

Editorial Note

This issue of the Asian Studies Journal features “Nikkeijin”. This Japanese term is explicitly explained by the authors in this volume, and for this reason, I will refrain from defining it. During the editing process, I realized the ambiguity of the term and sought a better, if not the best, alternative: Japanese diaspora, Japanese descendants, Japanese migrants, and so on. In fact, the authors in this volume use nuanced interpretation in referring to “them”: Japanese(-)Filipino/American, Filipino(-)Japanese; Japanese(-)Filipino descendants; persons of Japanese descent, Japanese descendants; Japanese migrants; Japanese; Japanese community; Japanese migrant laborers; descendants of Japanese migrants; Filipino-Japanese children; Filipino Nikkeijin; and so on. Ultimately, the concept of what “Japanese” is turned out to be problematic.

Emigrants from today’s Okinawa Prefecture and their descendants often seem to prefer labelling themselves *Okinawan* as an established English adjective and noun, over the label *nikkei* - “of Japanese ancestry” - a term less popular with English-speaking populations. Philippine history books have recorded the presence of many Japanese in different parts of Luzon in the earlier part of the 16th century, before the arrival of the Spanish expansionists. They were traders, fishermen, domestic servants, corsairs, exiles, or prostitutes. Today, their descendants are hardly recognizable, and the concept of Nikkeijin excludes them. Also, the discourse of Nikkeijin, at least in the Philippines, usually does not include so-called *karayuki-san*, or Japanese prostitutes from the late Edo to the early Showa periods (at the turn of the 20th century); nor would it likely accept their descendants, if identified, as Nikkeijin.

After a long process of deciphering the meaning of “Nikkeijin”, I decided to retain the term as the title of this special issue to stress its “embeddedness” in Japan’s modernization. It was in the process of modernization that the concept of “Japanese” vis-à-vis nation-state was established and that the Okinawa region became a part of it. The lifting of more than 200 years of maritime restrictions at the end of the Tokugawa

Shogunate (1601-1868) marked one of the first steps towards the modernization of Japan. Since then, many “Japanese” left for the Asian, Pacific, and North and South American regions under the official emigration program of the Japanese government. Others were personally motivated to leave in search of a better life abroad. The word Nikkeijin by and large refers to those emigrants and their descendants.*

In 1973, at the height of Japan’s economic boom, the Nippon-maru sailed for the last time from Yokohama Port to South America signalling the end of the era of seaborne Japanese emigrations. In the 1980s, air travel became a more efficient means of carrying international tourists, mainly from affluent countries including Japan, and migrant workers from less developed countries, including Brazil and the Philippines, across states. In the 1990s, the international labor markets expanded with the aid of the internet technology. As a result, the Japanese abroad and their descendants today do not seem to fit the category of “Nikkeijin” in a classical sense any more. They may rather be labelled as global citizens as well as members of cyber communities, perhaps with a lesser sense of attachment to Japan as a nation-state and to the Japanese community at their place of residence. They enjoy on-line connection with their family, friends and colleagues in Japan and the world, just like they do with those in their destination community to deal with their everyday concerns, all simultaneously. This marks a clear contrast from the early Nikkeijin during the 20th century who, presumably, imagined Japan from afar as a contoured territory isolated by the sea. Japan was then by and large covered with a print-media network that connected its people as their source of knowledge, information and entertainment; while embracing prefectural factions. Perhaps, that was the driving force that have bonded Japanese migrants psychologically and emotionally in their destination too; such intimacy among *the* Japanese must have been hardly possible in the pre-modern age and is becoming faint in the internet age.

* At the final stage of the editing, I came to realize that the word “shin-Nikkeijin” in the Philippines, referring to children of Filipino and Japanese parents which rapidly increased in number since the 1980s as a result of the proliferation of Filipina migrant workers and wives in rural communities in Japan, seems to be absorbed by “Nikkeijin” in the labor market and functions as an identity marker today.

Studying the Nikkeijin as the legacy of the 20th century and the contemporary issues that result from their status inevitably, means seeing the Nikkeijin from different lenses. The articles in this volume are to varying degrees a historical investigation of the subject, yet the discussion is inflected with the disciplinary background of each author. The *Asian Studies Journal*, renewed as a refereed journal, serves as an appropriate channel to feature this topic.

As issue editor, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the anonymous referees for their valuable comments that raised each article's quality. My thanks also go to Armando S. Malay, Jr., who provided insightful suggestions on some English wording and phrasing, to improve the accuracy and the flow of the scripts. (Through enlightening editorial meetings with him, my understanding of such key concepts as nation-state, citizenship, diaspora, and most importantly, the principle of academic writing as process of logic construction, sharpened). Also, I would like to thank the Japan Foundation for its generous support for the publication of this special issue. This publication is a part of the "Philippine Nikkeijin 2007", a series of events related to Nikkeijin in the Philippines. The University of the Philippines Asian Center hosted a photographic exhibition "Haponés: The Early 20th Century Japanese Community of Baguio" and a symposium "Japanese Migrants to the Philippines: History, Issues and Prospect" in 2007. "Haponés" has been favourably received in Baguio City in 2008. Lastly, I thank all of those who made this publication, as well as the above mentioned events, possible and meaningful.

The romanization of Japanese words as well as the spelling of Japanese names reflect each author's interpretation. Therefore, they are not necessarily consistent throughout the volume. Similarly, the inclusion of Japanese characters was left to the discretion of each author.

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