Research Paper 23

Japanese Migration and the Economic Development of the East Asian Region

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Abstract

Japanese immigration, both legal and illegal, increased very rapidly in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a result of this, the 'oldcomer' immigrant population of second and third generation Koreans came to be matched by an equal number of 'newcomers' - migrants from south and south east Asia, and from Latin America. The first part of this paper traces the main trends in recent immigration, and discusses the position of these immigrants in Japanese society. Special attention is given to the spatial distribution of the six main immigrant groups. The second part examines the relationships between these international migrations and (i) international inequalities in income and quality of life in the southern and east Asian regions; (ii) the economic restructuring, or 'hollowing out', of the Japanese economy; and (iii) the movement of the Japanese economy through recent business cycles (notably the 'bubble economy' of the late 1980s). It discusses the labour market positions of immigrants, and the ways in which immigrant workers are used to meet labour supply shortages in specific sectors and regions. The third part provides an example of the social and cultural problems faced by immigrant workers and their families in Japan, and emphasises the contrast between the strong 'external' internationalisation of Japan (as shown by the volume of direct foreign investment in Europe, North America and south east Asia), and its weak 'internal' internationalisation (as shown by the difficulty that many Japanese people and institutions experience in adjusting to the presence of a growing population of 'foreigners' living permanently or semi-permanently in Japanese cities).

[Key words: Japan; international migration; economic development in East Asia; ethnic minorities; language problems)

Introduction

Japan's history as a modern, 'western', capitalist, urban, industrial society is incredibly short. Only 150 years ago Japan was governed by the Tokugawa Shogunate. It was a traditional east Asian society, 'feudal', rural and agricultural in nature, and its government was fiercely opposed to contacts with the outside world of that time. After the 'Meiji Restoration' of 1868, a period of radical modernisation and westernisation ensued. The pace of that change still challenges belief. Landscape, economy and society were transformed within a single life span. But, as with most radical modernisations, some of those uprooted by the changes sought new lives in distant lands. Japan became a country of emigration, and 'Japanese' communities developed in the western United States (especially California and Hawaii), and in Latin America, notably in Brazil and Peru. Back in Japan the product of this radical modernisation was an economically, politically and militarily powerful nation state. Indeed, so powerful was Japan, that during the first half of the twentieth century it built up a vast empire, firstly on the nearby mainland of northeast Asia (Korea and Manchuria), but later extending to the whole of the east and south east Asian region (*dai nippon* - Greater Japan). During this period, covering the thirty years before 1945, Japan was also a country of emigration, only this time it was not the uprooted who were migrating but colonial settlers, administrators, businessmen, soldiers and traders. Thus, in 1935 there were about one million Japanese living abroad, mostly in Manchuria (320,000), the United States (260,000) and Brazil (190,000) (Ito 1990).

But there was also migration in the reverse direction; many of Korea's rural poor had sought new lives in Japan's industrial cities, so that by 1929 there were already 270,000 Koreans living in Japan. (Incidentally, facts given without detailed reference are taken from Kodansha 1993). Furthermore, towards the end of the period, to meet the extreme labour shortages brought about by the war effort, the Japanese government forcibly imported labour from its colonial territories (it is calculated, for example, that 1.2 million Koreans were brought to Japan during the period 1939-45). So, for the first time there came to be a significant 'foreign' population living semi-permanently in Japan. And as the first of the foreign populations of modern Japan, these Korean (and Chinese) workers and their descendants came to be called the 'oldcomers'.

The traumatic defeat of Japan in 1945 initiated another radical political and social transformation of Japanese society - the second within eighty years! Once again it triggered emigration to North and South America (though this emigration was not permitted until after 1952), but it also brought a new group of people to Japan - the members of the occupying forces. In 1952 there were 260,000 US military personnel in Japan, and 40 years later the figure was still considerable but now below 50,000. The United States' presence in Japan was enhanced by the important geostrategic position of Japan in the early Cold War years and, in particular, by the Korean War. Indeed, it was the economic growth spurred on by the extra economic demand generated by the Korean War, that began to lift Japan out of the extreme poverty that it experienced in the late 1940s. The result of the 'economic miracle' of rapid and sustained post-war growth which followed is the Japan of today - a country whose GNP per capita now exceeds that of the United States - the country under whose military (and some would say, political) umbrella it remains!

The long period of economic growth was not achieved without a fundamental change in the relationship between Japan and the rest of the world. At first it looked as though Japan's internationalisation was to be only 'external' - that is to say, in the face of mounting labour shortages at home, and fearing trade policies which would exclude imports from Japan, Japanese firms were investing energetically and on a massive scale in production abroad. With this came

a new kind of emigration - the transfer of company personnel to the foreign branch plants and offices of major Japanese companies. These managerial and professional staffs, with their families and assistants form Japanese communities in all of the major cities of the developed world, and in many other regions in both the developed and the developing world wherever Japanese manufacturing and resource-related investments are to be found (for example, Cormode 1993).

But it turned out that Japan's internationalisation was not to be just 'external'. For one thing, after 1945, Japanese society became deeply penetrated by American cultural influences. Even today a vast amount of Japanese television programme time is devoted to Hollywood films, and to US-located sports events (especially golf and baseball). But as the Japanese economy boomed and income inequalities between Japan and its neighbours in east and south east Asia grew, as the labour shortages persisted (despite the 'hollowing out' of the Japanese economy as firms invested 'off-shore'), and as the 'bubble economy' of the 1980s put a further strain on the labour market already depleted by the lack of urban labour market entrants from rural farm backgrounds, so, suddenly, Japan became (despite serious misgivings) a country of large-scale 'guest-worker'-style immigration. These immigrants are called the 'newcomers'.

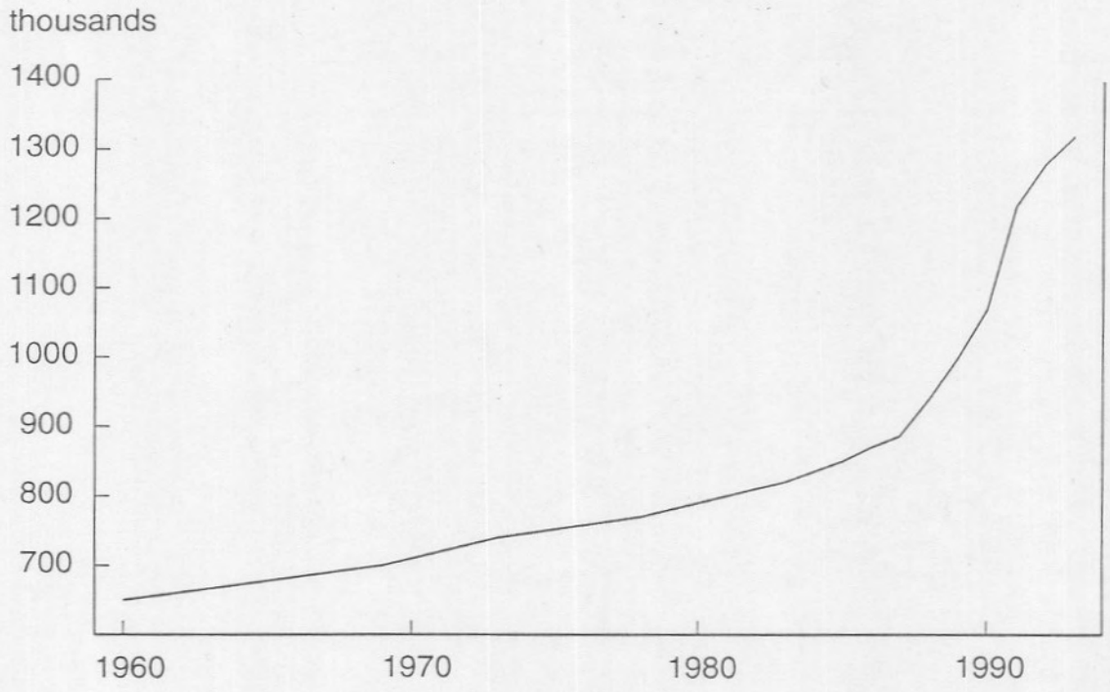
It is this recent large-scale immigration that constitutes the focus of this paper. What form does it take? What caused it to happen? What are its consequences - demographic, social, economic and political? The first part of the paper traces the main trends in recent immigration, and discusses the position of these immigrants in Japanese society. Special attention is given to the spatial distribution of the six main immigrant groups. The second part examines the relationships between these international migrations and (i) international differences in wage-levels and living conditions in the southern and east Asian regions; (ii) the economic restructuring, or 'hollowing out', of the Japanese economy; and (iii) the effects of recent business cycles (notably the 'bubble economy' of the late 1980s). It discusses the labour market positions of immigrants, and the ways in which immigrant workers are used to meet labour supply shortages in specific sectors and regions. The third part confronts one of the social and cultural problems faced by immigrant workers and their families in Japan; it emphasises the contrast between the strong 'external' internationalisation of Japan (as shown by the volume of direct foreign investment in Europe, North America and south east Asia), and its weak 'internal' internationalisation (as shown by the hostility of some Japanese people to the presence of a foreign population in 'their' country).

The geography of international migration to Japan: patterns and trends

This section provides an overview of recent migration trends and patterns, concentrating particularly on the timing of the build up in immigration, and on the locations of countries of origin (mostly in Asia and Latin America) and of counties (prefectures) of destination in Japan. The data source is the annual report entitled 'Statistics on Immigration Control' published by the Japan Immigration Association (Japan Immigration Association 1994).

The increase in immigration to Japan can best be seen through the data on 'registered aliens', presented in this report but collected by the local authorities. 'Registered aliens' are people who are required to carry an 'Alien Registration Card' with them at all times. They are men and women who have a right to live in Japan - not necessarily to work, and certainly not to vote in national elections or to take public office. Their numbers at the end of 1993 came to one million, 321 thousand, or just over one percent of the total population. This, of course, represents a far smaller proportion of the population than equivalent figures for other advanced capitalist societies (Stalker 1994). However, this figure is only a part of the picture. Firstly, there are very many

illegal immigrants in Japan - probably well in excess of 300,000 in 1993 (we will discuss this issue further below). The second is that this figure has increased very suddenly over the past ten years. In 1983 there were just 817 thousand registered aliens in the country. Between 1983 and 1993 the permanently resident 'Korean' population (who are still classified as registered aliens) has remained almost static at around 680 thousand, so the 'newcomer' population has approximately trebled in ten years! Figure 1 records the trends from 1952 to 1993. It can be seen that the major increase in immigration was during the late 1980s and early 1990s - that is the period when Japan became, for the second time in its modern history, a country of immigration (Mori 1994, Kono, S. 1994, Kouseishou 1993).



Source: Japan Immigration Association 1994, Statistics on Immigration Control

Figure 1. Registered Aliens in Japan 1960-93

Who are these people? For the most part (and irrespective of the jobs they did before they left their countries of origin), they work in Japan in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, especially in the construction, manufacturing (e.g. car components) and service industries (e.g. as 'entertainers'). They are classic 'gap-fillers' - they do the kinds of jobs that the Japanese themselves do not want to do. Employers, finding it impossible to recruit reliable Japanese labour for the '3K' jobs (involving work that is strenuous, dirty and dangerous - kitsui, kitanai, kiken) turned to foreign workers, who were only too willing to do these jobs at rates of pay that were far more (five, or even ten times greater) than the wages that they could earn in their home countries. In the early period of the build up of immigration (in the late 1970s until the mid-1980s) the majority of the newcomers were young Asian women recruited by agents to work in the Japanese sex industry (as bar hostesses, strip-tease dancers and prostitutes). But by the late 1980s the immigration stream had become male dominated, with Asian men working in the construction industry during the boom years of the 'bubble economy', and also in small factories and workshops. By the early 1990s these men had been joined by the *Nikkeijin* - men and women of Japanese descent, migrating from South America to work (for better pay and in better conditions than the Asian

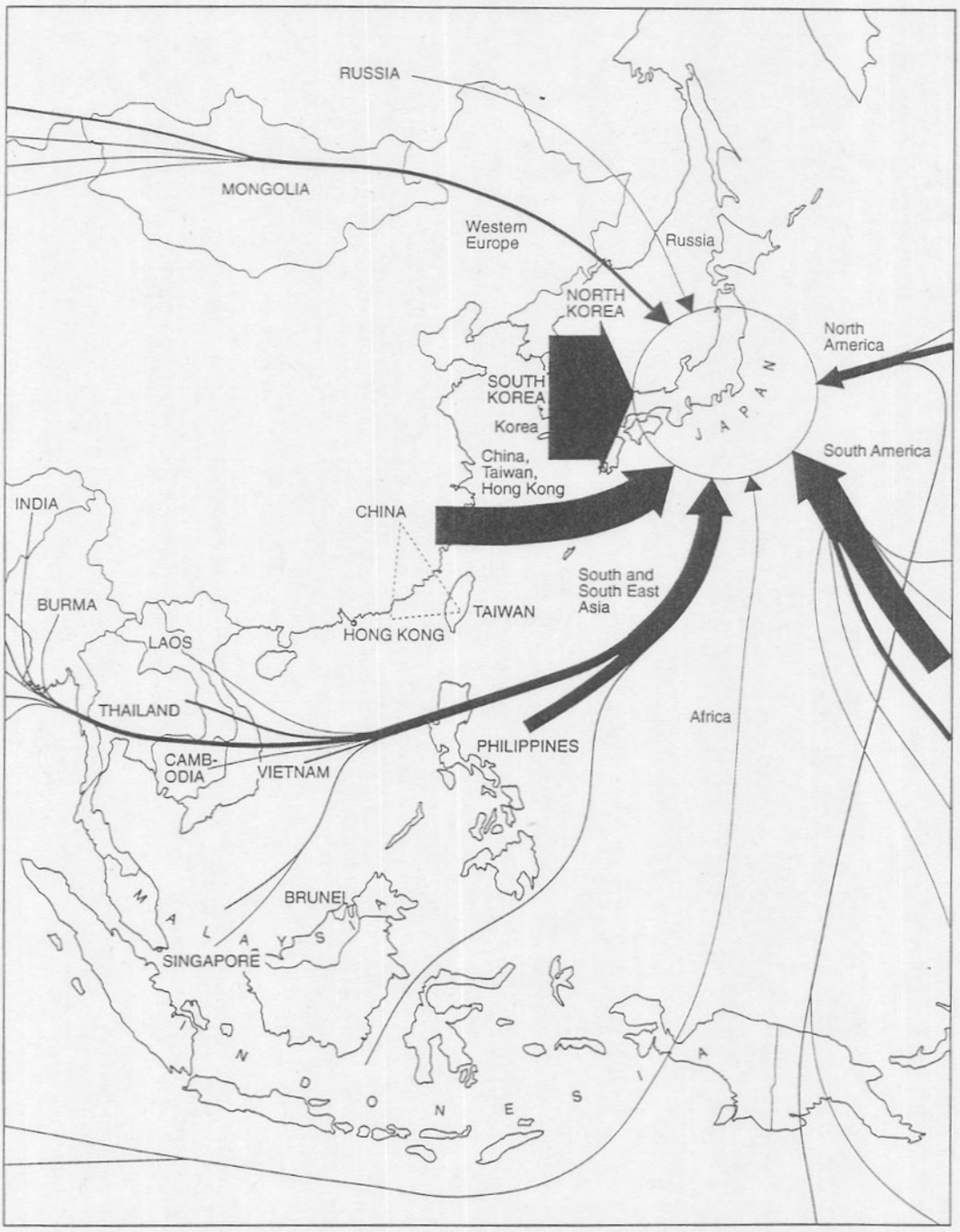
newcomers) in the larger factories, mostly in the car components and electrical engineering industries. Throughout the period, of course, a minority of those migrating to Japan have been professional, technical and managerial staffs associated with international business and higher education. (For useful surveys of the recent growth of immigration, and of the 'foreign worker problem', in addition to those listed elsewhere in this paper, see Goto 1993 (on the economic effects of immigration), Kajita and Iyotani 1993, Momose and Ogura 1992, Morita and Iyotani 1994, Nagayama 1993 and Sasaki and Sato 1993).

We can gain a better picture of the complexity of contemporary Japanese immigration if we examine the spatial distribution of migrant origins, and the spatial distribution of their destinations within Japan (for the latter see Chiba 1993, 1994). Figure 2 shows the country of origin of the 1.32 million registered foreigners living in Japan at the end of 1993. The situations and characteristics of these groups are very different. By far the largest group is the one which traces its origins to Korea (682,000). Some of these are recent arrivals of young people and young adults whose homes are in South Korea and who are culturally Korean. The vast majority, however, are second and third (sometimes first and fourth) generation Koreans, the descendants of the 30% or so of the 2.3 million Koreans in Japan in 1945 who chose to stay. Although to a very large extent culturally Japanese (in language, thought and customs), these people are not Japanese citizens (only a very small minority have become naturalised) and therefore they cannot vote, take public office, or become employees in many public sector organisations. They are 'denizens', or permanent residents, rather than citizens. They constitute a large rather shabbily-treated minority, suffering the hatred of a handful of right-wing extremists, but also experiencing a degree of social exclusion from the mass of the Japanese population (Park 1993, Weiner 1994).

When their parents and grandparents came to Japan in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, Korea was part of Greater Japan. But during their lives in Japan, the Korean minority have seen their 'homeland' first achieve independence, then suffer a dreadful war, then become divided. The division of Korea into two ideologically opposed countries has affected the Korean community in Japan. Most of the Koreans came from what is now the highly developed, capitalist South Korea, but others had family connections with North Korea, and many sympathised with the ideas of the late North Korean leader, Kim Il Sung. This fact, when combined with the effects of social exclusion in the realm of work (which pushes some members of the Korean community towards the seedier end of the non-public sector services), and when combined with residential segregation (which results in Koreans living in the more run-down areas of the cities), provides many Japanese with the reasons they need to justify their feelings of superiority over, and distrust of, the Korean minority (Yoshino 1992).

It is important to note that the Korean 'community' is not evenly distributed around the country but is highly concentrated in the Kansai region (the region of west-central Japan which includes the cities of Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe). Figure 3 (based upon data for the end of 1993) shows that the proportion of Koreans in northern Japan and in the Kanto region (the region around Tokyo) is much lower. This reflects the timing of their arrival and the circumstances of their insertion into the Japanese labour force. The colonial and wartime economies were based upon the heavy engineering and chemicals industries of the Kansai region, and it was to fill the labour shortages there (and in the coal mining areas of south west Japan) that the Koreans came or were brought to the country.

EAST ASIA



Source: Japan Immigration Association 1994, Statistics on Immigration Control

Figure 2. "Registered Aliens' in Japan 1993

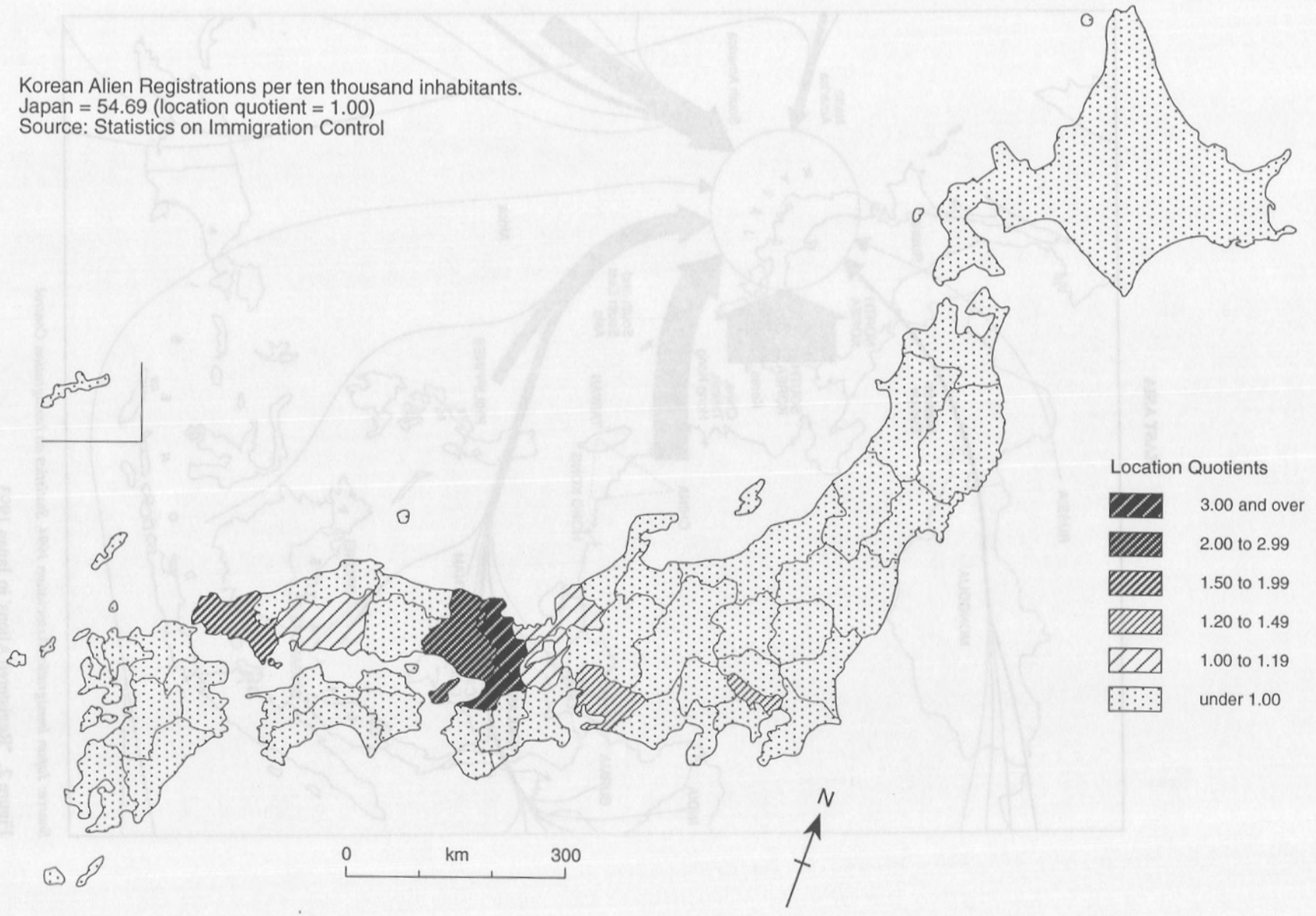


Figure 3. Japan's 'Korean' population in 1993

Chinese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong Alien Registrations per ten thousand inhabitants.
Japan = 16.86 (location quotient = 1.00)
Source: Statistics on Immigration Control

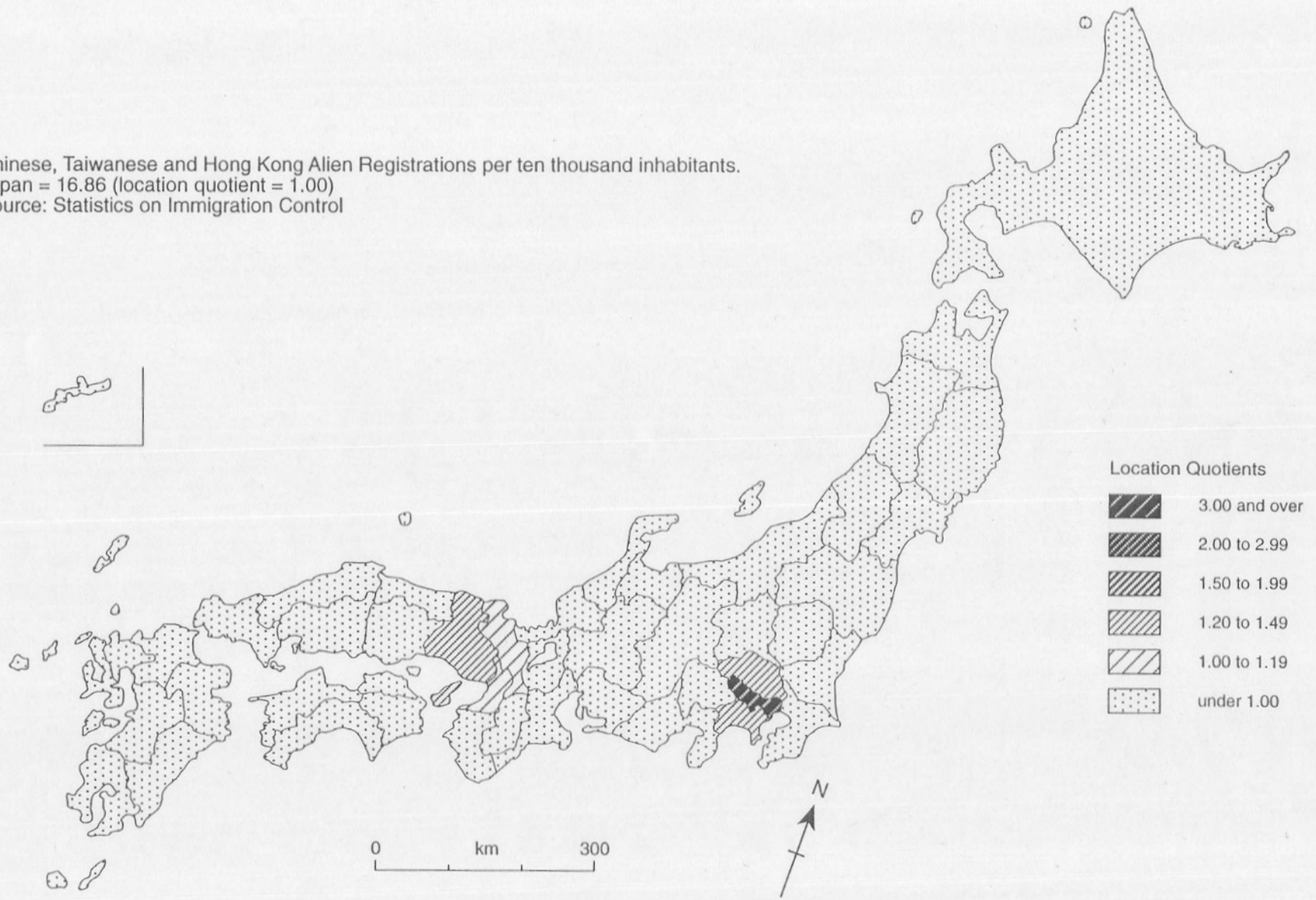


Figure 4. Japan's 'Chinese' population in 1993

Figure 2 shows that the second largest group of registered aliens (210,000) are the Chinese (the registration statistics for the 'Chinese', due to Japan's 'one-China' policy, include people from Taiwan and Hong Kong). Some of these men and women (around 25,000) are in Japan for the same reason as the Koreans discussed above, and some are men and women associated with the strong commercial links that connect Japan with Taiwan and Hong Kong (and increasingly now with China mainland), but the majority are young men who, whatever the pretext for being in Japan (usually as students or trainees), are thought by most commentators to be 'really' there to earn money. From data collected by the immigration service we can find out what were the reasons given by people for entering Japan. During 1993, those entering from China (mainland) represented 42% of all foreign student entries and 39% of foreign trainee entries (Japan Immigration Association 1994). And if we compare the figures for the last few years we find that total entries from China (mainland) are, except for those from South America (see below), showing the fastest rates of increase (there were 64,000 new entries from mainland China in 1989 and 127,000 new entries in 1993) (For discussions of students and trainees as workers see Wakabayashi 1990, Kuptsch and Oishi 1995, Okunishi and Sano 1994, and Furuya 1994).

So where are these Chinese people residing in Japan? Using the registered aliens data again we can see from Figure 4 that they were very highly concentrated in Tokyo, and to a lesser extent in the prefectures containing the cities of Yokohama and Kobe (for studies of the social networks of the Chinese in Tokyo see Tajima 1994 and forthcoming). This pattern conforms well with the recent development of this immigration, since it has been in the capital city and its region that the problems of recruitment of unskilled and semi-skilled labour have been most severe. The Chinese communities in the port cities of Kobe and Yokohama are, however, of much longer standing (for information on the regional origins of the Chinese community see Chen 1990).

Grouped together, the third largest immigrant community in Japan comes from South America. These are the *Nikkeijin* - descendants of the Japanese emigrants of the early twentieth century. They mostly come from Brazil (155,000) and Peru (33,000), but smaller numbers also come from Bolivia, Argentina and Paraguay. In one respect they are like the Koreans - they are 'Japanese' in Brazil and 'Brazilians' in Japan in the same way that the Koreans are 'Koreans' in Japan and 'Japanese' in Korea (Koga, E. 1994). But that is where the similarities end. The big difference, of course, is language. The Koreans speak Japanese, but the recent migrants from South America, despite their physical appearance and their Japanese names, have Portuguese or Spanish as their first language (Kawakami 1994, Nimomiya 1994).

The number of *Nikkeijin* entering Japan was already important in the late 1980s, but their number dramatically increased following the Immigration Law of 1990, when restrictions on their immigration for work purposes were lifted. For the most part they form a much less exploited group of immigrants than those already discussed or about to be discussed. This is because they have legal status to live and work in Japan, enjoy job mobility and can command wages that are comparable with Japanese nationals. They tend to work in large or medium-sized factories belonging to well-established manufacturing firms. These firms tend to be located in the outer industrial areas of the extended Tokyo and Nagoya urban regions (Koga, M. 1994, Yoshida 1992). As a result, it is the prefectures around the cities of Tokyo and Nagoya that have the highest *Nikkeijin* population, particularly those with many firms in the car components and electrical engineering industries (Gunma, Shizuoka, Ibaraki, Shiga and Mie) (Figure 5).

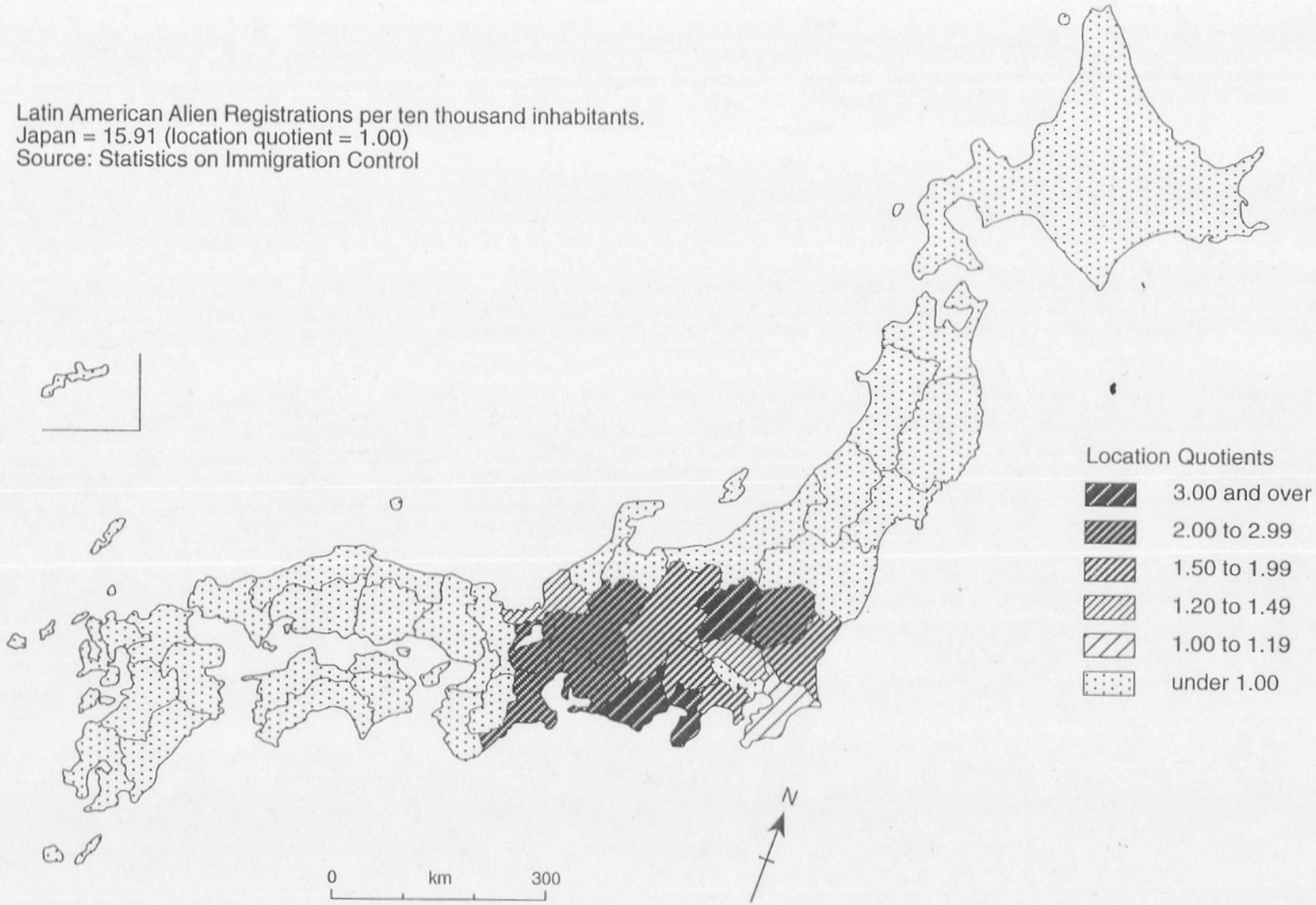


Figure 5. Japan's 'Nikkeijin' Population in 1993

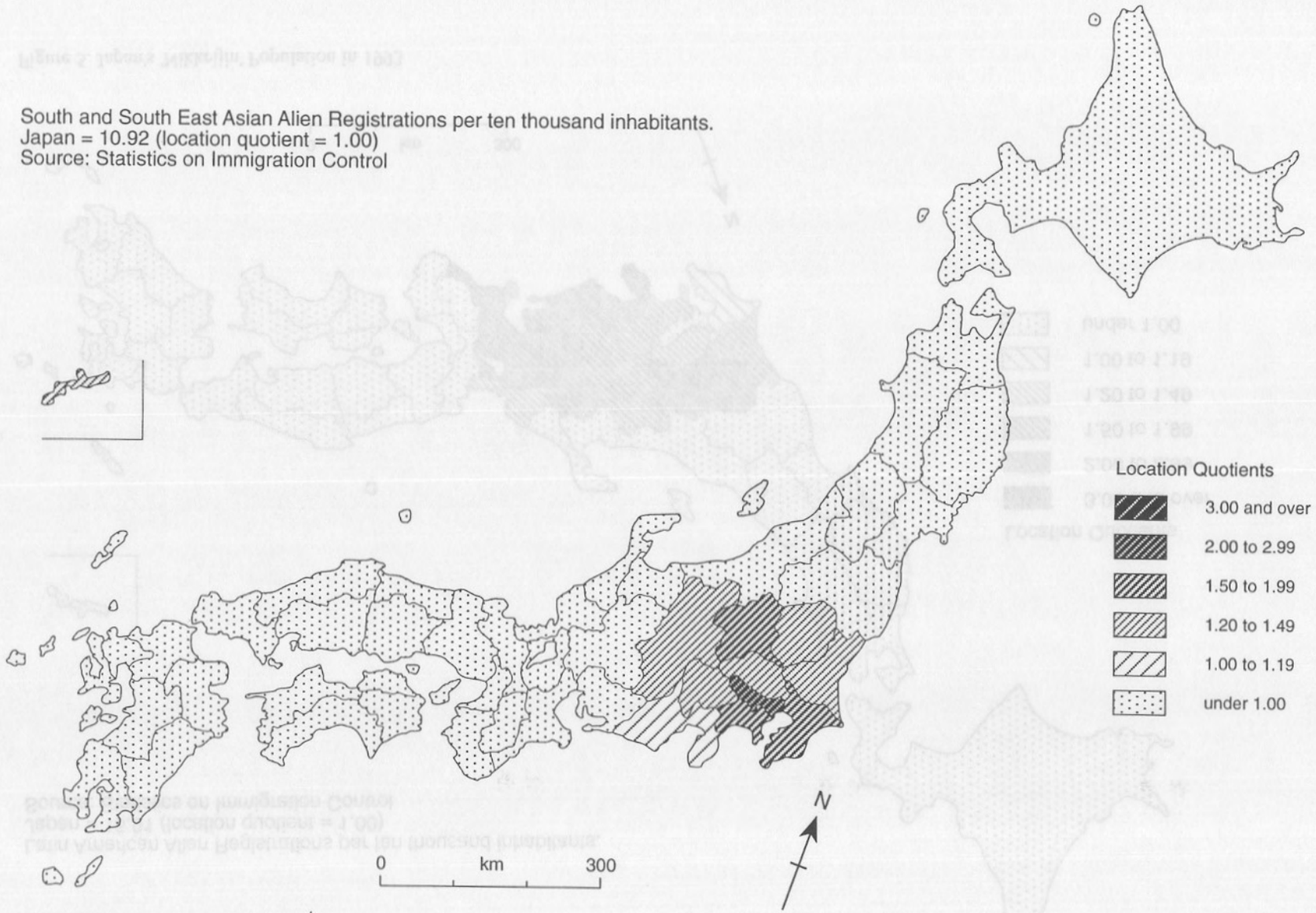


Figure 6. Japan's 'South and south east Asian' population in 1993

We have now examined the three largest immigrant groups, and it is time to make a more general observation. Immigration to advanced capitalist countries is almost always a complex and complicated process, but in the case of Japan, that complexity is enhanced by the great differences between the main immigrant groups. These differences of demography (notably age/sex structure), culture (notably language), economy (industrial sector and type of establishment) and social history (past links with Japan) are reflected in the spatial patterns of their residence in Japan. We can think of no other country where the three main immigrant groups have such wildly different spatial distributions.

But the picture does not become any simpler when we turn to the other important immigrant groups. From Figure 2 we can see that significant numbers of registered aliens come from the countries of south and south east Asia. These tend to be the most heavily exploited of all immigrants to Japan, and it is from south and south east Asia (along with mainland China) that most of Japan's illegal immigrants originate (Ajiajin roudousha mondai kondankai 1988, Fujie 1995, Nishiguchi no date, Stahl 1993). The men are often employed as casual day labourers on the building sites or as cheap labour in small industrial workshops, the women are employed in the service sector, for example in catering and cleaning, and in the sex industry (sometimes in conditions that are so exploitative that they are represented as the victims of a modern form of slavery - see Miki 1994, Yoshimura 1993). The sizable migration flow from the Philippines, in particular, is composed very largely of young women working as 'entertainers' in Japan. So politically sensitive has this issue become that the Philippine government now requires young women to take ballet lessons and classes in Japanese language and culture before they are allowed to become 'dancers' in Japan! A significant, but far smaller number of Philippinas become the wives of Japanese farmers in remoter rural areas, where it is very difficult for men to persuade Japanese women to accept the physical and social rigours and obligations of Japanese village life.

Despite the variety of countries from which they come (Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Burma, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are the main countries of origin), these migrants tend to share the experience of being at the very bottom of the social system - doing the worst jobs under the worst conditions with the least security and for the lowest wages. And they are also very similar in their geographical distributions in Japan. Nearly all of these groups are heavily concentrated in Tokyo itself, and to a much lesser extent in the prefectures of the greater Tokyo region (especially Kanagawa, Chiba, Saitama and Gunma) (the exception is the Vietnamese community which is - or was in 1993, ie before the earthquake - strongly represented in Kobe) (Figure 6).

Unlike Europe and North America, Japan has very few immigrants from either Africa or the Caribbean, and surprisingly few from its near neighbour, Russia (though here there are signs of recent growth). The remainder of Japan's immigrants are from the other advanced capitalist countries, which for our purposes can be grouped into two categories - the English speaking countries bordering the Pacific Ocean (US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), and western Europe. The first group is dominated by the United States. In addition to military personnel, there are many men and women in professional, technical and managerial occupations working in Japan, and a significant number of mixed marriages between Americans and Japanese. Once again, it is the capital city and its region which accounts for a large part of this immigrant population, but the large US base on Okinawa is also affecting the distribution (Figure 7) (people from Australia and New Zealand are often assumed to be 'Americans' in Japan). Japan's European population is very small and is likewise focused on Tokyo (Figure 8).

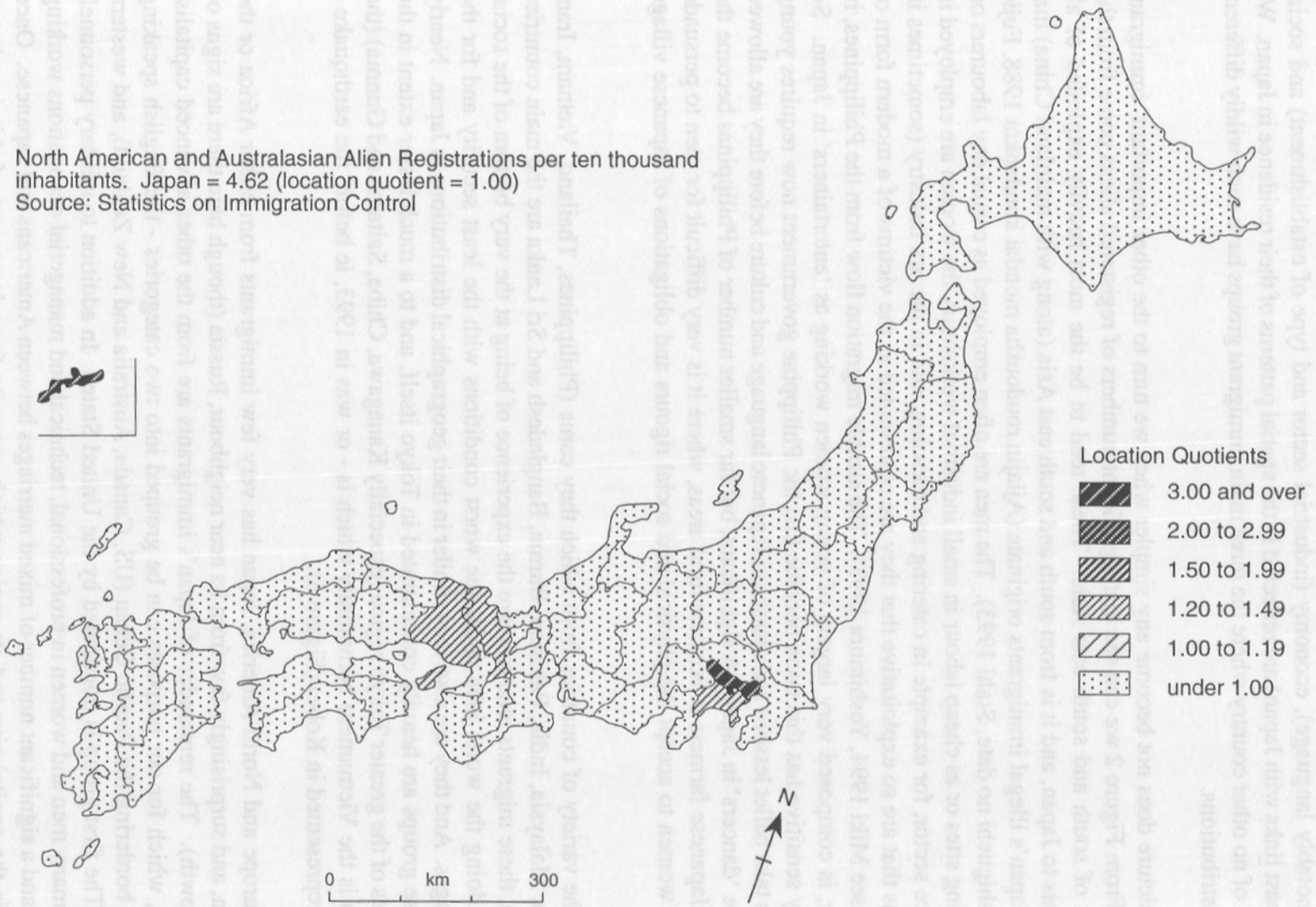


Figure 7. Japan's 'American' Population in 1993

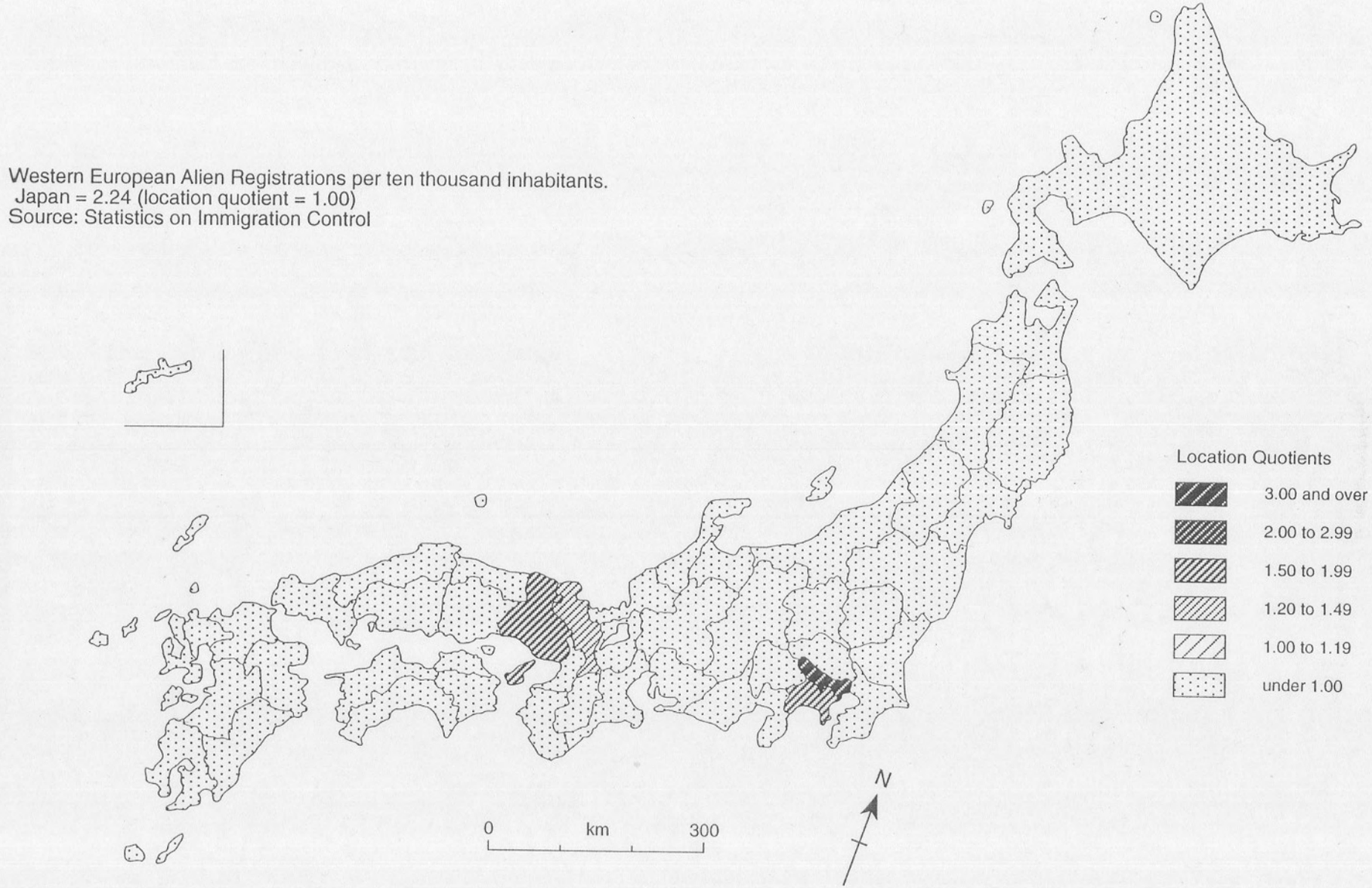


Figure 8. Japan's 'European' population in 1993

It is tempting to assume that this population from 'western' advanced capitalist countries is made up entirely of well-paid company executives and professional people. But this is not the whole picture. Many of the registered aliens from these countries are young university graduates, either seeking a break before settling down to a career in their own country or unable to find suitable employment there. They live in Japan largely on the proceeds of teaching English in schools, language schools and universities. Although their job security is often low, the rates of pay are so high that student debts can be paid off and money saved for the future. These young men and women represent a new phenomenon - a white, Anglo-Saxon form of 'guest-worker'.

Explanations of the recent rapid increase in immigration to Japan

There has been a strong tendency to explain the main features of Japanese immigration largely in terms of government policy. The low overall proportion of ethnic minorities in the population, compared with Europe and North America is explained by the actions of the Japanese Government in its insistence that Japan is not a country of immigration. Many Japanese politicians and officials point to the ethnic conflicts in other advanced capitalist countries as evidence of what happens when societies become multicultural. Shimada expresses this position very effectively when he refers to Japan's 'foreign worker problem' (Shimada 1994). So the argument is, that by not allowing most of those who want to migrate to Japan to do so, the government has kept immigration to a low and 'manageable' level. A related argument would be that, by not allowing dual citizenship, and by making it difficult to become a naturalised Japanese citizen, the government has kept the large Korean minority in a state of political powerlessness as 'immigrants'. This is because, as 'registered aliens' (even though they were for the most part born and brought up in Japan and are Japanese in almost every respect), they lack the social, political and employment rights of being Japanese citizens.

How, then, does one explain the recent sudden increase in immigration? It might be argued that the Japanese government, in response to pressure from business interests, especially in the construction and engineering industries, has created ways in which cheap labour can imported 'by the back door' as it were, while maintaining the fiction that Japan remains a uniquely uniform and homogeneous society. The recent increases in the 'student/trainee' population and in the immigration of the South American *Nikkeijin* seem to conform well with this explanation. In the first case, the government has encouraged the migration of Asian students to Japan, some of them to take courses in the Japanese language. These students are allowed to work part-time (up to 20 hours per week). But critics say that in practice the students are in Japan for work purposes, and that the studying comes a poor second in their priorities. The situation with trainees is similar. It is argued that, by providing training opportunities in Japan in exchange for work, the Japanese are helping both their own employers (who need the labour) and the countries from which the trainees come (who need to have people with the skills that the trainees are acquiring). Some, like Shimada, see this migration, therefore, as a kind of development aid given by Japan to the developing countries (the same argument was heard in the early days of the European guest-worker system). But, in reality, the amount of training offered is very variable with some trainees receiving virtually no training whatsoever. Their presence in the workplace is seen by some employers (and commentators) to be for the purpose of filling those vacancies which cannot be filled by the use of Japanese labour.

In the second case, the government are aware that the *Nikkeijin* represent a non-threatening form of labour immigration, not only because the migrants are regarded as ethnically 'Japanese' (which,

of course, in most respects they are not), but also because there is only a relatively small and finite number of people involved. The importance of government policy in determining immigration can then be seen in the sudden increase in South American migration to Japan that followed the lifting of restrictions. Similar arguments are also used to explain particular shifts in the immigration trends. Thus, when travellers to Japan were required to have entry visas, the numbers arriving from countries that were previously free of such restrictions (for example, Iran), suddenly decreased.

Thus, from this perspective, Japanese immigration reflects: (i) the general ban on the immigration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers; (ii) the relative lack of restriction on the immigration of highly qualified labour, where this can be seen to be in line with Japanese national interests (for example, by promoting innovation or supporting international trade); and (iii) the creation of 'back door' entry mechanisms to ensure that those who are most adversely affected by labour shortages can obtain the foreign workers that they need.

However, this line of argument is insufficient for two reasons. The first is that it tends to take it for granted that many people are keen and willing to leave their home countries to live in Japan. But this assumption should be questioned. After all, the Japanese are very unpopular with many people in East Asia. There may be a grudging respect for Japan's economic success and for the quality of the products of Japanese companies, but the associations of Japan with war and occupation are far keener than the equivalent feelings towards Germany in western Europe, and the process of political reconciliation - of 'mending fences' - still has a long way to go (Sato 1994). These feelings of distrust and hostility are particularly strong in Korea and China. Moreover, it is not as though the *Nikkeijin* are renewing old family and community ties when they migrate to Japan. These were, for the most part, firmly broken when the migrants left Japan in the second, third and fourth decades of this century. When, in addition, it is realised just how few people outside Japan can speak and read Japanese, and how different Japanese culture is from that of many of the countries of south and south east Asia (especially those that are Muslim or Christian in religion), it might be regarded as somewhat surprising that the pressure to migrate to Japan is so strong.

The second problem with a perspective that explains recent immigration in terms of government policy alone, is that it ignores the facts of illegal immigrantion. If everything was in the capable hands of the politicians and officials, how is it that there seem to be almost daily newspaper reports about illegal immigrants being caught trying to enter the country? (with the implication that there are many others who are not caught!). Estimates of the population of illegal immigrants vary greatly. The minimum figure for 1993 seems to be around 300,000. This figure is based on the number of cases where people have entered properly as temporary visitors (for example, as tourists), but have failed to leave Japan by the required date (90 days later). They are the 'over-stayers'. But commentators accept the possibility that the true figure for illegal immigrants could be several times greater than this (for example, Shimada 1994 p. 38). If so, the registered 'newcomers' could well represent less than half the true newcomer population, and the total 'immigrant' population could be in excess of two million people - far more than the 1.32 million given in the official statistics (for detailed discussions of illegal immigrants see Morita and Sassen 1994, and Sasaki 1994).

What is missing, of course, from the policy-based account of recent immigration, is a treatment of the economic 'root causes' of migration to Japan. These can be usefully grouped under three headings: (i) those that derive from processes that operate over the long term, and which produce

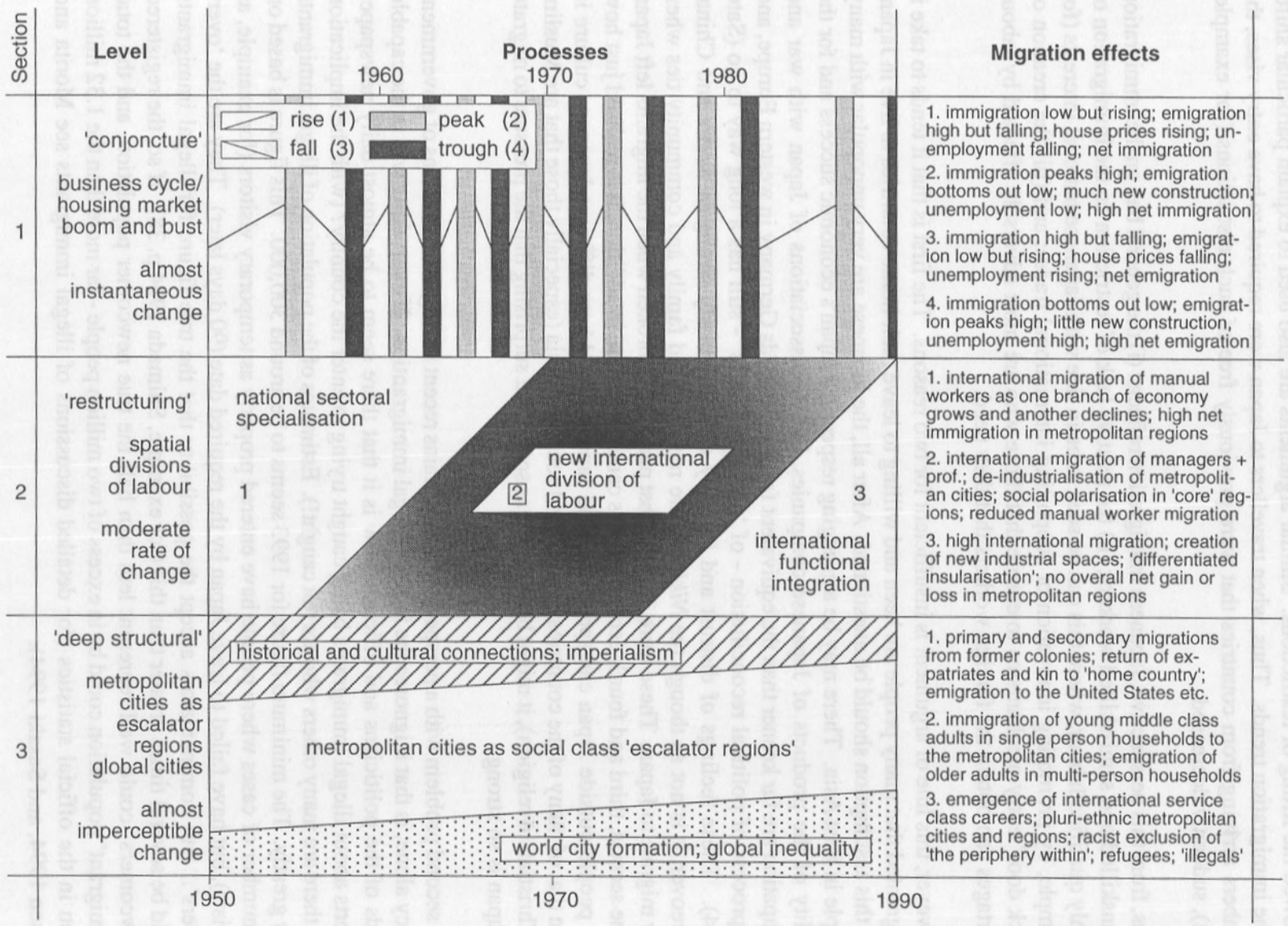
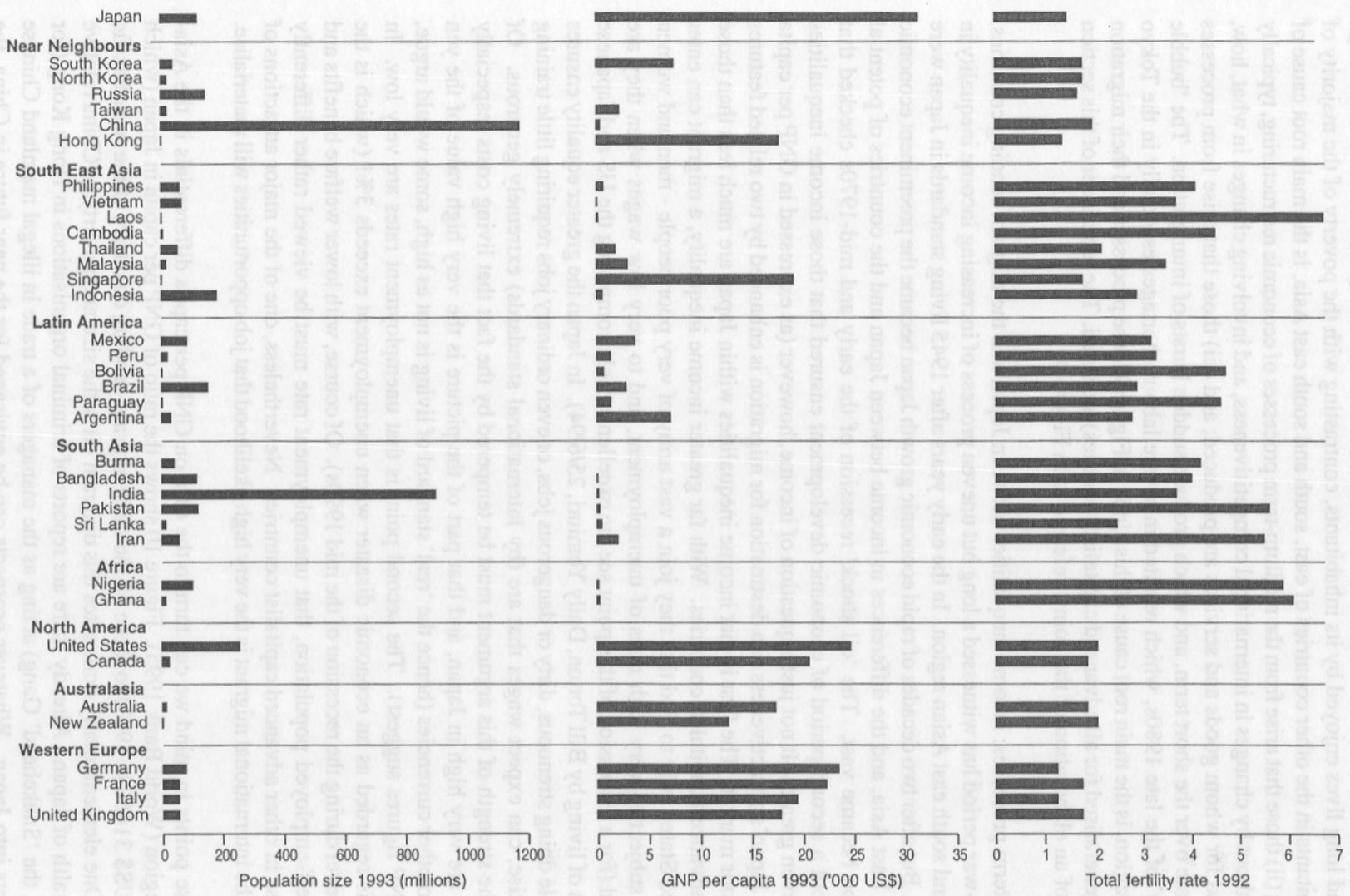


Figure 9. A general classification of the economic 'root causes' of migration to advanced capitalist countries

an underlying propensity for migration to occur. The wealth of Japan, reflected in the high wages and long lives enjoyed by its inhabitants, contrasting with the poverty of the majority of the inhabitants in the other countries of east, south and south east Asia, is the main root cause of this kind; (ii) those that arise from the medium-term processes of economic restructuring, typically brought about by changes in international competitiveness, and involving changes in what, how, where and for whom goods and services are produced; and (iii) those that arise from processes that operate over the short term, and which produce sudden bursts of immigration. The 'bubble economy' of the late 1980s, which resulted in severe labour shortages especially in the Tokyo (Kanto) region, is the main root cause of this kind. In Figure 9 these processes and their migration results (generalised for all advanced capitalist countries) are listed. The remainder of this section consists of an elaboration of the points referred to in Figure 9.

(i) Long term processes: income inequalities between Japan and the migrant sending countries. The post-war period has witnessed a long but uneven process of increasing income inequality in the east and south east Asian region. In the early years after 1945 living standards in Japan were very low. But after two decades of rapid economic growth Japan became the preeminent economic power in East Asia, and the differences in income between Japan and the countries of potential emigration became vast. The 'oil shock' recession of the early and mid-1970s checked that growth, but a second period of economic development ensured that those income inequalities became even greater. It not just a question of income, however (as expressed in GNP per capita figures). Japan's attractiveness as a destination for migration is enhanced by two related features of its labour market. The first is that income inequalities within Japan are much less than those in other advanced capitalist countries. With far greater income inequality, a migrant can enter the United States only to find that they join a vast army of very poor people - men and women who are subject to very high rates of unemployment, and to very low wages when they are employed (for a discussion of this point see the excellent article comparing the US and Japanese standards of living by Bill Totton, Daily Yomiuri, 25/6/94). In Japan the greater equality ensures that people doing strenuous, dirty or dangerous jobs, or even ordinary jobs requiring little training or expertise, can expect wages that are (by international standards) extremely generous. Of course, the strength of this argument must be tempered by the fact that living costs (especially housing) are very high in Japan, and that part of the picture is the very high value of the yen relative to other currencies (hence the 'real' standard of living is not as high, some would argue, as the GNP figures suggest). The second point is that unemployment rates are very low. In Japan it is regarded as an economic disaster when unemployment exceeds 3%! (which is the average level during the recession of the mid 1990s). Of course, with lower welfare benefits and a large self-employed population, that unemployment rate must be viewed rather differently from those in other advanced capitalist countries. Nevertheless, one of the major attractions of Japan to the international migrant is the very high likelihood that job opportunities will materialise.

With these points in mind we can turn to the data on GNP per capita differentials in the Asia-Pacific region (World Bank 1995). Figure 10 shows the ratio of GNP per capita in Japan (which stood at US$ 31450 in 1993) to those of the main migrant-sending countries of the Asia-Pacific region. One element totally dominates this diagram - it is the size and poverty of China relative to the wealth of Japan. Already there are reports of criminal organisations in Hong Kong (for example, the 'Snakehead' Gang) acting as the managers of a trade in illegal mainland Chinese immigrants into Japan. Whatever prospects can be envisaged for the near future in China, the demographic impact on Japan is likely to be considerable. If 'peaceful' radical capitalist modernisation continues, it will further uproot hundreds of millions of Chinese people from their village and small town backgrounds, thus rendering them more likely to enter the international



Source: World Bank Atlas

Figure 10. Income inequalities, population sizes and total fertility rates for countries sending significant numbers of migrants to Japan.

migration system (for this argument as applied to south east Asia see Kobayashi 1994 and Rujhan 1993). If law and order breaks down, as China politically and socially fragments following the fall of the Chinese Communist Party, the refugee situation could become disastrous, resulting in difficult choices for the governments of neighbouring countries, notably Japan. Figure 10 also focuses attention on the potential migration from Russia (though it is, of course, the low-population-density Russian Far East that forms a common (and disputed) boundary with Japan), and on certain countries in south and south east Asia that have either (or both) extremely low incomes or extremely high fertility rates (notably Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan). Together, these five countries have a population which exceeds that of China, and their fertility rates are far higher, meaning that there are, and will continue to be, many young people seeking work (and probably failing to find it) in these countries.

To summarise, Japan already has a significant number of registered aliens from countries in east and south east Asia (containing a combined population of 2.25 billion people) where average incomes are less than one fiftieth of those in Japan! When this is combined with the speed, ease and relative cheapness of modern air travel, a basis for mass migrations to Japan is firmly established.

(ii) Medium-term processes: economic restructuring and the 'hollowing out' of the Japanese economy. It may well be the case that income inequality provides the basis for international migration, but, for that migration to become activated, there must be specific jobs in the receiving country that can be filled by specific people from the sending country. And, anyway, since these income inequalities have existed for a long time, why is it the case that it is only in the 1980s and 1990s that migration to Japan has become so important? To answer this question we need to look into the workings of the economy within Japan, and the way that this has changed over the post-war period.

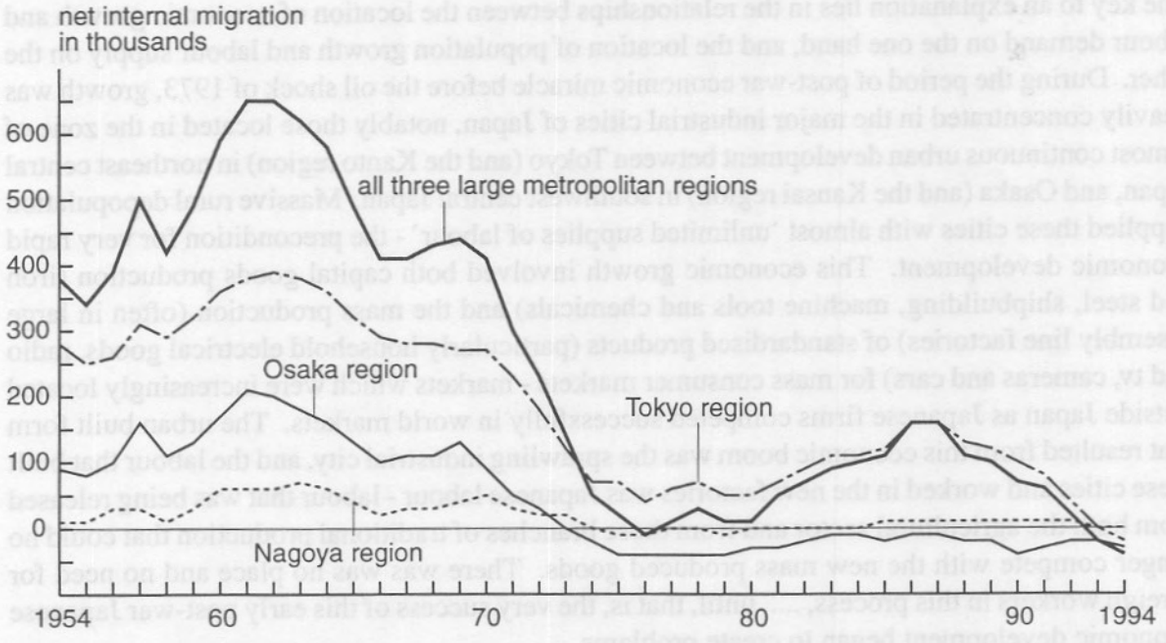
The key to an explanation lies in the relationships between the location of economic growth and labour demand on the one hand, and the location of population growth and labour supply on the other. During the period of post-war economic miracle before the oil shock of 1973, growth was heavily concentrated in the major industrial cities of Japan, notably those located in the zone of almost continuous urban development between Tokyo (and the Kanto region) in northeast central Japan, and Osaka (and the Kansai region) in southwest central Japan. Massive rural depopulation supplied these cities with almost 'unlimited supplies of labour' - the precondition for very rapid economic development. This economic growth involved both capital goods production (iron and steel, shipbuilding, machine tools and chemicals) and the mass production (often in large assembly line factories) of standardised products (particularly household electrical goods, radio and tv, cameras and cars) for mass consumer markets - markets which were increasingly located outside Japan as Japanese firms competed successfully in world markets. The urban built form that resulted from this economic boom was the sprawling industrial city, and the labour that built these cities and worked in the new factories was Japanese labour - labour that was being released from both the agricultural sector and from those branches of traditional production that could no longer compete with the new mass produced goods. There was was no place and no need for foreign workers in this process, ... until, that is, the very success of this early post-war Japanese economic development began to create problems.

By around 1970 (well before the oil shock recession) it was clear that a serious economic restructuring of Japanese industry was under way. Labour costs and labour shortages were now

making firms invest heavily in labour-saving production methods. The annual 'spring offensive' (or wage round) had resulted, over the years since its inception in 1955, in significant wage increases for industrial workers. In the face of these high costs and shortages of labour in the major industrial cities, a trend towards the establishment of branch plants in other regions of Japan began in earnest. This, along with other changes, produced the famous 'U-turn' phenomenon - the sudden end to provincial population losses due to out-migration to the main industrial cities, and a slight tendency for those cities to become areas of net migration loss (Figure 11) (Alden and Abe 1994).

However, the relocation of production within Japan was not a permanent solution to the continuing problem of labour shortages, and when the economy started to pick up after the oil shock recession of the mid-1970s, firms began (partly also in response to the threat or reality of import restrictions) to invest in production abroad. The late 1970s and early 1980s, in particular, saw a rush of new 'green field' investments by Japanese manufacturing companies in the United States, western Europe, south east Asia and Australia. Thus, for two very different reasons, the need, or economic rationale, for the import of foreign labour was postponed - (i) because supplies of the much-needed labour were available in Japan both through internal migration and through plant relocation, and (ii) because Japanese companies rapidly adjusted to rising costs at home by locating much of their new investment in either low-cost countries in south east Asia and Latin America, or in the countries in which their goods were consumed.

The effects of this latter process - the 'hollowing out' of the Japanese economy - were many, but the one that concerns us, because it affects the demand for foreign workers, is the significant lessening of the pressure on the labour markets of the major industrial cities in the main manufacturing belt of Japan. Between 1960 and 1970 there had been a massive growth of 4.2 million workers in manufacturing industry (matched almost exactly by a 3.9 million decrease in



Source: Management and Coordination Agency, Statistics Bureau 1995, Annual Report on Internal Migration in Japan

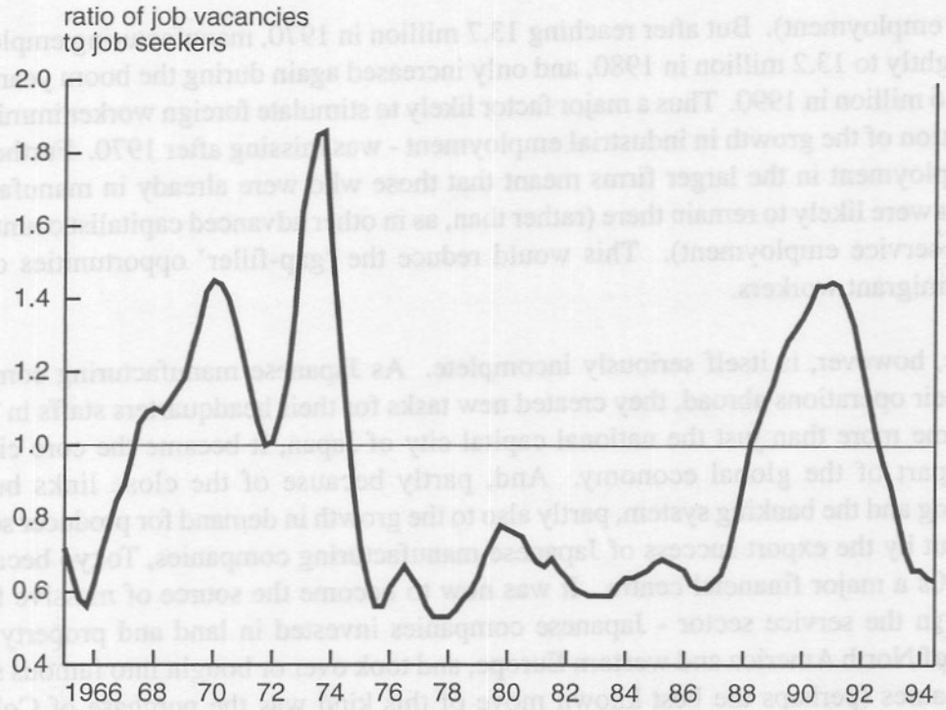
Figure 11. Net Internal Migration for Japan's largest metropolitan regions 1955-94

agricultural employment). But after reaching 13.7 million in 1970, manufacturing employment declined slightly to 13.2 million in 1980, and only increased again during the boom years of the 1980s to 14.6 million in 1990. Thus a major factor likely to stimulate foreign worker immigration - a continuation of the growth in industrial employment - was missing after 1970. Furthermore, lifetime employment in the larger firms meant that those who were already in manufacturing employment were likely to remain there (rather than, as in other advanced capitalist countries, to switch into service employment). This would reduce the 'gap-filler' opportunities open to potential immigrant workers.

This picture, however, is itself seriously incomplete. As Japanese manufacturing companies expanded their operations abroad, they created new tasks for their headquarters staffs in Tokyo. Tokyo became more than just the national capital city of Japan, it became the core city of a significant part of the global economy. And, partly because of the close links between manufacturing and the banking system, partly also to the growth in demand for producer services brought about by the export success of Japanese manufacturing companies, Tokyo became by the mid-1980s a major financial centre. It was now to become the source of massive foreign investments in the service sector - Japanese companies invested in land and property in the major cities of North America and western Europe, and took over or bought into famous service sector companies (perhaps the best known move of this kind was the purchase of Columbia Pictures by the Sony Corporation in 1989).

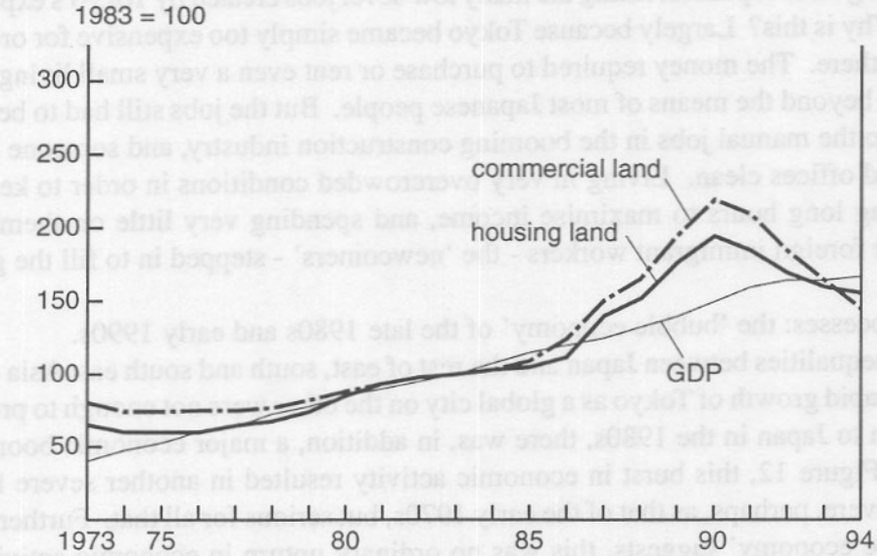
Two important outcomes flowed from Tokyo's expansion as a global city in the 1980s and early 1990s. The first was a major boost to the Tokyo regional economy, the second was a polarisation of its labour market (Sassen 1991). The first effect can be seen in Figure 11 where the Tokyo metropolitan region is the only region to experience significant inter-regional in-migration during the 1980s. But there is ample evidence to show that these in-migrants were highly educated young people being recruited for top jobs in financial services and related sectors. They were not ordinary working class Japanese, filling the many low-level jobs created by Tokyo's expansion as a global city. Why is this? Largely because Tokyo became simply too expensive for ordinary Japanese to move there. The money required to purchase or rent even a very small living space in Tokyo was well beyond the means of most Japanese people. But the jobs still had to be done. Someone had to do the manual jobs in the booming construction industry, and someone had to keep the hotels and offices clean. Living in very overcrowded conditions in order to keep the rent down, working long hours to maximise income, and spending very little on themselves while in Japan, the foreign immigrant workers - the 'newcomers' - stepped in to fill the gap.

(iii) Short term processes: the 'bubble economy' of the late 1980s and early 1990s.
As if the income inequalities between Japan and the rest of east, south and south east Asia on the one hand, and the rapid growth of Tokyo as a global city on the other were not enough to provoke a sizable migration to Japan in the 1980s, there was, in addition, a major economic boom. As can be seen from Figure 12, this burst in economic activity resulted in another severe labour shortage - not as severe, perhaps, as that of the early 1970s, but serious for all that. Furthermore, as the term 'bubble economy' suggests, this was no ordinary upturn in economic activity. It involved a frenzied speculation in land and property, and was based upon very high levels of bank lending. At the time of writing, the bad debts accumulated when the 'bubble' burst remain a serious threat to Japan's financial institutions, and therefore to the stability of the Japanese economy (on which much of its reputation for success in the past has depended). But the speculative nature of the boom has particular significance for the importation of foreign labour. As Figure 13 shows, the late 1980s witnessed a remarkable increase in land values for both



Source: Keizaikikakuchoo Choosa Kyoku 1995, Nihon Keizai no Genkyoo

Figure 12. Labour shortages in the Japanese economy



Source: Keizaikikakuchoo Choosa Ryoku 1995, Nihon Keizai no Genkyoo

Figure 13. Japanese land prices relative to GDP

housing and commercial land (Keizaikikakuchou Chousa Kyoku 1995). This reflects a high level of redevelopment as owners tried to capitalise on the massive gains in land values that these redevelopments produced. What is needed for land redevelopment? - building labour. And much of the casualised day labour was, of course, supplied by the 'newcomers' (sometimes with the help of criminal organisations - the infamous yakuza).

To summarise, for a long time after the end of World War II, the long-term and medium-term economic processes mitigated against large flows of migrants from east, south and south east Asia and Latin America to Japan. In the 1980s and early 1990s, however, (and especially between 1986 and 1992) all three sets of processes (the long-term, the medium-term and the short-term) lined up to favour immigration.

Since 1990 the economy has turned down, and the accretion of global city functions to Tokyo has come to a halt, so the pressures for immigration have undoubtedly decreased (in Figure 1 it is possible to detect the first signs of this). But in the meantime the international income inequalities have in most cases widened further. And of great significance for the future is that there now exists a 'springboard' community living in Japan for almost every national group in the Asia-Pacific region. It is hard to imagine, therefore, that Japan will remain, even to the degree that it is now, a relatively 'mono-cultural' exception in a world of multicultural advanced capitalist countries.

Social and cultural problems faced by foreign workers and immigrants in Japan: the case of language-deficiency

The main difficulties faced by immigrant workers and their families in Japan are derived from their position at, or near to, the bottom of the social system. They tend to do the worst jobs and live in the worst housing, and they suffer discrimination in their daily lives (Okuda, Hiroto and Tajima 1994). But these problems of powerlessness can often be traced back to the foreigners' lack of ability to speak, write, read or understand Japanese. Even when the cause of the problem is located elsewhere, the lack of ability in the language is likely to make the problem more difficult to resolve. So the final section of this paper focuses on the language problems of immigrants and foreign workers in Japan and shows how serious a handicap the lack of Japanese can be.

'Japan is currently in a transitional period in which she has to choose a new way of 'internationalising' herself.' This is the first line of the report entitled 'The Internationalisation of People's Lives' issued by the Social Policy Bureau of the Economic Planning Agency in 1988. The phrase 'a new way of internationalising' has been a key phrase for the last decade, meaning a transition from an 'outward' internationalisation to an 'inward' internationalisation. To cope with the situation posed by the presence of an increasing number of foreign workers, the Japanese Diet approved several amendments to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law in 1989, which became effective on June 1, 1990. According to this new law, job categories with special skills and qualifications are expanded such as lawyers, accountants, medical personnel and so on. On the other hand, 'it seeks to restrict and control the inflow of unskilled workers. For the first time, sanctions are imposed on those employing and contracting illegal workers' (Sassen: 1993, p.80). Not surprisingly, this has added a new seriousness to the relationship between the Japanese authorities and the migrants - a relationship that is often beset by misunderstandings. The difficulty of effective communication is one of the major problems faced by foreigners living in Japan, especially by unskilled workers (the conditions of those

with special skills and qualifications are less problematic, because they are the welcomed guests of Japanese organisations, and they can obtain help from their colleagues and others without difficulty).

It is estimated that about one million non-Japanese people in the world are at present learning Japanese in schools or language institutes, and if those who are learning Japanese by themselves are included, the figure would be about three million (Kusaba 1994). Thus the Japanese language has the potential to grow to become an international language. However, the Japanese people do not seem to show strong positive attitude towards this trend and few incentives are given to those who try to learn Japanese. For example, Japanese enterprises operating abroad usually train their Japanese employees to be able to communicate with local staffs in English and do not usually give any special treatment to those local employees who can speak Japanese. Their ability to speak Japanese does not particularly enhance their chances to be employed or promoted (Cultural Agency 1987). Neither has the Japanese government made much effort to popularise Japanese (perhaps the exception here is the work of the Japan Foundation). This is reflected in the fact that in the libraries of official establishments abroad there are almost no books on Japan written in Japanese. There are just a few books introducing Japan, and they are written in English (Umesao 1988). Recently, the Japanese government has announced a plan to raise the number of foreign students, but they are often 'neglecting to make provision for their acquisition of the Japanese language' (Iyotani 1994 p.9).

Reluctance and indifference towards popularising Japanese seem to have two aspects. One is that the Japanese people over-evaluate the complexity of their language believing that Japanese is too difficult and subtle for non-Japanese people, and that only the Japanese-born can master it. The other is that they under-evaluate the universality of the Japanese language, believing that Japanese is peculiar and illogical, so it can never be an international language. The latter perception was first formed in the period after the Meiji Restoration (late nineteenth century). In the process of importing western technologies and ideologies, Meiji leaders encouraged the study of European languages such as English, French, Dutch and German. Looking at the great differences between those European languages and Japanese, they believed that Japanese was not a mature and logical language and they pushed their own language to the periphery, so to speak. This tendency became even stronger when Japan lost the second world war. Thus these two factors combined seem to have shaped the present attitudes of Japanese people towards their language, and have helped to prevent it becoming widely used.

Against this background, a large number of newcomers are entering Japanese society without any command of the Japanese language. Language barriers naturally undermine their living conditions. We focus on three major points concerning the language barriers faced by foreign workers and immigrants in Japan: (i) the way administrative services, often involving the dissemination of important information, are extended to foreigners; (ii) the situation of children of newcomers in terms of language acquisition; and (iii) the situation of foreigners accused of crime. For foreigners who come to work and live in Japan, whether or not they are able to communicate with the host population may be a matter of life and death. It is only recently, however, that these language issues have begun to attract attention.

(i) Administrative services

Unlike other nations of the world, the task of controlling foreign residents in Japan is, for the most part, entrusted to the local municipalities, although the alien registration system is under

the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice (Yi San Ho and others 1988). Unfortunately, the degree of effort made by local governments to improve living conditions for foreigners varies considerably. In the report entitled 'Research on the reception of, and coexistence with, foreign workers' issued by the Japan General Research Institute, the following overall view was acquired through a 1990 survey of 621 local municipalities from all over Japan:

a) Measures already taken or planned to be taken soon:

- the publication and distribution of guidebooks to provide foreigners with information on how to use public facilities, and other information useful in their daily lives;
- the sending of a notice about school entrance when their children reach the elementary school age.

b) Measures currently being examined within local government:

- the setting up of a consultation counter for foreigners;
- the promotion of cultural and social educational services which are extended to foreigners as well as to Japanese (Japan General Research Institute 1990).

The above might be thought of as leading indicators showing how central and local governments in Japan should respond to the increase in foreign residents who live and work in Japan on a long term basis. The municipalities where the above mentioned measures have actually been implemented are the cities which have a long history of coping with issues concerning resident Koreans or Chinese, in other words, the 'oldcomers'. Places like Kawasaki City in Kanagawa Prefecture and Yao city in Osaka Prefecture are typical examples. These cities have a long tradition of resident foreigners striving for their rights and of the people and the government of the area responding to those claims. It is fair to say that improvements in administrative services targeted at newcomers in these areas have usually been initiated by the oldcomers (Ebashi 1993, Kawasaki International Association 1993).

'One of Kawasaki's responses to foreign residents is the establishment of the Kawasaki International Friendship Association, which focuses on: a) providing easy access to information about living in Japan in the form of a Resident's Guidebook published in English, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish; b) establishing a Counselling Corner with counsellors in the same five languages; and c) holding Japanese classes for foreigners as well as planning opportunities for exchange and communication with interested members of the community' (Iyotani 1994 p.14). In addition to the above, Kawasaki has been ahead of national policy with regard to foreign residents, 'taking its own initiative in granting these community members National Health Insurance, providing children's welfare benefits, and allowing access to municipal public housing. And recently, in February 1994, the city decided that elderly foreigners (over 70) residing in the city are eligible for welfare benefits' (Iyotani 1994 p.13).

Many other local governments, however, are lagging far behind. According to the data issued by the Ministry of Labour, if you calculate from the foreign resident-related expenditure of the four local municipalities which spend the largest amount of money on measures for foreign residents, the total expenditure of all local municipalities in Japan should be 28.3 billion yen. Actual expenditure, however, was only 5.8 billion yen in 1991. This clearly shows that many local governments are not taking adequate measures toward foreign residents (Komai 1993). In many cases, the reality is that there are foreign residents who do not even know how to call the police or an ambulance in an emergency. In small cities and towns, it is not easy to find staffs who have an ability to communicate properly with foreign residents who do not understand Japanese. When it comes to minority or rare languages, even large cities have difficulties coping with the matter.

The following is a fairly typical case in which foreign workers are put at a disadvantage because of their inability to understand Japanese and their ignorance of the system. When an accident occurs at work and a foreign worker becomes injured, the employer is entrusted to go through all the formalities to claim for workmen's accident compensation from the local government. Several cases have come to light where the employers paid only a small amount of money to their foreign employees who were injured and have pocketed the rest (Kanagawa City Union 1994). Those employers were obviously taking advantage of their foreign employees' ignorance of the system. The foreigners who do not understand are completely helpless in such situations.

Another typical problem concerns medical treatment. According to the survey conducted by the Citizens' Conference for Promotion of Internationalisation in Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture, 86% of the doctors who responded have at some time examined foreigners and 15% of them had trouble with foreign patients. There are many cases where the lack of communication hampers doctors in giving appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Improvements in the health care system for foreign residents, including interpretation services, issuing guide books on medical consultation and registration of medical institutes which are prepared to accept foreigners, are urgently needed (Tezuka 1991).

Having been (apart from the Koreans) a non-immigrant country with only one language for a long time, Japan is not yet set up to solve the problem of communication barriers. In our opinion, measures taken by the Australian government for assisting immigrants to settle in their country would serve as a good model for a future language policy for foreign workers and immigrants in Japan. In Australia, administrative services in terms of languages are among the most important immigrant settlement measures. The Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) takes charge of these services targeted to newly-arriving immigrants. The most noteworthy service is the Adult Migrant English Programme providing 400 educational institutes with 1800 teachers. DILGEA also offers interpretation and translation services, such as the round-the-clock telephone interpretation services with 100 languages, sending interpreters to courtrooms and medical institutes and so forth (Kuwabara 1993).

(ii) The situation of foreign children in Japanese schools

According to the research conducted by the Administrative Inspection Bureau of the Management and Coordination Agency in 1991 under the title 'The present situation and problems of administration concerning foreign residents in the era of internationalisation', the number of foreign children registered as residents was 111,138 in 1990 (53,265 children at the age from 5 to 9 and 57,873 from 10 to 14). It is not an obligation for foreign residents to send their children to school when they reach the age of compulsory school education, but if they wish to do so they are accepted in elementary schools and junior high schools regardless of their nationalities and their ability in the Japanese language. According to Ministry of Education data, 47,591 foreign children were going to Japanese elementary schools and 24,749 to junior high schools in 1991. Those people were concentrated in the metropolitan areas, and five prefectures, namely, Osaka, Hyogo (Kobe), Tokyo, Kyoto and Aichi (Nagoya), accounted for 69% of the total (the Administrative Inspection Bureau 1991).

The figures above include a number of children of 'oldcomers' who can understand and speak Japanese as well as newcomer children. Therefore, the important thing here is to know the number of school children who do not understand Japanese. The Ministry of Education survey tells us that only 2,977 foreign children in Japanese elementary schools and 1,389 in junior high

schools did not understand Japanese. And the number of schools which accepted those children was 1,437 in 1991 (Administrative Inspection Bureau 1991). Against this background, the Ministry of Education conducted research in 1991 on the Education Boards of all prefectures and all public elementary schools and junior high schools which had accepted foreign children who needed to learn Japanese. The purpose of this research was to understand the situation of those children and how they were taught Japanese in the schools. The following are the measures which the scholars and specialists thought should be taken (Administrative Inspection Bureau 1991):

- improvement of systems to receive foreign children at schools for compulsory education as early as possible;
- to secure teachers who have foreign language abilities. (Establishment of training institutes for school teachers to teach them the native languages of their students. Establishment of education institutes for foreign children to teach them Japanese before entering a school);
- to enhance the ability in the Japanese language of foreign students at schools for compulsory education through supplementary lessons etc.;
- to give education to foreign children more efficiently and effectively by accepting all foreign children together in educational institutes of local municipalities instead of leaving it to each of the schools;
- to extend all necessary information about the procedure of school entrance to all foreign residents who have children at the age of compulsory education.

Regarding the last point, the research found that eight out of a selected thirty-five municipalities did not send foreign residents with children at the school age any notification or information about school entrance.

From various reports and surveys we can appreciate that most foreign students face certain problems in Japanese schools, such as not being able to adjust to Japanese customs which are quite different from those in their home country, difficulties in studying school subjects, etc.. Among those problems, the communication barriers caused by a lack of ability in the Japanese language is the most important, because it underlies most of their problems, and it directly affects their mastery of the school subjects. This is shown by the fact that most of the foreign students are not good at 'Japanese', 'social studies' and 'science', in which the command of the Japanese language is the decisive factor for understanding. As for 'English', there is a general tendency for students from Brazil and the Philippines, for example, to be good at it while Chinese and Vietnamese students are not (Nakanishi 1994). It is natural that students from a cultural background in which they have exposure to Western languages, especially English, are good at 'English' in Japanese schools.

Another serious problem caused by the lack of ability to understand Japanese is that the children of foreigners can not make friends with Japanese students. Not being able to understand Japanese, their behaviour sometimes appears strange, even when they are acting correctly according to the customs of their home country. When they start speaking Japanese, they are often laughed at because of their mistakes or wrong pronunciation. Even if no harm is meant, their pride becomes damaged. They feel isolated and begin to shut themselves off, and since this is difficult for the Japanese students to understand, they become even more isolated. This vicious circle is caused partly by a lack of experience on the part of the Japanese students of being in touch with foreign people and their cultures. For them, having foreign students in their classroom is something not quite natural and can be somewhat disturbing.

There is also a language barrier problem which concerns the parents of foreign children. Many of the newcomers do not speak or understand Japanese, and school teachers have difficulty in conveying necessary information to the parents of their students. Translators and interpreters are needed, but when it comes to minority languages, it is practically impossible to find people who know those languages. Therefore, they often have to communicate in Japanese or in English which are not the native languages of the parents, and the chances of misunderstandings are great. Besides language barriers, there are other factors which hamper communication between school teachers and foreign parents. Most of the families of foreign students are dual-income families and parents are seldom at home. When they need to visit the school and see the teacher of their children, it is impossible in many cases. And to make matters worse, they usually do not have a telephone in their home. Just getting in touch with the parents is sometimes a very difficult thing for the school teachers. There is another problem concerning especially the children from the developing countries. Many of them have not received proper school education in their home country, and there are even countries in which there is no compulsory education system. In such cases, it is very difficult to gain the support and understanding of the parents towards the education of their children (Kajita 1994).

There are, naturally, some cases where we see fewer problems than average concerning the language. Children of the *Nikkeijin* families whose parents know some Japanese tend to have fewer problems, although, in many cases, the children themselves do not understand Japanese. To help those children, the Education Board of Toyota City in Aichi Prefecture, for example, where there are many *Nikkeijin* published 'The Guidebook for Japanese-Portuguese Conversation' (Tanaka 1993). Children with a background of 'Kanji' (Chinese characters) cultures, such as Chinese and Korean children, tend to be better off than other foreign children in terms of communication, since they can understand at least some written information.

Another factor affecting smoother communication is the age of the children at the time of arrival. The younger they are, the faster their ability to communicate in Japanese grows. There is, however, a problem which is inherent to those cases of younger children; that is to say, they are likely to lose their own native language gradually as they grow older. This is an issue of a different nature concerning the language problems of foreigners and immigrants.

Lastly, it should be pointed out that school policies toward foreign students, such as the ways they extend guidance and training in terms of Japanese language acquisition, are an important factor determining whether or not the problems concerning communication can be kept to a minimum. According to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Education (Administrative Inspection Bureau 1991), eleven out of thirty-five sample schools gave their foreign students special lessons for learning Japanese and/or provided professional teachers of the Japanese language. Eighteen out of the thirty-five schools left this task of teaching Japanese to each of the classroom teachers. Five schools did nothing particular, on the assumption that their foreign students were able to speak Japanese. The same survey reveals that the length of the Japanese lessons given to foreign students per week ranges roughly from 0 to 30 hours and a strong concentration is seen in the range from 0 to 10. The types of people who teach Japanese are also diverse. In some cases, school administrators, such as principals undertake this task, using their spare time. In other cases, classroom teachers are given responsibilities for teaching Japanese to the foreign students in their class. In some municipalities Japanese language teachers are provided by the government. There are even cases where it is left to the activities of local volunteers to teach Japanese to foreign children. As for the effects of Japanese lessons given to foreign students,

one serious question has been raised. That is the dissociation between Japanese as the daily-use language and that as the academic language. Even though the foreign students become able to speak Japanese, it does not directly lead to their ability to learn and master the academic content of the school subjects. Consequently, the foreign students come to be labelled as the equals of dull Japanese students (Oota 1994). This contains a danger that foreign students will become structurally marginalized in schools. Looking at the importance of policies and efforts on the part of Japanese schools in terms of teaching Japanese to foreign students in order to promote better communication, it is a rather discouraging fact that there are no concerted efforts administered by local governments, and how to cope with the situation tends to be left to the authorities of each school. With the rapid increase of foreign children who do not understand Japanese, this problem has become too big an issue for each individual school to handle. It is the urgent task for central and local governments to develop more comprehensive measures to cope with the situation. The Japanese education system has been based on the assumption that children are culturally and linguistically homogeneous. A drastic change in thinking is urgently needed (Miyajima 1993, Yamaguchi 1992).

(iii) Issues of language interpretation during criminal proceedings

According to the statistics issued by the Supreme Court, the number of non-Japanese convicts who were given interpretation services during court proceedings has risen dramatically since 1989 (Murase 1993). In 1994 the figure rose to 3,521 from 320 in 1984 (Criminal Justice White Paper 1995). Under these circumstances, the issue of judicial interpretation has come to the surface. This has become evident especially after 1990, when the Urawa district court ruled that the confession of a Pakistani suspect (who was charged with arson) during the police interrogation could not be admitted as evidence because the interrogation was conducted through an interpreter whose ability in the Japanese language was not sufficient, and important rights, such as the right to consult a lawyer or the right to stay silent during the interrogation were not properly explained to the suspect. Thus the voluntary nature of the confession was denied (Urawa district court, 12th October 1990). Until around 1990, interpretation services were considered to be given for the convenience of the judiciary, that is, to make legal proceedings run smoothly, and not to help the accused. Recently, however, with the increase of foreigners flowing into Japanese society and the increase of the criminal cases involving foreigners, the issue of judicial interpretation has been raised to the level of a human rights issue.

The following are examples of problems concerning judicial interpretation which have been discussed among experts, such as, lawyers, professional interpreters, scholars of law and so on (Osaka Bar Association 1991):

- arresting a foreign suspect without translation of the warrant for arrest. It is a violation of the international covenant on human rights which assures the right to be told the reason for the arrest immediately;
- not providing interpreter services to the accused during the criminal procedure on the assumption that the accused can understand and speak Japanese well enough, even when their language ability is only sufficient for simple daily conversations;
- choosing interpreters whose language abilities are significantly poor, or who are not able to speak the mother tongue of the accused. In the case of rare languages, it is extremely difficult to find an interpreter. Interpreters of the second or third language are often chosen, such as an interpreter of English for a Philippino whose mother tongue is Tagalog;
- not allowing the accused in the detention house pending trial to communicate with visitors or correspond with people outside in any language other than Japanese (except at

a few detention houses in certain cases), because there are no language staff in the detention houses who are able to monitor conversations between the accused and the visitor and translate letters to and from the accused. This means that the accused has practically no chance to communicate with people outside, such as family members or friends.

The problems above represent only a part of the whole issue. One can see, however, that in criminal procedure the language barriers hamper human rights protection to a great extent. In particular, misinterpretations through bad interpreters directly affects the outcome of the trial and the life of the accused. The case of four Pakistanis charged with robbery in 1989 is one of the best-known cases of misinterpretation. Being questioned in the police station, one of the suspects said that they were driving around the street trying to find a petrol pump. The translation given by the interpreter who was also a policeman was that they were driving around the street because they saw a patrol car and they wanted to avoid bumping into it. The interpreter mistook a word 'petrol' as 'patrol'. This kind of misinterpretation causes misunderstandings concerning criminal intentions and in many cases distorts the nuances of the original speech (Sakuragi 1994). Affidavits which are full of wrongly interpreted statements are used as evidence in the court in many cases. Another important point is, as mentioned earlier in this section, that interpreters whose language ability is not sufficient or who do not have knowledge of the criminal procedure are not able to help the accused obtain the information necessary for the exercise of their rights, such as the right to keep silent or the right to consult a lawyer.

In the U.K. and the U.S.A., for example, the issue of judicial interpretation started to draw attention much earlier. The case of Lee Kun (The King v. Lee Kun, Kings Bench) in 1915 and the case of Negron (U.S. ex rel Negron v. N.Y. 310 F. Supp.) in 1970 respectively, where the non-English-speaking defendants were not given sufficient interpretation services during the trial are the cases through which the issue of judicial interpretation has been raised to the level of a human rights issue. 'It has been argued that a non-English-speaking person who is not given the services of an interpreter may be physically present at his trial, but he is not linguistically present, which means that he is unable to confront witnesses during cross-examination, and he is rendered unable to communicate with his attorney, which therefore prevents him from aiding his attorney in the defence on his behalf' (Berk-Seligson 1990 p.33-34). In both countries, there have been laws passed to protect the rights of non-English-speaking defendants to be able to fully participate in the trial (Ebashi 1990). In the United States, since 1978, together with the enactment of the Court Interpreters Act, the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination has been developed and administered nine times by 1994 (US Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination Manual 1994). Until the Court Interpreters Amendments were enacted in 1988, the certification system was available only for Spanish-English interpreters, but since then it has been expanded to cover Haiti-Creole and Navaho Indian as well (Sakamaki 1994). As for the affidavit made by the police through interpreters, its admissibility as evidence is denied, unless the interpreter or the recorder of the interrogation who understands the language appears in the court and proves that the contents of the affidavit are true (Ebashi 1990).

Japanese judicial organisations are at present researching western systems of judicial interpretation in order to cope with this newly raised issue. To date, there have been some improvements, such as, holding seminars to educate interpreters about judicial procedures or making videos in several languages to explain judicial procedures and the rights of the accused, and showing those videos to the accused before the trial (Nakayama 1993). There are other measures implemented to improve the situation, but some of the most important problems are left unsolved. One is the

lack of a system for qualifying interpreters. In the U.S., the examination to certify court interpreters started with Spanish-English interpreters. More than 90% of the cases which need interpreters involve the Spanish language (Sakamaki 1994). In Japan, the languages involved are much more diversified, the languages which are most in demand change in a short span of time, and the absolute number of the people who know certain minor languages is very small. Therefore, it is not easy to establish the system to certify judicial interpreters.

Another problem is how to check the interpretation. In the U.S. court, defending attorneys often bring their own interpreter to the court as a monitor interpreter and make him or her check the official court interpreter's interpretation (Ooide and others 1989). In Japan, this system is not yet familiar to the people concerned and except very special cases there is only one interpreter in the court. In the cases of rare languages, to find even one official interpreter is difficult. Thus the main problem concerning the language issue in criminal proceedings in Japan is the absolute shortage of interpreters for minor languages or rare languages. This problem must be solved somehow, but it seems to be a very difficult task. With the increase of foreigners in Japan and the diversity of their nationalities, the issue of judicial interpretation will become more complex and challenging.

To conclude, given this diversity of ethnic backgrounds it seems that the best way to solve problems and improve conditions for foreign people is to promote the study of the Japanese language both within and outside Japan. With the increase of Japanese enterprises operating overseas and foreign workers in Japan, the report by the Social Policy Bureau of the Economic Planning Agency points out that it is essential to present Japanese culture to the world and popularize the Japanese language. 'Given the growing number of foreigners who wish to learn Japanese in their home countries, it is necessary to increase the number of teachers of Japanese as well as to develop textbooks and other teaching materials' (The Social Policy Bureau 1988 p.74). The first thing that has to be done is to eliminate the deeply rooted perception that Japanese is very difficult for foreign people to learn. Analyses of the world's languages have revealed that European languages, which Japanese have long believed to be normal and logical are in fact rather peculiar in terms of structures and the number of vowels or syllables, and that the Japanese language is placed at about the average level of complexity (Cultural Agency 1988). In terms of pronunciation, Japanese is relatively easy with only 5 vowels and 18 consonants, and all syllables are made of one consonant and one vowel. There are some difficulties in its grammatical structures, such as, the use of particles and auxiliary verbs, but generally speaking, the grammar is much simpler than other languages of the world. Honorific forms are quite peculiar and difficult to learn and there are too many levels of words expressing feelings and emotions. The writing system is also rather complicated, because of 'Kanji' (Chinese characters). Even for the Japanese people it is almost impossible to master 'Kanji' - sometimes one 'Kanji' has more than ten different uses! For a long time now there has been a movement in Japan to simplify the uses of 'Kanji'.

Nevertheless, considering all these difficulties of the Japanese language, it is not an impossible language to learn. The level of difficulty is not specially high compared with other languages. Osamu Mizutani of the National Institute of Japanese Language points out in his report that 'theoretically speaking there is no element in the Japanese language which cannot be learned if sufficient time and efforts are given and methods are right. The elements which are rather strange in the living environment of a foreign person or the elements which are different from his or her linguistic senses need even greater time and efforts to be mastered, and correct teaching

methods are strongly required to be developed' (Cultural Agency 1988 p.96). In many cases, the teaching of the Japanese language has been based upon the personal experiences of the teachers. The lack of a systematic analysis of the language in terms of communication has been often pointed out. A more precisely analysed basis will be needed to teach Japanese effectively as a means of communication. However, with a large inflow of foreign workers in Japan, and being a major 'global' economic power, Japan can no longer afford to see its society stay closed, nor its language. In order to avoid marginalization of foreigners and accept them in the Japanese society in a real sense, it is essential to establish the ways of helping them to learn Japanese, because the language underlies almost every aspect of life.

Conclusions

The main results of our analysis are:
(i) that Japan has experienced a recent sudden rapid rise in immigration;
(ii) that this immigration is distinctive for its ethnic diversity, and for the contrasts in the geography of immigrant groups in Japan;
(iii) that, although the Japanese government has been a major agent in shaping the pace and nature of this immigration, its 'root causes' lie in economic factors;
(iv) that these economic factors can be grouped into a) income differences between Japan and other countries in the Asia-Pacific region; b) industrial restructuring in Japan, 'hollowing out' and the rise of Tokyo as a global city; and c) the business cycle effect, notably the 'bubble economy' of the recent period;
(v) that the social and cultural problems faced by immigrants in Japan, though fundamentally related to their low status within Japanese society, can often be traced back to, or are made worse by, their difficulties with the Japanese language.

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