers export contracts was 3 455 in 1990, reaching the peak in 1998 when 2.39 billion Chinese were abroad as a labour force under international contracts (Wenrou, 2000: 169). It is safety to think that this export of labour will continue due to the restructuring Regarding the Japanese case, it is evident that the largest group of trainees corresponds to the Chinese (table 4).

Latin-American Japanese descendants (*Nikkei*)²³

Latin American countries and Japan are perceived as distant countries not only regarding distance but also regarding economic relationship. Kagami Mitsuhiro describes such a relationship as *strong in blood but weak in business*' (Kagami, 2002). He reports that there is around 1.3 million of Japanese descendants in Latin America (*Nikkei*) and 200 000 working and living in Japan. It is outstanding how fast this figure changes year by year. The Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law, approved by the Diet on December 8 of 1989 and in effect since June 1990, opened the door to *Nikkei* and their spouses and children stimulating their legal migration to Japan to satisfy companies in need of labour force. The relevance of this action was that it opened up the Japanese unskilled labour market. Despite current demographic and economic situation in Japan this immigration, thought as temporary, has tended to become permanent and it has increased in numbers.

The reported number of *Nikkei* in Latin America represents a labour stock for Japanese companies in need of cheap and flexible labour. These workers allow Japanese companies to compete in an international market in which China is imposing a low labour costs as a norm. The results reported in this research, after one year of publishing Kagami's, are relevant since they suggest that the relationship between Latin America and Japan is not *weak in business* when we take into account that Japanese companies, small and medium sized (SMEs), and even large sized, are employing *Nikkei* as labour. Therefore, even though there is an apparently weak business relationship between Latin America and Japan, suggested by the amount of money involved in business transactions, when we explore deeper such a relationship, it is evident that blood is significant to business. *Nikkei*, along with trainees, legal and illegal foreigner workers, are important in sustaining the economy of Japan throughout providing a cheap and flexible labour force vital to sustain Japanese competitiveness in the world. According to extensive studies on international migration recently published (Hayase, 2000, 2002) the case of Japan shows not only an increasing trend on immigration but also diversification on nationalities of origin. The main reason is pointed as the economic.

²³ This section is based on a major research carried on in Japan in the 2002 financed by the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE) of the Japanese Trade Organization (Jetro).

²⁴ The extension of the stay was six months but it was extended up to one year, to three years.

TABLE 5
LATIN AMERICANS IN JAPAN

Nationality	1980 19	85	1990	1995	1997	1998 199	9 2	000
Brazil	1 492	1 955	56 429	176 440	233 254	222 217	224 299	254 394
Peru	348	480	10 279	36 269	40 394	41 317	42 773	46 171
Argentina	293	329	2 656	2 910	3 300	2 962	2 924	3 072
Mexico*	418	487	786	1 238	1 551	1 596	1 612	1 740
Other	226	307	584	1,019	1230	1 297	1 283	1 416
Total	2 777	3 558	70 734	217 876	279 729	269 389	272 891	306 793

*Mexico is regarded as North America along with Canada and the United States of America.
Source: 2002 Japan Statistical Yearbook, www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/1431-02.htm.

Previous to the amendments to the 1990 Immigration Control and Refugee Control and Refugee Recognition Law, the appreciation of the yen after the 1986 Plaza Agreement attracted foreign labour, at that time mainly from Asia (93 per cent of the total) (Hayase, 2002: 16). Therefore, the first factor is economic. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1995) data reveals that there are striking economic differences between developing countries and Japan that attracted an increasing number of foreign workers. Table 5, shows the increasing pattern of entrance for this group.

The fact that the entrance of Latin Americans to Japan increased since the amendments to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in 1990 is pointing to *Nikkei* as the largest group among Latin Americans.²⁵

In the report *Estudio Económico de América Latina y del Caribe 2001-2002* (Latin American and Caribbean Economic Research 2001-2002) published by the Economic Commission for Latin American and Caribbean (Cepal) Latin America is depicted as immersed into a severe economic crisis. This region has been strongly dependent on the performance of developed economies. Therefore, since these economies are slowly recovering from economic crisis Latin American countries are encountering several problems. It is also pointed at internal economic dependence in the performance of developed economies; performance has contributed to expand the crisis in Latin America. As in the Argentina case, effects are extending from one country to another. Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay, among others, are immersed in severe economic problems. This report points to unemployment rate has risen to severe levels such as the case of Argentina (22 per cent), Colombia (20 per cent), Brazil (8 per cent), and, Mexico (4.5 per cent). Thus, from this data migration seems to be a way for improving workers standards of living.

Chinese workers enter to Japan as *Trainees*

Regarding China, export of workers is a key factor in the China reforms. There are some factors identified as push factors for emigration of workers: a large size population (the largest in the world, 1.24 billion people), new graduates in need of employment, young and middle-aged workers from country side in the search of job, several million of unemployed people, 5.70 million in 1997 (Wenrou,

²⁵ Although there are Nikkeis in every country formerly occupied by Japanese, Latin Americans are the higher in proportion entering to Japan.

2001: 165). China is supporting export of workers since 1977. According to Wenrou, in the period of 1979-1988, the average annual growth rate of labour export was 47.1 per cent. This trend has increased significantly since the 1990's. By the end of September 1999, the workers working abroad was 345 574. It is interesting that among the five categories of China workers none corresponds to trainees.

Regarding Japan there are some organizations in charge of Training Programs. The main are: Japan International Cooperation Organization (JITCO), The Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS), and Overseas Vocational Training Association (OVTA). The organization leading these programs is Jitco.²⁶ Jitco was established in 1991, with the aim of providing comprehensive support and services to companies and organizations, mainly in the private sector, that accept foreign trainees. Jitco is under five Japanese ministries: "Justice, Foreign Affairs", "Health, Labour and Welfare", "Economy, Trade and Industry", and, "Land, Infrastructure and Transport". This suggests that the Chinese people that leave China to work abroad is categorized as Trainee when enter Japan.

Jitco offer two programs: Training Program (TP) and the Technical Internship Training Program (TITP). Regarding TP, the person is called Trainee, Chinese work one year in the host company. Regarding the TITP, the person is called Technical Intern, Chinese work up to two years for the host company. The TP is the lowest in allowance paid to the labourer. According to the promotional of Jitco, the main objective of the Training Programs must be to secure the "transfer of technology, skills, and knowledge of industry as a means of contributing to the development of the human and industrial resources of other countries". In other words, trainees are not to compensate shortness of labour force in Japan. However, the trend on dropping birth rate and ageing of the population suggest such shortness as a critical problem for the Japanese industry.

The number of trainees per company is set at one per 20 full time workers. However the restriction on trainee's number may be eased in cases "where trainees are accepted via chamber of commerce and industry, business corporative, etc". Table 6 shows the number of trainees accepted in Japan during the year 2002.

²⁶ Based on the document: Training Program and Technical Internship Training Program in Japan (2002) Jitco, Japan.

TABLE 6
TRAINEES PROGRAMS IN JAPAN 2001

	No. of people	Component ratio (%)
Grand total	59 064	100.0
<i>Government organizations</i>		
Subtotal 12	626	21.4
JICA 7	816	(13.2)
AOTS 4	126	(7.0)
JAVADA 534		(0.9)
ILO 150		(0.3)
<i>Private host</i>		
JITCO support		
Subtotal 37	423	63.4
Type 1	9 953	(16.9)
Type 2	27 470	(46.5)
Others 9	015	15.3
Unit: persons		

Data supplied by Jitco.

NB: JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), AOTS (The Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship), JAVADA (Japan Vocational Ability Development Association), ILO (The ILO Association of Japan Inc.)

Type 1: Type Implemented by a Company Itself.

Type 2: Type Implemented through the Medium of an Accepting Organization.

Type 1 refers to the acceptance of trainees being undertaken solely by companies, whereas, Type 2 refers to the acceptance of trainees being undertaken by organizations such as public-service corporations, chambers of commerce and industry and the like cooperating together as a group.

As it is observed from the table 6, the largest proportion of Trainees directed to private hosts is the Jitco's. That is why many point at Jitco as an organization in charge of disguising workers for private companies. The Trainee system in Japan has been raising concerns about its role as disguising cheap workers to Japan, characterized by ageing of population and dropping birth rate. According to Hatate Akira (2002) some problems trainees encounter in Japan are:

1. off-the-job training is not provided (OJ);
2. no pay for Trainees work overtime and on holidays;
3. monetary exploitation in the name of management fee (remittance to the sending agency), technical trainees are not paid wage equivalent to that of the Japanese workers;

4. limit on contacts of Trainees with Japanese and co-Trainees from the same country.

Chinese Trainees and Latin-American Nikkei are struggling for the 3D's job?

According to the above sections both groups of immigrants, Chinese Trainees and Latin-American *Nikkeis*, have been introduced to Japan in the early 1990s as a response to the SME's needs of cheap labour force. The SME's are significant to the Japanese economy as provider of flexibility to large size companies. Japan is currently characterized by an ageing population and dropping birth rate, therefore, it is safe to say that there is a need of foreign and cheap labour force. Both groups enter to Japan legally; however, the Chinese Trainees seem to be the most vulnerable regarding payment and working conditions. First, there is a general consensus about JITCO disguising workers. It is said that the Trainees do not receive training but perform repetitive task in the companies as non-skilled workers.

The allowance received by the Trainees of the TP, suggest precarious conditions of work and earnings. The income is a little bit higher during the second year of the TITP than during the first one. In the second year the Technical Intern obtains a better income. Despite the improvement of the income, it seems to be low in comparison with the income of the nationals engaged in the same type of activity. Meanwhile a Latin-American *Nikkei* earns about 1 000 Yen per hour; the 40.8 per cent of the Trainees earn 2 000 Yen per day.²⁷ Around the 40 per cent of Technical Interns earn 4 000 Yen per day.²⁸

Regarding the type of work Chinese Trainees perform in Japan, the recently *Osaka Symposium on Foreign Workers*, (Japan Times, 2003) disclosed severe working conditions for these workers. In the case of Latin American *Nikkei*, they do work for lower salaries and benefits than the nationals but not as low as the trainees.

Some final remarks

In this paper we explored the diversification of increasing entrance of foreign workers to Japan. It seems this entrance is a response from excluded groups in

²⁷ This income is not termed as salary or wage but allowance.

²⁸ This income is termed as wage.

the search of the social right to work beyond national frontiers. We focused on two groups: the Chinese and the Latin-American workers. The two groups are legal workers who have been officially accepted in Japan through two different immigration statuses: *Trainees* and *Spouse of Child of a National*. This labour force is the cheapest in the Japanese labour market. The SME's sized companies have demanded cheap labour, as a result legal entrance of these two groups has been allowed since the late 1980s and early 1990s. Unfortunately, this immigration is not only a matter of wage differentials, the two groups earn lower salaries than the nationals but it is also about exclusion and vulnerability of these two groups. The Chinese Trainees seems to be the most vulnerable, with a low salary called *allowance*, and precarious working conditions. These are elements of the so-called 3D's jobs: difficult, thirty and dangerous. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that these two groups are double excluded: socially in the host society, Japan, and from the social right to work at their home countries.

Regarding the decision to immigrate to Japan, in the case of Latin American *Nikkei* the window to immigrate legally seems to be quite attractive for a vulnerable population. In the case of Chinese trainees their export from their country of origin has been imposed by the state's reforms. China is a country facing serious problems to deal with its high population, the highest in the world, and urban unemployment rate. To what extent the autonomy inherent in the social decision to emigrate is present in the case of Chinese workers? This is a question that deserves a more extended research. Here is enough to mention that such a quality of autonomy seems to be lacking in the case of Chinese trainees. After exploring the case of immigration of these two groups, we still have the same initial question, how to provide protection to workers beyond the national limits of the nation-state? It is a question that has not answer by now despite the increasing numbers of international migrant workers in the world. However, analysing the case of these two groups contributes to clarify what are some strategies to satisfy the shortage of cheap labour force needed in some central countries, in this case Japan, in the legality framework of immigration statuses: by blood (*ius sanguinis*) or in training.

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