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Recognising 'Japaneseness': the politics of recognition by the Philippine Nikkeijin

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Regaining "Japoneseness": The Politics of Recognition by the Philippine Nikkeijin

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Introduction

"Ethnic identities" are not only made and re-made, but are created through a constant interplay with other evolving identities – this is what Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2000, p. 165), a British-Australian historian, has stated about peoples living in the modern nation-state. Her point is particularly applicable in the case of the identities of multiethnic peoples. Their identities are often perceived as fluid, and have been described as "a dynamic construct that changes over time in relation to the specific social situations which biracial persons experience" (Pinderhughes, 1995, p. 81). Multiethnic people also tend to change their identity according to the geographic region in which they have resided. This tendency was described frankly by the mestizo Latin American scholar, Linda Alcoff (1995, p. 278): "in white society I feel my Latinness, in Latin society I feel my whiteness".

This paper examines such identity variability in the case of the Nikkei in the Philippines. There is no legal definition of "Nikkei" or the original Japanese term "Nikkeijin". According to the definition of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Nikkeijin are "overseas Japanese permanent residents having Japanese nationality and people of Japanese descent having no Japanese nationality" (Gaimushô Ryôji Ijû-bu Seisaku-ka, 2002, p. 196). On the other hand, the International Nikkei Research Project, which comprises scholars, defines "Nikkei" as "a person or persons of Japanese descent, and their descendants, who emigrated from Japan and who created unique communities and lifestyles within the societies in which they now live. The concept includes the dekasegi [emigration to earn money], or persons who returned temporarily to live and work in Japan, where they often had a separate identity from that of the larger Japanese population" (Hirabayashi et al., 2002, p. 19). In this paper, I define the Nikkei as people of Japanese descent living outside Japan, including those who have returned or emigrated to Japan.

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The largest overseas Nikkei community exists in Brazil (around 1.3 million) and the second largest in the United States (around 1 million) (Gaimushō Ryōji Ijū-bu Seisaku-ka, 2002, p. 196). These days, in both countries, hundreds of thousands of Nikkei are children of Japanese and foreign parentage. As some scholars have pointed out, some mixed children of American Nikkei intermarriages were buffeted between their two identities, unsure which to choose, or even whether it was possible to embrace one or the other in the United States (Spickard, 1989, p. 116), whereas many Brazilian Nikkei mestizos rejected their Japanese background in social situations but embraced it in the economic sphere (Lesser, 2002, p. 50).

The recent studies on the Nikkei in the Americas indicate that there is a series of new dynamic identities that has been fuelled in part by human globalisation processes. For instance, Bolivia’s Nikkei, who are the offspring of Japanese-Bolivian couples and had not established a distinct Nikkei community in the past, have strengthened their self-identity as “Nikkei” since they became aware that those with Japanese surnames could take advantage of special job opportunities in Japan (Amemiya, 2002), especially after Japan enforced a unique immigration policy granting privileged long-term visas to overseas Nikkei in 1990.

Based on the above and other studies on multiethnic Nikkei, this paper attempts to explore the Philippine Nikkei’s ethnic/national identity in connection with their shifting nationality/citizenship. I use a Japanese term “Philippine Nikkeijin” for the Philippine Nikkei because this is how they have referred to themselves since the 1980s. I use the term “nationality” (“kokuseki”) in the Japanese context and the term “citizenship” (“pagkamanamayan” in Filipino) in the Philippine context, in line with colloquial expressions and official English terms in each country. This community has not received much attention in academic circles, partly due to its relatively small size, but deserves to be studied because of the unique life histories of the Philippine Nikkeijin and their recent collective movement to regain their “lost” Japanese nationality, which has not been reported in past studies on other Nikkei communities around the world. Their movement has been developed into the politics of recognition as “Nikkeijin” and subsequently as “Japanese”. Their politics is also worthy of examination, primarily because of its role in breaking down the official boundary between “Nikkei” and “Japanese”, which is discussed in more detail later.

The politics of recognition can be seen as a new form of identity politics, whereby groups formed on the basis of shared ethnicity, religion, gender or sexuality enter political arenas in search of recognition and remoulding of citizenship so that it comes to reflect these more fractionalised forms of personal identity (Miller, 2002, pp. 2-4). In the United States, for example, a new politics of recognition is being practised by the Association of MultiEthnic Americans. It objects to identity politics based on existing monoracial identification and classification (Spencer, 1999, pp. 87-124; Takezawa, 2005, pp. 220-29). This is one of the various forms of politics of recognition that has been spreading among oppressed or marginalised peoples in democratic societies.

The Philippine Nikkeijin, the vast majority of whom are multiethnic, have furthered their original aims such as “upgrading” their Nikkei generation from Nisei [second-generation Japanese immigrants] to Issei [first-generation Japanese immigrants] or from Sansei [third-generation Japanese immigrants] to Nisei by listing their names in their Japanese ancestors’ koseki [family register] and other means. I examined the historical background, the process and mechanism of the politics and identity and nationality/citizenship shift of
Philippine Nikkeijin through a careful reading of primary and second materials as well as open-ended interviews using strategic sampling. My interviews with over 100 Philippine Nikkeijin and others concerned with this issue were carried out intermittently in the Philippines and Japan from 2001 until 2006.8

This paper aims to contribute to a deepening understanding of the complex identity and citizenship problems shared by people of mixed ancestry, whose populations have been rapidly increasing around the world. This demonstrates how ethnic identifications in each political and social context involved political manoeuvrings, and the discarding and readoption of “Japaneseness” in such contexts indicate the fluidity and variability of the identities and citizenships of multietnics.

Problematic Integration of Mestizo Nisei into the Japanese Community

The Philippine Nikkeijin comprises Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei [the fourth generation] and even Gossei [the fifth generation]. These generational Japanese terms are quite often used among the Philippine Nikkeijin and other Nikkei communities around the world, and are thus also used as English terms. Based on a recent statistical survey by the nationwide Nikkeijin organisation the Federation of Nikkeijin Kai Philippines, 2,972 or more Nisei were left in the Philippines at the end of the Asia-Pacific War, and the numbers of Sansei and Yonsei born in the Philippines are estimated to be 10,288 and 31,904 respectively (see Table 1).

By region, Davao in the eastern part of Mindanao Island has the biggest Nikkeijin community. For prewar overseas Japanese migrants, Davao was one of the most attractive frontiers. It was the best place to plant abaca (Manila hemp) because of its fertile soil and typhoon-free climate. The Isssei were highly sought after as abaca cultivators by American and Filipino plantation owners because of their reputation as good workers.

\[\text{Table 1. Numbers of Philippine Nikkeijin by Generation and Area (as of July 2005)}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA (from north to south)</th>
<th>Nisei (2nd Gen.)</th>
<th>Sansei (3rd Gen.)</th>
<th>Yonsei (4th Gen.)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baguio (Luzon Island)</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>1,385</td>
<td>4,709</td>
<td>6,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila (Luzon Island)</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>1,857</td>
<td>5,838</td>
<td>8,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicol (Luzon Island)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>1,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iloilo (Panay Island)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>1,077</td>
<td>1,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacolod (Negros Island)</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>1,911</td>
<td>2,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cebu/Samar (Cebu Island/Samar Island)</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>1,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butuan (Mindanao Island)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surigao del Sur/Misamis Oriental (Mindanao Island)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iligan/Cagayan de Oro (Mindanao Island)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>1,236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davao (Mindanao Island)</td>
<td>1,249</td>
<td>4,246</td>
<td>12,722</td>
<td>18,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotabato (Mindanao Island)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>1,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zamboanga (Mindanao Island)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Santos (Mindanao Island)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,972</td>
<td>10,288</td>
<td>31,904</td>
<td>45,164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All figures are based on a survey by the Federation of Nikkeijin Kai Philippines. The figures for Nisei include the number of dead persons. The figures for Sansei and Yonsei are estimated and not actual numbers.
Before the outbreak of the Pacific War, there were nearly 20,000 Japanese residents in the province of Davao. Among them, over 300 men lived with Filipina wives or common-law wives, mainly from non-Christian indigenous ethnic groups such as Bagobos. Japanese intermarriages with Bagobo and other ethnic Filipino women made it possible for the former to possess the arable land in their legal or common-law wives’ or relatives’ names even under Philippine land laws that prohibited foreign ownership of land. The majority of Philippine Nikkeijin residing in Davao are the descendants of these unions.

The majority of Issei wished to educate their children in the same manner as Japanese children in Japan. They had begun to have pride as “ittō kokumin” [first-class nationals], and wanted to prevent the assimilation of Nisei with Filipinos, whom the Japanese tended to regard as “santrō kokumin” [third-class nationals]. This tendency is expressed in the recollection of one Nisei of Japanese parents (born in 1928 in Davao): “Davao Japanese settlers in general recognised that Japan was a first-class nation, the same as the US, and China was a second-class nation, and the Philippines was a third-class nation.”

Thus, each Japanese regional association established and managed a Japanese elementary school in each major city such as Manila, Davao and Baguio after 1917. A number of Japanese mestizo children of Japanese-Filipino mixed parentage were also enrolled in each Japanese elementary school in line with the wishes of their Japanese fathers. In Davao, twelve Japanese elementary schools were managed by the district branch of the Davao Japanese Association as of 1939. Of around 1,900 pupils in all, around 11 per cent were Japanese mestizos (Hattori, 1939, p. 26). At Baguio Japanese Elementary School, the majority of pupils were mestizo Nisei from the time the school opened in 1925 (Kojima, 1996, p. 85).

Most mestizo pupils growing up with Japanese-Filipino mixed cultures and languages faced difficulties after they were admitted to a Japanese school due to their inadequate Japanese language ability. So that they would overcome this Japanese language deficiency, Japanese teachers prohibited mestizo pupils from speaking Filipino languages, and attempted to implant *Yamato-damashii* [the Japanese spirit] in Nisei pupils’ minds. They taught subjects such as *shīshin* [morals], the same as were taught at schools in Japan, and made their pupils recite *Kōtoku Chokugo* [the Imperial prescript on education], which enhanced pupils’ loyalty to the Japanese Emperor. These efforts bore fruits in “remodelling” mestizo pupils into the Emperor’s subjects. This is explicit in compositions written by mestizo Nisei who were educated at Baguio Japanese Elementary School. One male mestizo Nisei wrote: “I have a love of my country for which I could sacrifice my life if some national crisis happens”, and another female mestizo Nisei claimed: “I want to keep my pride as a modest *Yamato-nadeshiko* [woman of Japan] forever” (Tomita, 1940, pp. 35–38).

However, the “Japanisation” of mestizo Nisei’s minds was problematic. According to a census survey conducted by the Philippine commonwealth government in 1939, the total number of children of Japanese-Filipino mixed parentage under 20 years old in the Philippine Archipelago was 2,358. Among these Japanese mestizos, 1,618 were reported to be “citizens of the Commonwealth of the Philippines” and 740 were reported to be “citizens of Japan”. In Davao Province, 487 of 754 mestizo children (64.6 per cent) were reported to be “citizens of the Commonwealth of the Philippines” (Commission of the Census, 1941, p. 398, p. 465). It is undeniable that the majority of mestizo Nisei did not have Japanese nationality formally. This fact was confirmed in a Japanese magazine article written by Nakamura Takeo, a member of the Japanese consulate staff in Davao: “They [Japanese
mestizo pupils) have a Japanese father without exception, but those who have acquired Japanese nationality formally are only a few” (Nakamura, 1939, p. 7).

Non-possession of formal Japanese nationality was due to their non-entry on their fathers’ koseki. The koseki is each family’s resister, kept at the family’s local municipality office in Japan.11 It shows one’s official name, one’s relationship with the head of family, one’s birth date and so forth. A copy of this document, called the koseki-tōhon, is an essential official document to prove one’s Japanese nationality/citizenship. It is highly likely that many Japanese fathers in the Philippines (Issei) purposely did not register their marriage with their Filipina partners on koseki, and thus avoided legal marriage so that their partners and illegitimate children would not lose their Philippine citizenship. It was important for the Filipina common-law wives and children of Issei to retain their ownership of land and other privileges as Filipino citizens.12

Identity Concealment after the Collapse of the Japanese Community

The Philippines was placed under Japanese military rule between January 1942 and early 1945. At that time, almost all Issei and most mature Nisei, including mestizos, were mobilised as soldiers or paramilitary personnel [gunzoku] for the occupying Japanese forces. They were forced to do so after the Japanese military administration threatened Japanese residents that if they refused to collaborate, they would be punished or even executed (Manila Nichinichi Shim bun, 6 January 1942). The administration took over koseki registration work from Japanese consular offices in 1943 (Gunsei Kōhō, November 1943, pp. 4–5), but conscripted civilian settlers without close examination of their koseki. This is demonstrated by the fact that a number of mestizo Nisei were conscripted as telephone operators, housekeepers, interpreters and in other capacities (Ohno, 1991, pp. 17–20, pp. 28–36), even in the case of non-registration of their names on their fathers’ koseki – that is, absence of official Japanese nationality.

Thousands of Issei, many of whom had been conscripted into the Japanese forces, had lost their lives by the end of the Pacific War.13 All other Issei survivors and the greater number of Nisei of both Japanese parents were repatriated to Japan in line with the policy of the General Headquarters of the Allied Powers (GHQ). It is unlikely that the United States occupation forces established a firm policy on repatriation of the Filipino wives of Issei and their mestizo children. The majority of Filipino wives chose to stay with their children in the Philippines because many had already lost their Japanese husbands before the end of the war, and were dependent on their Filipino relatives’ assistance in taking care of themselves and their children (Ohno, 2005, pp. 148–49). In a considerable number of Nikkei families, some mestizo Nisei siblings, usually seniors, were repatriated to Japan while the other siblings, usually juniors, were left in the Philippines. In some cases, it took four, five, or even six decades for them to be reunited with their families in the Philippines or Japan (Ohno, 2005, pp. 175–88, pp. 213–20; Ohno, 2006).

Around 3,000 Nisei, including dozens of war orphans of Japanese parents,14 were left in the Philippines after the end of the war. They faced strong ethnic hostility in their residential communities after over one million Filipinos lost their lives during the war.15 Most Nisei were deprived of their families’ land, houses, domestic animals and other valuables (Ohno, 1992, pp. 72–73). They also had to contend with local Filipinos’ harassment and teasing, such as being called “Hapoo” [Japanese]. The Spanish-origin Filipino term
“Hapón”, which implied a cruel race in postwar Philippine society, was used for almost all Nisei regardless of the extent of their Japanese blood (full-blooded or mixed blood).

To avoid animosity from Filipinos, the majority of remaining Nisei changed their Japanese names to a Filipino-like name (mostly their baptismal name in the case of Christians) or even a Chinese name, and disguised themselves as full-blooded Filipinos or Chinese mestizos. The adoption of a “passing” name was a survival strategy in hostile circumstances. The Filipino wives and children of many Issei abandoned relevant documents showing their relationship with their Japanese husbands or fathers in order to conceal their “Japaneseness”.

**Coming-out as “Philippine Nikkeijin”**

The first big gathering of remaining Nisei was held in Davao City in August 1968 when they held a reunion with a Japanese tour group composed of repatriated Issei and Nisei. This was the first return visit by former Davao expatriates to their second home. On this occasion, more than 60 mestizo Nisei organised a Nisei society known as Nisei Kai to communicate with and help each other. This small society was developed into a non-stock and non-profit corporation, Philippine Nikkei-Jin Kai, in 1980. At that time, the Nisei were called “Japanese mestizo” and/or “Hapón” by local Filipinos. These terms often implied “collaborator”, “traitor” or “children of the enemy”. They therefore adopted a new self-labelling Japanese term “Philippine Nikkeijin” that is used by Japanese visitors for descendants of Japanese immigrants to the Philippines (Ohno, 2005, pp. 216–23).

Philippine Nikkeijin associations have also been founded in Baguio, Manila, Bacolod, Iloilo and other major cities since the 1970s. Their coming-out as “Philippine Nikkeijin” was only possible after Filipinos’ war trauma had substantially healed, and their sentiment towards the Japanese had improved significantly, particularly after Japan became the largest aid donor to the Philippines. Japan’s growing international prestige as a world economic power also helped the Nikkeijin to recover their confidence in being children of Japanese. On a parallel with Filipinos’ shifting perception of Japan and the Japanese, Nisei’s stigma as children of the enemy race has been gradually worn down.

In January 1992, around 100 Nisei representatives from the islands of Luzon, Cebu, Negros, Panay and Mindanao assembled in Davao City with financial assistance from a Japanese NGO, and held their first nationwide meeting, or the “First Japanese Descended Filipinos’ National Convention”. During the three-day convention, Nisei participants outlined their problems: missing Issei father whose whereabouts had been unknown for the 47 years since the war; unpaid pensions of Nisei veterans who had collaborated with the Japanese forces; property that had been confiscated. They began to share an identity as war-victimised Nikkeijin after they recognised their common problems, which could be ascribed to their ethnic background. At the end of the convention, they adopted a resolution that demanded compensation from the Japanese government for their war damages, through the payment of a pension for bereaved families of war dead and other war victims, assistance to the activities of Nikkeijin associations, and preferential opportunities to work in Japan (Mainichi Shimbun, morning ed., 20 January 1992). This resolution was drafted with the assistance of the Japanese attorney Nishida Kenshi who felt deep compassion for the much lower living standard and social status of Philippine Nikkeijin compared with the Nikkei in Latin America, which he had travelled around in his
younger days. This assembly resulted in the establishment of the nationwide organisation, the Federation of Nikkeijin Kai Philippines (abbreviated as FNJKP).

Their demands to the Japanese government can be classified into two categories: (1) resolution of their problems relating to the aftermath of the war, and (2) acceleration of their mobility to Japan. The early 1990s was a period of escalation in movements to obtain redress for Asian war victims, including former Korean and Filipino comfort women’s individual compensation claims against the Japanese government. By this time, the problems of Philippine Nikkeijin such as long separation from their deported father or siblings and difficult and impoverished postwar lives had often been reported in the Japanese mass media. The Philippine Nikkeijin became more confident in pursuing their demands after they established regular communication with sympathetic journalists, attorneys, politicians and other Japanese visitors.

Another demand related to economics. By this time, thousands of Latin American Nikkei had emigrated to Japan to work, mainly from Brazil and Peru, where large Nikkei communities had been formed. The snowballing Nikkei migration to Japan came to be known as the “dekasegi phenomenon” in Latin America, although “returned” Latin American Nikkei tended to be long-term residents of Japan. The Japanese term “dekasegi” originally means “spending part of the year working in another district or country”, and implies return from a temporary place of work. The number of Brazilian and Peruvian residents in Japan jumped from less than 3,000 each in 1986 to 147,803 and 31,051 respectively in 1992 (Hō mushō Nyūkoku Kanri-kyoku, 2001). This phenomenon was primarily brought about by Japan’s enforcement of its 1990 revised immigration control law. This law stipulates that overseas Nisei and Sansei and their spouses are allowed to engage in any kind of occupation in Japan with a “resident visa” that guarantees their legal stay for one, three or more years primarily for the convenience of their reunions with their relatives in Japan.

However, there was a major obstacle for the Philippine Nikkeijin when they attempted to acquire a resident visa or a Japanese spouse visa from the Japanese Embassy in Manila or the Japanese Consulate in Davao. They had to submit many different kinds of official documents to prove their Japanese ancestry, including their Japanese father’s or grandfather’s koseki-tōhon, which is regarded by the Japanese government as the most crucial evidence of a Japanese bloodline. The majority of Philippine Nisei and Sansei did not have such a koseki-tōhon for the above-mentioned reasons.

Claims as “Firipin Zanryū Nihonjin”

The problems of Philippine Nikkeijin had sometimes been raised by opposition politicians in the Japanese Diet since February 1988. In that same month, Inoue Issei, then member of the House of Representatives attached to Japan’s Socialist Party, condemned his government’s cold attitude towards the Philippine Nikkeijin and demanded that it tackled their problems at the committee of the House of Representatives. His criticism resulted in the government’s swift survey of Philippine Nikkeijin in Manila, Buguo and Davao. This survey highlighted the ambiguity of the citizenship/nationality of Philippine Nisei. Responding to questions on their nationality, among 111 interviewees, 57 answered “the Philippines” (51 per cent), 10 answered “Japan” (9 per cent), and 44 (40 per cent) answered “unknown”. Before January 1989, the government listed 599 mestizo Nisei and 14 full-blooded Japanese Nisei. Among 666 Nikkei family members including a
small number of Filipino wives of Issei, 477 (72 per cent) had no news of the whereabouts of relatives in Japan, and 271 (41 per cent) did not know whether they had Japanese nationality or not (Ohno, 1991, pp. 301–13). This result demonstrated the uncertain sense of national belonging of Philippine Nisei.

The government established five criteria for the extension of financial assistance to Philippine Nikkeijin who sought to visit Japan. Two of the criteria were: that both parents should be Japanese, and that they should have resided in the Philippines since the prewar period. These criteria are copied from those that were applied to Chūgoku Zanryū Nihonjin-koji [Japanese orphans left behind in China (mostly in former Manchuria during the closing days of World War II)], who qualified to visit Japan upon the Japanese government’s invitation to identify their Japanese relatives (Ohno, 1991, pp. 310–13). Consequently, in 1990 and later, the government formally invited to Japan only three Nisei of Japanese parents left behind in Panay Island after the end of the war.

In terms of mestizo Nisei, who constitute the vast majority of Nisei in the Philippines, the government entrusted an extra-governmental organisation to arrange for them to visit Japan. The majority of mestizo Nisei were excluded from the organisation’s assistance program because it too established several strict criteria such as being the children of Japanese and Filipino parentage born in a legal marriage, and who had already identified relatives in Japan (Ohno, 1991, pp. 314–18). The government obviously distinguished Philippine Nisei in its assistance project according to the proportion of their Japanese blood rather than nationality. This policy seems to have been rooted in the common Japanese myth of Japanese racial purity and a reflection of the distorted perception that mixed-blood Japanese are not “authentic Japanese”. Hence, Philippine Nikkeijin associations were frustrated over the government’s discriminatory treatment of their mestizo members, and thus further consolidated under the FNJKP.

The movement for redress by Philippine Nikkeijin was stimulated by the Japanese government’s new policy on recognition of the Asia-Pacific War. In August 1993, then Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro, the leader of Japan New Party, expressed his understanding of the war as a “war of aggression” and a “wrong war” waged by Japan (Asahi Shimbun Sengo Hoshō Mondai Shuzai-han, 1999, pp. 9–10). His successors also expressed similar views on the war. These liberal political circumstances strengthened the position of the Nikkeijin as “war victims”.

The year 1995 was a good time for the Philippine Nikkeijin to put their problems to the public in Japan because that year was the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War, and the Japanese mass media were therefore paying considerable attention to the unresolved legacies of the war. A group of 32 mestizo Nisei visited Tokyo in June 1995 with financial assistance from Japanese small and medium enterprises that hoped to employ Nikkeijin workers in Japan. They submitted a letter addressed to then Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi asking the Japanese government to recognise them as “Firipin Zanryū Nihonjin” [Japanese left behind in the Philippines] and issue them with Japanese passports. The Japanese term Firipin Zanryū Nihonjin connotes Japanese who have been victimised because of the war, as does Chugoku Zanryū Nihonjin [Japanese left behind in China].

“Returned” Nikkeijin activities in Tokyo were widely and compassionately reported in the Japanese mass media (e.g. The Japan Times, 14 June 1995; Asahi Shimbun, morning ed., 5 July 1995). Most of the Japanese media called them “Firipin Zanryū-koji” [orphans left behind in the Philippines], as they claimed. During their month-long stay in Japan, the
government made two important decisions. One was its acceptance of an application by Nisei visitor, Takezawa Daisuke (born in Davao in 1931), to add his name in his late father's koseki as the latter's son. Previously, Takezawa was not registered in his father's koseki, which was kept at a local town hall in Nagano Prefecture. This meant that he could be considered an illegitimate child of his Bogobo mother and therefore a Filipino citizen. Takezawa had prepared all of the required documents to prove his relationship with his Japanese father and reconstructed his parents' marriage certificate based on affidavits by Filipinos who had attended their tribal marriage ceremony. By adding his name in his father's koseki, he "regained" Japanese nationality after his three-year struggle for verification as Japanese (Asahi Shimbun, morning ed., 4 July 1995; Tokyo Shimbun, evening ed., 10 July 1995). Dozens of other Philippine Nisei subsequently undertook the same procedures in order to acquire Japanese nationality.

Another crucial decision was that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to issue Japanese passports to ten Philippine Nisei applicants. These ten Nisei had been listed in their fathers' koseki as their children, but had difficulties in identifying themselves as Japanese name-carrying children recorded in koseki because they had used Filipino names on their Philippine passports and the other official documents issued in the country of their residence after the war. Nevertheless, the Japanese government decided to recognise them as Japanese nationals, based on circumstantial evidence such as their possession of family photos and affidavits signed by their Japanese relatives (Asahi Shimbun, morning ed., 14 July 1995). A female Nisei of Japanese and Bagobo parentage born in Davao in 1931, one of those who received a Japanese passport at the time, relates in fluent Japanese:

Even after the war, I have continued to consider myself Japanese. I had been educated as Japanese by my father, and always educated in Japanese manner [at the Japanese elementary school]. I have never had a sense as Filipino. I had a conversation with my Bagobo mother in Japanese, and told her that I would remain Japanese forever.19

This woman's testimony suggests that her motivation for acquiring a Japanese passport derived from her undiminished sense of Japanese identity even after long exposure to Filipino culture and languages. The primary intention of such Nisei in "regaining" their Japanese nationality appears to be to harmonise their citizenship/nationality with their national identity. Some, however, had also hoped to make it easier for their descendants to work in Japan. One Nisei who "regained" Japanese nationality in 1995 frankly stated his motive to the author: "My grandchildren are also able to work in Japan after I got Japanese nationality".20

It was an epoch-making decision by the Japanese government to recognise the Japanese nationality of Philippine Nisei collectively. The Japan Federation Bar Association (Nihon Bengoshi Rengō Kai) also supported the claim of the Philippine Nisei. In its report, the Bar Association paid attention to the 1941 Philippine Commonwealth Act, which stated that children of a foreign father and a Filipino mother were required to swear an oath of their election of Philippine citizenship in the presence of authorised Filipino public servants when they wished to become Filipino citizens. The Bar Association found that the majority of mestizo Nisei had never sworn such an oath. It also concluded that the tribal marriages by Issei males with indigenous Filipino women were considered legal even in the case of non-registered marriages, in accordance with the provisions of the
1987 Philippine Constitution, which states that the government recognises and respects the rights of indigenous cultural communities (Nihon Bengoshi Rengō Kai Jinken Yōgo linkai 1995, pp. 18–26).

With the help of Bar Association members, FNJKP submitted a petition to then Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō. In this petition, FNJKP demanded that the government recognise Philippine Nisei as “Japanese”, and stressed their wartime collaboration with their “fatherland”: “We fought American armies and Philippine guerrillas with the Japanese forces as our duty to the Emperor” 21 As a result, Japanese government officials gradually changed their perception of the Philippine Nikkeijin amid rising public sympathy for them and other Asian war victims in Japan. At the committee of the House of Councillors held in May 1997, Premier Hashimoto called Philippine Nisei “Firiipin Zanryū Nihonjin” [Japanese left behind in the Philippines] (Sangiin Kessan-ininkai, 1997, p. 27). Just five years earlier, at another committee, then Minister Yamashita Tokuo of the Ministry of Health and Welfare had stated that the government did not have any legal responsibility for Philippine Nisei and Sansei because they were “Filipino nationals” (Shūgūn Kōsei-ininkai, 1992, pp. 24–26). It can be said that Hashimoto’s reply recognised Philippine Nisei as “Japanese”, but it did not recognise all of them as “Japanese nationals” because many Nisei lacked a koseki record. Even so, the Bar Association’s and Hashimoto’s public recognition of the Nisei as Japanese resulted in awakening a previously suppressed “Japaneseness” in the Nisei.

In the same year, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) entrusted Legal Aid for Japanese Descendants in the Philippines (abbreviated as Legal Aid), organised by Attorney Nishida, a FNJKP counterpart NGO composed of Japanese and Filipino staff, to conduct a survey on “Firiipin Zanryū Nihonjin” in order to compile the family tree of each Nikkeijin. This was the second MOFA funded survey, following the first survey on the Nikkeijin conducted in 1995. These two surveys assisted a significant number of Nikkeijin families to find their ancestors’ koseki. After the completion of the second survey, the Japanese Embassy in Manila established a “Nikkeijin Desk” that fast-tracks the screening process for Nikkeijin applicants who need resident or spouse visas for emigration to Japan. Since that time, the dekasegi of Philippine Nikkeijin has accelerated (Kawai, 2006, p. 2).

**Generation “Upgrading” Movement**

FNJKP and Legal Aid classified Philippine Nisei into three categories – Category A, Category B and Category C. Category A includes those whose names are registered in their Japanese parents’ koseki. Category A Nisei are regarded as Japanese nationals by the Japanese government as long as they have not taken the legal procedures for naturalisation in the Philippines. Category B denotes those who have already located their parents’ koseki but whose names are not recorded there (e.g. Takezawa Daisuke’s case). Category C includes those who are not able to locate their parents’ koseki. Category A and Category B Nisei are qualified to stay and work in Japan and send their children (Sansei) to Japan to work, whereas Category C Nisei and their children are not qualified to acquire a resident visa or spouse visa because the Japanese government does not recognise them as authentic Nikkei because they lack a koseki-tōhon.

The above categorisation was accepted by FNJKP members because they understood that its aim was to assist Category C Nikkeijin in finding their koseki and thus enable
them to work in Japan. Category C Nisei do not know which municipality in Japan held their fathers' koseki. In order to identify their municipality, Legal Aid began to conduct research at the Diplomatic Records Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where all name lists of Japanese who have received Japanese passports from the Meiji era to the end of the Asia-Pacific War are stored. Legal Aid staff listed a total of over 73,000 Japanese who had emigrated to the Philippines under American rule, and with the aid of computers cross-referenced these names with names that Category C Nisei claimed as their fathers (Asahi Shimbun, evening ed., 23 February 1997).

Since Legal Aid suspended its activities due to budget constraints in 1999, FNJKP has continued its mission to locate its members' koseki under the strong leadership of its new president Carlos Teraoka (born in 1930), a businessman Nisei of Japanese-Ilocano parentage. He was appointed as Honorary Consul General of Japan at Baguio in 1995 because of his contribution to improving the economic and social status of his fellow Nikkeijin in the Baguio area. He has undoubtedly played a significant role in accelerating Nikkeijin's emigration to work in Japan by establishing the Philippine Nikkei-Jin Mutual Foundation (abbreviated as PNJMF), which manages a training center for Japan-bound Nikkeijin on Teraoka's vast farm in northern Luzon Island (Nikkan Manila Shim bun, 4 November 2003). He has a strong belief based on his father Teraoka Munzo's business success in prewar Baguio that dekasegi is the best method for uneducated poor people to improve their miserable lives in the shortest time. He has taken advantage of his strong ability in the Japanese language to find various job opportunities in Japan for young Nikkeijin.

FNJKP and PNJMF have also made efforts to "upgrade" their members from Category B to Category A because Category A Nisei are permitted to send their children (Sansei) as well as grandchildren (Yonsei) to Japan with resident visas, whereas Category B Nisei, having no Japanese nationality, can only acquire the same visas for their children. To achieve the "upgrading" of their status to Category A, Category B Nisei are required to prepare the marriage certificates of their parents and other official documents for listing their names in koseki. A number, however, did not possess their parents' official marriage certificates due to the latter's unofficial tribal marriages. To overcome this problem, FNJKP exchanged a memorandum of agreement with the National Statistics Office (NSO) of the Philippine government, which manages various official certificates of Filipino citizens, in September 1994. In accordance with the memorandum, FNJKP was given the authority to screen and authenticate its members' applications for the late registration of marriages, births and other events (Ohno, 2005, pp. 243–45).

The above efforts resulted in an increase in the numbers of Category A and B Nisei. In parallel with this trend, the number of Nisei contacting the regional Nikkeijin association also increased from 2,121 in November 1995 to 2,954 in July 2005 (See Table 2). Each regional Nikkeijin association and FNJKP was able to increase its membership by supporting their dekasegi, and has taken an active part in "awakening" Nikkeijin identity even among young people of Japanese descent, who never had such an identity in the pre-dekasegi fever period.

It is worth noting that Philippine Nikkeijin's politics of nationality played a crucial role in breaking the official boundary between the Japanese and the Nikkei. The Japanese government's definition of Nikkeijin (Nikkei) until 2000 was "people of Japanese descent, who have no Japanese nationality". In 2001, this was redefined as "overseas permanent residents having Japanese nationality and people of Japanese descent having no Japanese nationality". One of the reasons it was redefined was the government's difficulty in ceasing
Table 2. Shifting Figures of Nisei by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KOSEKI</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>NOV. 1995</th>
<th>APRIL 1997</th>
<th>APRIL 1999</th>
<th>JULY 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Known and his/her name registered</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>n. a</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known but his/her name unregistered</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>n. a</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>1,123</td>
<td>1,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal of A &amp; B</td>
<td></td>
<td>666 (31%)</td>
<td>1,024 (45%)</td>
<td>1,516 (61%)</td>
<td>1,874 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1,455 (69%)</td>
<td>1,268 (55%)</td>
<td>959 (39%)</td>
<td>1,080 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,121</td>
<td>2,292</td>
<td>2,475</td>
<td>2,954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The figures for 1995 and 1997 are based on nationwide surveys by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The figures for 1999 are based on a survey conducted by Legal Aid for Japanese Descendants in the Philippines. The figures for 2005 are based on a survey by the Federation of Nikkeijin Kai Philippines. These figures include the number of deaths.

categorising the Philippine Nikkeijin who acquired Japanese nationality in recent years as Nikkei. The government has continued to categorise them as Nikkei because they still label themselves “Nikkeijin”. The other primary reason is that there are a growing number of dual nationality holders of Japanese descent, including an unidentified number of Philippine Nikkeijin. The Japanese nationality law principally prohibits Japanese nationals from holding dual nationality after the age of 22. However, it is a reality that a large number of Nikkei have continued to retain Japanese nationality and their other nationality even after they have passed the age of 22 primarily because the Japanese government has not strictly imposed this condition.

As a result, it has become difficult for the government to distinguish between overseas Japanese nationals and Nikkei. According to its official redefinition, the total number of Nikkei worldwide jumped from around 1.4 million as of October 1986 to over 2.5 million as of January 2001 (Gaimushō Ryōji Itō-sho Seisaku-ka, 1990–2002). Philippine Nikkeijin movements unintentionally contributed to the fusion of overseas Japanese nationals and Nikkei who were generally perceived as foreigners by the Japanese in the past, in terms of official definition, and thus succeeded in proving that Nikkeijin identity can make a compromise with Japanese identity.

In parallel to the steady increase in numbers of Category A and B Nisei, the number of Nikkei “return migrants” has also rapidly increased. At the end of 2004, the number of Filipino resident-visa holders was recorded as 23,756 and surpassed that of Peruvian holders by the end of 2003 (Hōmushō Nyūkoku Kanri-kyoku, 2005). Japan’s Immigration Bureau considers that most Filipino resident-visa holders are Nikkeijin, mainly Sansei, their spouses and children. Currently, Philippine Nikkeijin expatriates probably form the third largest Nikkei expatriate community in Japan after Brazilian Nikkei and Chinese Nikkei.

Transmission of Japanese Nationality over Generations

Japan’s revised immigration law defines that alien Nisei and Sansei are eligible for resident visas, but the Yonsei [the fourth generation] are not yet eligible for this visa that
would guarantee their right to work in Japan. Consequently, some Sansei residents in Japan began to change their nationality from the Philippines to Japan in order to become “Issei” according to Japan’s legal definition. It is not so difficult for the children of Category A Nisei to change their nationality. As long as a Nisei is registered in his or her father’s koseki as his child, and has not taken any legal measures to obtain Philippine citizenship at a mature age, this Nisei can be considered a Japanese national by the Japanese government, as noted earlier. Thus, if a Category A Nisei makes his/her independent koseki separate from his/her father’s koseki and registers his/her child in his or her own koseki, this child [Sansei] is also considered a Japanese national.

For instance, one male Sansei (born in 1968) obtained Japanese nationality in 1998, two years after he emigrated to Japan as a manual labourer, and began his own koseki recording his name as the head of his household two years later. His appearance looks Filipino. He narrates his experience and wishes in English:

Japanese employers regard me as Filipino and keep my wage amount lower than Japanese workers even after I became Japanese. My identity is Filipino. But, I wish to work in Japan until reaching the age of 60. I and my Filipino wife living with me make a remittance amounting around 100,000 yen to our relatives every month. It’s very difficult to find such amount job in the Philippines. I also want to give my children a chance to work in Japan in the future.27

His primary reason for acquisition of Japanese nationality was to improve the living conditions of himself and his family. It seems that native Japanese non-recognition of him as a “full citizen” of Japan strengthened his consciousness as “Filipino”. Other Sansei expatriates, too, face communication gaps between themselves and native Japanese primarily due to the former’s imperfect Japanese language ability.28

The enactment of the dual citizenship law in the Philippines (Republic Act No. 9225) has also been an important factor in accelerating naturalisation of Sansei residing in Japan. This law, effective from September 2003, states that the government allows natural-born Filipino citizens who have lost their Philippine citizenship through naturalisation abroad to reacquire it upon taking the oath of allegiance to the Philippines (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 23 September 2003). In these new circumstances, for instance, a Davao-born female Sansei (born in 1962) and her eight sisters and brothers obtained Japanese nationality after they immigrated to Japan to work in the early 1990s. She spoke about her nationality switch in Japanese fluently enough, though with some minor errors as shown below:

As long as we are foreign nationals in Japan, our companies [employers] do not have insurance [for us]. As long as we are Japanese, we can find our residence easily. Even here [Davao], we are considered trustworthy if we are regarded as Japanese. I thought there will be no problem after my return here in the future because of the dual citizenship law of the Philippines. I think that the presence of Nikkeijin having Japanese nationality will be beneficial even for other Nikkeijin [Nihon de gaikoku-seki dato, katsha wa hoken ni haitte [sic] kurenai. Nihonjin dato jiyūyō mo sagashi yasui. Nihonjin to iu imēji ga arato. Kochira demo shinyō sareru shi. Fīripī no niyū koseki-hō ga arushī, kochirani modottomo mondai ni naranai dorō to omoimasita. Nihon kokuseki o mette iru Nikkeijin ga [sic] irukoto ga hoka no Nikkeijin ni tottemo meritto ga aru to omou].
The other reason for the woman’s naturalisation appears to have been her discovery in Japan of her own “Japoneseness”, which she had not recognised during her time in the Philippines:

I have a restless nature so that I can hardly wait [for the arrival of unpunctual Filipinos]. After I emigrated to in Japan, I finally found that this aspect of my nature came from Japan. I was taught the importance of punctuality and manners by my mother in my childhood [Watashi jishin matenai seikaku [sic] nandesu. Nihon ni itte, Watashi no seikaku ga Nihon kara kitano da to yatto wakatta. Watashi wa kodomo-jidai ni haka kara jikan no taiketsusa ya gyōgi o oshie-konarete kimashita].

There is no doubt that her birth country’s dual citizenship law and the improvement in its citizens’ perception of the Japanese encouraged her naturalisation. She also considers her discovery of her “Japoneseness” one of the factors in her dual identity claim and her acquisition of her mestizo Nisei mother’s nationality.

Based on my fieldwork in the Philippines and Japan, it appears that hundreds of Philippine Nisei, Sansei and even Yonsei have already acquired Japanese nationality. In the case of Nisei, they usually obtained Japanese nationality after they travelled to Japan. In the case of Sansei, most changed their visas from a resident visa or Japanese spouse visa to a permanent visa; some went on to become Japanese citizens.

In the year of the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War, the Philippine Nikkeijin politics of recognition entered a new phase. On 12 October 2005, eight Category C Nisei aged between 60 and 87 “returned” to Japan for the first time, and made a group petition to the Tokyo Family Court to allow them shōsiki [creation of a new koseki with the family court’s permission for those whose koseki are not found or whose names are not registered in their family’s koseki]. Shōsiki is a last legal resort for acquiring Japanese nationality, and has been used by more than one thousand Chūgoku Zennō-koji who were not able to identify their birth and parentage but succeeded in becoming Japanese nationals through this measure (Yomiuri Shimbun, morning ed., 13 October 2005). On 2 February 2006, the same court made the decision to allow shōsiki for another two Nisei sisters aged 77 and 82, who made the same petition in August 2004 (Yomiuri Shimbun, morning ed., 3 February 2006). In response to this court decision, FNJKP decided to recommend to hundreds of other Category C Nisei that they make a similar petition to the court at its executive meeting in August 2006 (Nikkan Manila Shimbun, 6 August 2006). These aged Nisei’s efforts are considered their final struggle to authenticate their “Nikkeiness” and possibly Japanese nationality, which may pave the way for their descendants to work in Japan and escape their current impoverished lives.

Conclusion

It can be said that most multietnic (mestizo) Nisei in the Philippines embraced a Japanese identity instilled in them in Japanese schools and the Japanese forces, which was contradictory to their non-Japanese nationality and/or Philippine citizenship, at least until the end of the Asia-Pacific War. Their lack of Japanese nationality was caused by non-registration in their Japanese fathers’ koseki or non-identification of their koseki. Thus, their politics of recognition needed to respond to Japan’s principle of persistently
adhering to koseki to determine nationality, and accompanied a koseki-searching and/or koseki-registration movement amid their shift in social status from war-stigmatised pariahs to visa-advantaged Nikkei. Through their identification of their Japanese ancestors recorded in koseki and repeated negotiations with the Japanese government, they have changed their self-identity label from “Nikkeijin” or “Japanese descended Filipino” to “Zanyû Nihonjin” [Japanese left behind]. Their “regained” Japanese identity was influenced and shaped by the experience of another group of war-marooned ethnic Japanese, i.e. Chûgoku Zanyû Nihonjin-koji, and moreover by Japan’s official recognition of them as “Zanyû Nihonjin”. Their emphasis on “Japaneseness” has been obviously advantageous for them and their descendants in seeking economic and personal opportunities in Japan.

Their aim of “upgrading” their legal generational status and “regaining” Japanese nationality originally was intended to bring their citizenship into line with their national identity in the case of the Nisei, but has been activated by instrumental motives such as the guarantee of long-term work in Japan, and citizenship options for their offspring in the case of the Sansei. Consequently the latter’s national identity has tended to be incongruent with their nationality/citizenship. As Derek Heater (1990, p. 186) has argued, citizenship is a shadow identity if it lacks the substance of a common tradition and nationality and the feeling of fraternity. The naturalisation of Sansei expatriates questions the propriety of Japan’s traditional koseki system and her jus sanguinis principle, which allows nationality to be transmitted over generations even to persons with no substantial connections to the society. It also demonstrates that the assumption that citizenship is singular, national and fixed has been outmoded in a globalising world of ethnic hybridisation.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper entitled ‘Regaining “Japaneseness”: Philippine Nikkeijin Identity Politics’ was presented at the 15th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, held in Canberra on 1 July 2004. My rewriting work was mostly done when I was affiliated with the Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies at the University of Wollongong in Australia. Indescribable thanks to its Director Lenore Lyons and Deputy Director Tim Scrase, who strongly supported my writing work. In this paper, I refer to some Philippine Nikkeijin by Western or Filipino name order (surname last) because they use their names in this order.

2. In the Philippines, the term “mestizo” (“mestiza” in the case of the female) has been commonly applied to people of native-foreign parentage since the Spanish colonial period.

3. By the 1980s, 50 to 70 per cent of the Japanese American (American Nikkei) population unmarried (Nakashima, 1988, p. 207). On the other hand, among more than 1.2 million Brazilian Nikkei, 340,000 are mestizos (mestizos) (Lesser, 2002, p. 50).

4. I recognise the difference between nationality and citizenship in the contemporary world. In some Western countries, important rights of citizenship such as suffrage and social welfare services are already granted to foreign residents who retain their original nationality.

5. Identity politics have proliferated since the emergence of various social movements of the 1960s: Black power, students’ political protests, women’s liberation, gay and lesbian civil rights, and others (e.g. Zaretzky, 1995). In recent years, it has met with increasing criticism and resistance among politicians, academics, and ordinary people who consider that the preoccupation with identity and difference has gone too far and has outlived its original purpose and intent, becoming less a movement of resistance and more a self-perpetuating form of self-interest (Nagel, 1999, pp. 132–33). The criticism includes the fact that the claims of minority cultures and religions sometimes clash with the norm of gender equality that is formally endorsed by liberal states (Okin, 1999, pp. 9–10).

6. My most intensive interviews with Nisei and Sansei were conducted in the Davao area where the biggest Philippine Nikkeijin community is found and its association is well organised. I also interviewed Nikkeijin association leaders of Baguio City, Metro Manila and other major cities to gain a wider
picture of Nikkeijin communities in the Philippines. In Japan, I interviewed over one dozen Nisei who have returned to Japan and reside in Osaka, Okinawa, Okayama and Hiroshima. My interviews were conducted in Japanese, English and Philippine languages such as Filipino and Visayan, sometimes with native speakers, and responded to in the preferred language of the interviewees.

7. According to the 1939 Philippine census survey, there were 17,888 Japanese residents in the province of Davao (Commission of the Census, 1941, p. 428).

8. According to the 1939 Philippine census survey, the total number of Filipino wives married to Japanese male citizens was 874, and that included 269 in the Davao area alone (ibid, p. 465). These census figures probably underestimate the actual numbers. The consulate annex office of Japan in Davao estimated that by 1936 around 200 Japanese males had entered a common-law marriage with indigenous Filipino women (Gaimushō Gakkō-shiryōkan 1936. J.1.1.0.1/J/X1-U2).

9. Interview with a male Nisei of Japanese parents in Davao City on 29 August 2002.

10. The Manila Japanese Elementary School was opened in 1917. The other Japanese elementary schools were opened in Davao, Baguio, Iloilo (Panay Island), Cebu (Cebu Island) and Legaspi (Luzon Island) between 1924 and 1935 (Obatani, 1940, pp. 458–81).

11. The koseki system was introduced to Japan from China around the sixth century. It exists in East Asian countries such as South Korea and Taiwan, but not in the West.

12. Some scholars such as Grant Goodman (1967, p. 107) have argued that the reason for this practice is that Japanese husbands did not wish their Filipino official wives or common-law wives to lose their Philippine citizenship and thereby lose their rights to possess or purchase public land. Pre-war Philippine citizenship laws stipulated that upon a Filipino woman’s marriage to a foreigner, by virtue of the laws of her husband’s country, she acquired his citizenship. On the other hand, Japan’s old nationality law (1899–1950) states that a foreign wife gains Japanese nationality after she marries a Japanese male. Thus, a Filipina who legally married a Japanese male should acquire Japanese nationality.

13. The exact number of Japanese civilian war deaths in the wartime Philippines has not yet been officially determined. Dabao Kai, an association of Japanese repatriates from Davao, estimates that in Davao alone around 4,800 civilians died during the war, and moreover, around 3,700 civilians died in concentration camps (Dabao 1968, pp. 8–9).

14. Many full-blooded Japanese Nisei remaining in the Philippines are orphans who lost their Japanese parents in the Japanese civilian mass suicide that happened in the town of Mu'as in Iloilo City on 21 March 1945. The details of this mass suicide are recorded by the former Japanese officer Kumai Toshimi (1977, pp. 174–78) and the Okinawan researcher Arakaki Yasak (1983).

15. According to the Philippine government’s survey, 1,111,938 human lives were lost during the Japanese occupation period (The Manila Times, 17 July 1951).


18. According to the statistics of the Office of Japanese Orphans in China of Japan’s Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor, 2,800 Japanese war orphans called Chūgoku Zainyū Nihonjin-koji were left behind in China even after Japan’s group repatriation programs were completed in 1958. Among the 2,800, 2,503 had already resettled in Japan by April 2006 (Kōsei-ōbō-shō Shokai Engei-kyoku, 2006, p. 1).

19. Interview with a Nisei of Japanese and Bogodo parentage in Davao City on 31 August 2002.


21. A petition letter signed by Benedicto Onari, then president of PNJKP, and presidents of six regional Philippine Nikkeijin associations, and submitted to then Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō on 24 March 1997.

22. Interview with Carlos Teraoka in Manila in November 2002.

23. Interview with Suzuki Yasuhs, Assistant Chief of the Consular and Migration Policy Division, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by phone in July 2002.

24. The famous Japanese ethnologist Unesuo Tadao (1979, p. 24) asserted in a public speech: “Migration is a synonym for going abroad in order to become foreigner”, and “The Nikkeijin are foreigners”.

25. Interview with Yamazaki Köichi, Chief of Public Information Section of the Immigration Bureau, the Ministry of Justice in Tokyo on 17 April 2003.
26. It is estimated that Chinese resident-visa holders (numbering 32,130 at the end of 2004) are mostly descendants of Japanese war orphans and women left behind in China after the end of World War II but who "returned" to Japan, and their accompanying family members. I categorise them as "Chinese Nikkei" although they are often called "Chūgoku Kikokusha" [people returned from China] in Japan (e.g. Anragi, 2000).

27. Interview with a male Sansei who temporarily returned from Japan to his residence in the province of Rizal near Manila on 15 December 2002.

28. According to a survey conducted by the Philippine Nikkei-jin Legal Support Center in 2005, among the 130 Nikkeijin respondents residing in Japan (mostly Sansei and Yonsei), 66 (50.8 per cent) faced difficulties in communicating in Japanese (Kawai, 2006, p. 84).

29. Interview with a Davao-born female Sansei naturalised in Japan in Davao City on 6 October 2005.

30. This trend is reflected in the results of the 2005 survey by the Tokyo-based NGO, Philippine Nikkei-jin Legal Support Center. It shows that among 130 Nikkeijin respondents residing in Japan, 104 (80 per cent) had resident visas whereas 16 (12.3 per cent) had permanent visas. Three respondents (2.3 per cent) had already acquired Japanese nationality (Kawai, 2006, pp. 61–62).

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