2

MIGRATION CHANNELS AND THE SHAPING OF IMMIGRANT ETHNO-SCAPES

The previous chapter presented the different motives that immigrants narrated for coming to Japan. However, looking exclusively at individual motivations will not give us a full understanding of why and how people move. Migration is a collective action produced by different actors—human or nonhuman—that facilitate or halt mobility. Institutional and personal ties, technology, state policies, and brokers have all shaped distinct channels of immigration into Japan for various types of people. This chapter examines the demographic and residential characteristics of the major immigrant groups in Japan and explains how such a population makeup is shaped by distinct migration infrastructures (Xiang and Lindquist 2014).

Japan's Immigrant Profile

In Japan, Asians accounted for over 80 percent of the 2.6 million foreign resident population in 2018. China, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines were the top sending countries. Nearly 30 percent of foreign residents were Chinese, and close to 20 percent were Korean. The population of Koreans has been gradually declining since the early 1990s while the number[1] of Chinese and Filipinos continues to increase following a dramatic hike in the 1980s and 1990s (figure 2.1). In the twenty-first century, the Vietnamese population has been growing the most rapidly. It increased from less than 20,000 persons in 2001 to nearly 300,000 (291,494) in 2018, surpassing the number of Filipinos to become the third-largest foreign resident population in Japan. The Himalayan country of Nepal has also sent many immigrants. In 2018, over 85,000 Nepalese worked and studied in Japan, a tenfold increase from the 2006 figure of 7,800.

South Americans, especially Brazilians, also have a significant presence in Japan. Most of them are Nikkei (ethnic Japanese) and their families, although many are of mixed descent (Linger 2001; Green 2012). This population has shrunk following the 2008 financial crisis. However, numbering over 196,000, the Brazilians were still the fifth-largest immigrant population. In addition, the nearly 60,000 US citizens made up the seventh-largest foreign national population in Japan (figure 2.1).

The immigration patterns are gendered. Among the top Asian sending countries, except for Vietnam, women occupied the majority. Gender imbalance particularly characterizes the Filipino population. Three out of four Filipinos in Japan were women. In comparison, men from western countries (North America and Western Europe) and Oceania vastly outnumbered women. For example, there were twice as many men from the United States as women (figure 2.2).

Copyright 2020. Cornell University Press.
All rights reserved. May not be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher, except fair uses permitted under U.S. or applicable copyright law.

EBSCO Publishing : eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI
AN: 2276184 ; Gracia Liu-Farrer.; Immigrant Japan : Mobility and Belonging in an Ethno-nationalist Society
Account: s7108593.Main.eds

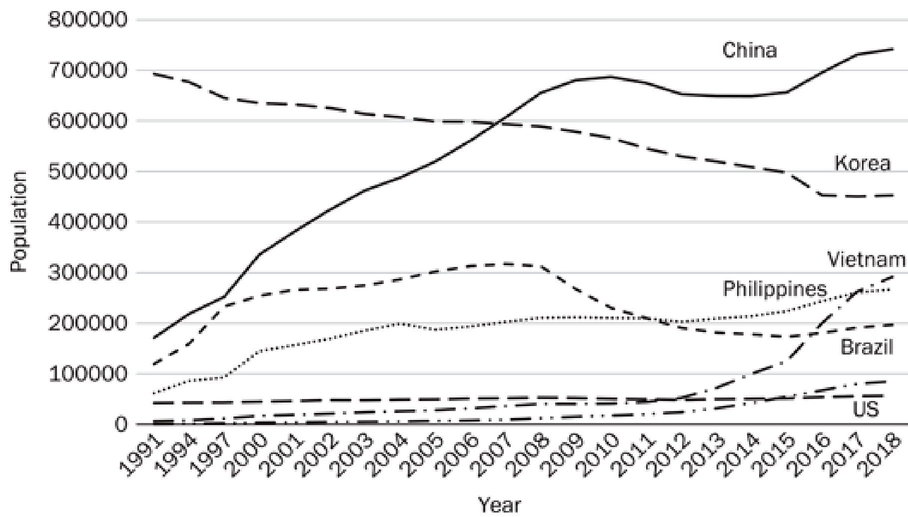

FIGURE 2.1. The major foreign population in Japan, 1991–2018

Common among immigrants from the top national groups—with the exception of the Vietnamese—is a large proportion in the permanent resident category.[2] It demonstrates the quick process of immigrants settling down in Japan. However, beyond this commonality, different immigrant groups were very different in their residential statuses. Compared with other nationalities, there is a more even distribution of categories of residents among the Chinese. Students made up nearly 17 percent of the total Chinese resident population in 2018. Skilled and highly skilled workers (people in visa categories of engineer/specialist in humanities/international services, intra-firm transfer, and skilled labor)[3] made up 13 percent of the total while technical interns accounted for 10 percent. In addition, those who came as spouses or children of Japanese nationals (31,607), permanent residents (15,191), and other immigrants (76,752) accounted for 12 percent of Chinese population.

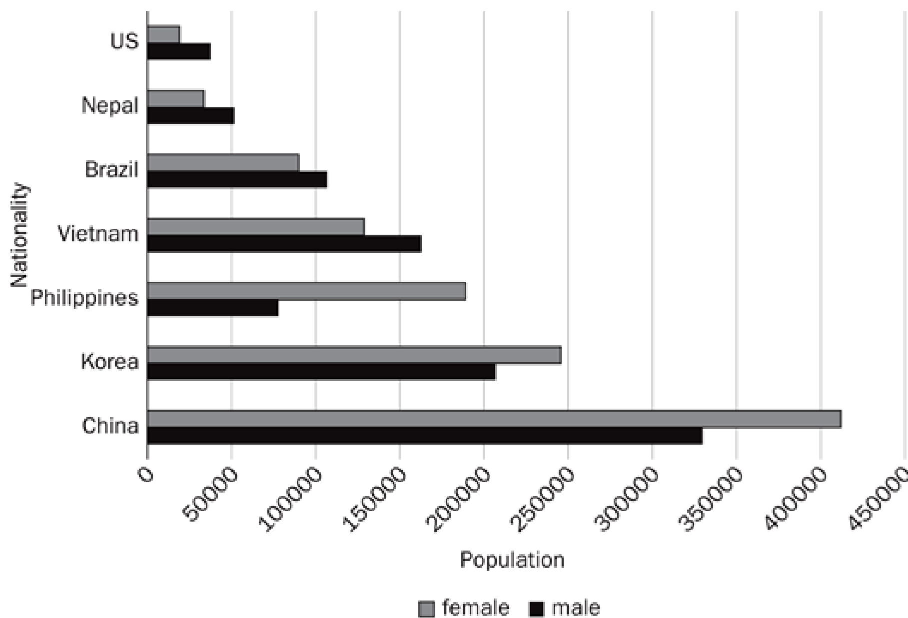

FIGURE 2.2. Gender ratio of major immigrant groups in 2018

Among Korean immigrants, there is a large group of the so-called old-comers whose families arrived in Japan before or during World War II. Numbering 292,878 out of a total of 452,701 in 2018, they made up two-thirds of the resident Korean

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

[4]

population in Japan. Not counting the technical interns, Korean newcomers resemble the Chinese in having a wider distribution of immigrants in different categories including a large number of students (17,097), highly skilled migrants (exceeding 25,000), and permanent residents (70,023).

The majority of Vietnamese migrants were either international students (80,683) or technical interns (133,324). These two categories combined made up nearly three-quarters of the total Vietnamese resident population (291,494) in Japan. Although Vietnam sends a large number of brides to South Korea and Taiwan (Wang and Chang 2002; Lee, Seol, and Cho 2006; Wang 2007), only approximately 3,500 Vietnamese in Japan were "spouses or dependents of Japanese nationals." Many are highly skilled workers, with 28,722 working with an engineer/specialist in humanities/international services visa.

Marriage has been the major immigration channel for Filipinos. Over 26,000 people hold the spouse or dependent of Japanese national visa. The number of long-term residents is also large (51,097). Long-term residents are often divorced or unmarried Filipino women who are raising children fathered by Japanese partners (Ogaya 2016). Among the working categories, technical interns make for the largest group. The number of entertainers has dramatically decreased, with only 443 people in this resident category in 2018—previously this visa served as a primary channel for labor migration. There is also a visible increase of highly skilled migrants holding the visa status of engineer/specialist in humanities/international services or intra-firm transfer.

Marriage is a main channel for long-term residency among the American immigrants too. A little over nine thousand—or 17 percent—of the US citizens in Japan were married to a Japanese national. Unlike the Filipinos, the spouses were mostly men. It was also likely for an American to be an instructor, teaching English at various Japanese primary or secondary schools.

Compared with the other nationalities, the Brazilians are the least diverse in terms of residential categories. Most Brazilians in Japan arrived on a long-term resident visa (Kajita 1994). As reported in many previous studies, they primarily held manual labor jobs in Japan's manufacturing sector (Higuchi and Tanno 2003; Takenoshita 2015).

What shaped these national, ethnic, and gender profiles of immigrants in Japan? In the following sections, I borrow the concept of *migration infrastructure* and its different components (Xiang and Lindquist 2014) to illustrate how specific patterns of immigration into Japan have been produced and in turn how a specific immigrant ethno-scape has been shaped.

Migration Channels

The classic push-pull model of migration focusing on the dynamics of regional economic and population imbalances and the resulting wage differentials or employment opportunity discrepancies has never been able to fully account for the causes and directions of migration (Massey et al. 1993). In the twenty-first century, migration scholarship has increasingly granted attention to the act of migration itself by emphasizing that it is an orchestrated process involving the participation of a diverse set of actors, human and nonhuman, with varying motivations.

Side Doors as the Major Labor Migration Channels

Japan's immigration regime—the regulatory component of the migration infrastructure—dictates who is allowed to come and settle and on what terms. Thus, it has a direct impact on the stock of immigrants within its borders. In the immediate postwar decades, Japanese society struggled with its colonial legacy—a large number of Koreans and Taiwanese were still living on the margins of postwar Japanese society—while trying to redefine itself as a monoethnic nation (Weiner 2009). It hesitated to accept foreign workers until the 1980s, when the economic growth created an acute labor shortage. The need for foreign laborers and the ambivalence surrounding their acceptance resulted in selective immigration policies and distinct patterns of migration into Japan. The doors were open for skilled workers but closed for the so-called unskilled laborers (*mijukurenrdsha*). As a result, "side doors" were created in an attempt to recruit labor while maintaining the appearance of [5] prohibiting low-skilled labor import.

The major channels of migration that have largely shaped the particular migrant demographic characteristics in Japan were these "side doors" that allowed for the import of entertainers, the ethnic return of Nikkei Brazilians, and the entry of [6] students. Entertainers and Nikkei, respectively, helped suffice labor demands in service and manufacturing industries. Accepting international students, on the other hand, represented Japan's effort to be a player among the global powers even though students also became an important source of irregular labor (Liu-Farrer 2011a). These channels lowered the thresholds for aspiring immigrants to enter Japan, brought in large numbers of immigrants from specific sending regions

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

with particular gender profiles, and allowed many the possibility of settling in Japan. Mobility would not have otherwise been available to these immigrants.

ENTERTAINERS

Entertainer visas provided the most accessible means for Filipino women to enter Japan from 1980 to 2005 (Ballescas 1992; Komai 1995; Douglass 2000; Takeda 2005).[7] This visa category—designated for dancers, musicians, artists, sportsmen, and people working in the entertainment business (MOJ 2019a)—became a channel to supply workers for the numerous hostess clubs and cabarets in Japan from the late 1970s on (Komai 1995; Douglass 2000; Takeda 2005). Because labor export has been a strategy of the Philippine state for revenue since the 1970s, Filipinos were encouraged to leave the country to work. Numerous promotion agents emerged to recruit, train, and prepare (in terms of both certifying and brokering) young Filipino women to become "entertainers" bound for Japan. According to several studies (Ballescas 1992; Douglass 2000; Tyner 2009), the import of entertainers was a reverse of the sex tourism trend involving Japanese men traveling to the Philippines. As Filipinas came to Japan, the number of tourists bound for the Philippines significantly declined (Tyner 2009). From 1979 to 2005, 1,917,063 entries into Japan with an entertainer visa were registered,[8] and the majority of them were Filipinos.

Evangeline was one of them. A beautiful young woman from the Philippines with only a primary school education, Evangeline was a divorced single mother struggling to support herself and her children before she migrated. She arrived in Japan in 1986 at the age of twenty-two on an entertainer visa and soon married a Japanese man she met at work. When asked why she had chosen Japan as an immigration destination, she was puzzled by the question. "I have chosen it? No, because in the [United] States for instance, they mostly need nurses and doctors. For somebody like me who was not able to acquire [an] education, Japan's hiring of entertainers is an opportunity available to me. And because I have friends who go here, I was convinced to come. At that time, I thought I should grab the opportunity since it did not require a diploma. But, of course, you have to capitalize on your looks. And that was okay because I was very young at that time." Through migration, Evangeline was able to support her entire family, something she valued as an achievement: "especially for a single mother like me." She beamed proudly while we talked. Her accomplishments were impressive. She fed her family including not only her own children but also her siblings and two abandoned children her late midwife mother brought home. She sent all of them to school, even though not all of them managed to graduate. She paid for the placement fee to help her brother go to Saudi Arabia as a migrant worker.

It is undeniable that the Filipino entertainers were victims of many injustices, including, in many cases, severe human rights violations. However, if it had not been for this migration channel, those who desired to move to better their lives would have never had the chance. Entertainer visas were short-term visas that allowed the individuals to stay in Japan for six months or less. Many of these entertainers, including Evangelina, ended up marrying Japanese nationals and settling in Japan. This trend resulted in Filipinos becoming one of the largest immigrant populations, but one that was predominantly female. Amid concerns of visa abuses, with the intervention of the US State Department, this visa category became more strictly regulated and increasingly unavailable to Filipinos after 2005.[9] The number of Filipinos who entered as entertainers decreased drastically, especially after 2011.

LONG-TERM RESIDENTS AND THE RETURN OF THE NIKKEI

The Brazilians and the Peruvians—together numbering around a quarter million—made up around 10 percent of the total foreign population in Japan in 2018. These South American nationals consisted mostly of ethnic Japanese and their family members. Most ethnic Japanese South Americans came to Japan as "long-term residents." This visa category was created through the 1989 ICRRA, which significantly revised Japanese immigration law to expand both working and residential categories. Long-term resident is a visa granted to the descendants of Japanese nationals (up to the third generation) and their families, legal guardians of children of Japanese nationals (e.g., divorced spouses of Japanese nationals who have custody of the children), or other individuals considered eligible by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ 1990).

Though technically not a category specifically for laborers, the creation of long-term resident status was aimed toward opening a channel for ethnic Japanese to work in Japan to supplement the country's shrinking manufacturing labor force (Yamanaka 1995, 2000). The process of ethnic Brazilian workers moving to Japan involved the coordination of regulatory and commercial actors of the migration infrastructure. Working with temporary work agencies in Japan, many Brazilian travel agencies actively recruited Nikkei people. Prospective migrants were presented with a long list of job openings to choose from in various places in Japan. The travel agencies would take care of the documents for immigration, including the proof of one's blood relation to Japanese (grand)parents. Meanwhile, the Japanese temp agencies were responsible for

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

placing laborers in workplaces, arranging housing, and providing Japanese language support and transportation (Watanabe 1996; Tanno 2003, 2006; Sasaki 2013). As a consequence of this very structured migration channel, Nikkei South Americans, regardless of their educational backgrounds and professional experience, through the legal category of long-term resident, were directly placed on shop floors in Japan's manufacturing sector.

The government's reluctance to accept foreign labor resulted in the rapid increase of ethnic Japanese Brazilians and Japanese Peruvian migrants. According to Yamanaka (2000), although there were Nikkei that came to Japan out of a longing for their homeland or a desire to find their ethnic roots, most of the second and third generations were motivated by economic interests. Having suffered from the economic crises in Brazil in the 1970s and 1980s, they sought to make quick money in Japan in order to buy a house or to start or maintain a family business back home. Researchers found this desire to make quick money resulted in a pattern of circular migration among the Nikkei Brazilians (Yamanaka 2000; Sasaki 2013; LeBaron von Baeyer 2015). After making money via manual labor in Japan, they wanted to go back to Brazil to start their own businesses. When these business ventures failed, however, they reembarked on the journey to the factory floors in Japan.

The Brazilian population grew rapidly throughout the 1990s and 2000s until the 2008 Lehman Shock when the global financial market crashed. Many factories closed down. The Nikkei workers, initially recruited as shock absorbers for the labor market, lost their jobs. Many left. The Brazilian and Peruvian combined population shrunk by 40 percent after 2008. Among those who had left were a large number of permanent residents. Many of the Nikkei Brazilians who returned home after the financial crisis were greeted by an entirely different economic situation. Not only had the Brazilian economy improved since they left, but there had also been an increase of Japan's offshore production in Brazil. Meanwhile, the labor market for Nikkei in Japan did not recover sufficiently to attract them back to Japan. The Nikkei Brazilians who were imported as workers for Japanese manufacturers two decades earlier now found themselves working for Japanese companies in Brazil (Sasaki 2013). Nonetheless, the majority of ethnic Japanese South Americans stayed on in Japan.

LANGUAGE STUDENTS: THE EDUCATION CHANNEL FOR LABOR IMPORT

The rapid increase of Chinese entering Japan in the late 1980s and Vietnamese entering Japan after 2010 was largely due to the availability of the legal category of "international student." Since 1983, when Japan instituted the Plan to Accept 100 Thousand International Students, waves of international students of various nationalities arrived in Japan, making the student visa one of the most accessible entry categories.[10] In 2008, the Japanese government started a more ambitious plan to recruit three hundred thousand international students by 2020.[11] Students have continued to make up the largest entry category of long-term migrants. Between 1984 and 2018, Japan accepted over 1.3 million overseas students, mostly from neighboring Asian countries.[12] Because a student visa permits off-campus work during the school year and can be changed to a work visa when a student finds professional employment, international education has become a channel for both unskilled labor during school and skilled workers thereafter, making it a "side door" for labor import.

International education in Japan, especially that in language academies, is heavily brokered. Japanese is not a language commonly taught in other countries' national curriculums, and thus the first landing place in Japan for international students tends to be the language school. The academic threshold for entering Japanese language institutions is relatively low. Only a high school diploma or its equivalent is required. Moreover, little prior language proficiency is necessary to study in language schools. This low entry threshold, coupled with the availability of a legal work permit that allows a student to work part time off campus, has turned language education into a lucrative migration business (Liu-Farrer and Tran 2019).

The top three sending countries of language students in the mid-2010s were China, Vietnam, and Nepal. Since the Association for the Promotion of Japanese Language Education started keeping track in 1989, China has been the country of origin for the majority of students. From 1986 to 2018, over half a million Chinese entered Japan as students.[13] Although Chinese society has undergone dramatic changes during this period and the demographics as well as motivations of language students from China have changed (Liu-Farrer 2011a, 2013, 2014), Japan, due to its accessibility, remains a popular destination for Chinese students. In 2009, a year after the global financial crisis, while the Nikkei Brazilian population dropped by 20 percent, a record number of Chinese students (thirty-five thousand) arrived in Japan. From personal network-based brokerage thirty years ago, a large industry has spawned around Chinese students' mobility into Japan, ranging from language training and preparing documents and logistics to cram schools that specifically prepare Chinese students for entering Japan's higher education.

Vietnam became a main sending country of language students in 2013. The total number of Vietnamese students in

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

Japan increased tenfold from 2011 to 2018. Many media reports attributed this trend to the increasing Japanese influence in Vietnam. Direct investment increased rapidly in Vietnam the second decade of the twenty-first century largely because of the rise of Chinese labor costs and the anti-Japanese sentiments that threatened Japanese businesses in China. In 2013, 1,077 Japanese firms were registered in Vietnam, and Japanese companies became desirable employers for the Vietnamese youth (Sunai 2014). At the same time, Japanese consumer products and popular culture also appealed to young Vietnamese people (NHK 2014). However, attraction alone does not move population. Language schools and the educational brokers were the primary agents in tripling and quadrupling the number of language students from Vietnam (Liu-Farrer and Tran 2019).

Nepal, a small Himalayan country that was torn apart by both a decade-long civil war from the mid-1990s till 2008 and the chaos thereafter and has a GDP that dropped to less than 800 dollars per capita (JASSO 2019), was the third-largest language-student-sending country in 2018. Since Nepal uses English as a medium of education in higher education and private high schools, traditionally Nepali students preferred studying abroad in Australia and other English-speaking countries. However, starting in 2013, Japan became the second most sought-after destination for Nepali students. Again, aggressive language schools and brokers were the main agents behind this change. Japan became a desirable destination because of the low threshold for getting a language student visa and the promise of earnings from part-time jobs. According to Kiyohiko Hamada, who worked for the embassy of Japan in Nepal, some language schools and brokers advertised, "Without speaking Japanese, you can still study in Japan. Even if you borrow loans to pay for the costs of travel and tuition fees, you can pay [them] back by working on part-time jobs in Japan" (JASSO 2014, 38).

In the close to thirty years since the studying in Japan boom started, a number of language students overstayed their visas and were later repatriated. Most language students, however, went on to pursue higher education in Japan. As a result, every year thousands, if not tens of thousands, of graduates enter corporate Japan and become important human resources in Japanese firms' globalizing businesses.

THE *TOKKU* MAIDS AND THE WORKERS OF "SPECIFIED SKILLS"

The labor shortage in many sectors in Japan has become so acute that the government was forced to come up with different schemes to import labor. For example, in the name of freeing women from domestic labor to encourage them to participate in the labor market, a special provision to allow the import of foreign domestic helpers (maids) was granted in 2015 on in so-called National Strategic Special Zones (*Tokku*) such as Osaka, Kanagawa, and Tokyo. However, the number has remained small. Six housekeeping service companies in Tokyo expressed interest in importing up to twenty-five hundred foreign workers for domestic services by 2021 (Nihon Keizaishinbun 2017).

Before the end of 2018, the Japanese Diet passed the amendments of ICRRA to accept specified skilled workers in fourteen categories.[14] In the official discourse, these workers are categorized as "middle skills," expected to be above the technical interns. If the workers attain appropriate skill credentials within five years, they have the opportunity to settle in Japan as permanent residents. It is the first time in Japan's postwar history that manual labor is allowed to enter.

The Invited Guests

Although Japan resists recruiting so-called unskilled (*mijukuren* or *tanjun*) foreign labor—and as a result has opened side doors, such as language education and the recruitment of ethnic Japanese Brazilians, to bring in manpower to replenish the shrinking workforce in its secondary labor market—the Japanese government has been actively accepting foreign people it deems desirable. These are often people with a higher education and technical or cultural skills.

THE GLOBAL TALENT

Japan has taken part in the global competition to attract highly skilled foreign workers (Tsukazaki 2008; Murata 2010; Akashi 2010; Oishi 2012). The nation's policies toward importing foreign talent have never been ambiguous. According to the sixth Employment Policy Basic Plan of 1988, the entry of unskilled labor (*tanjun rdsha*) is "to be dealt with extreme caution" (*jbun shinch ni tai suru*); foreigners who have professional and technical skills are considered in the plan as resources for revitalizing and internationalizing Japan, and thus it states "as many as possible should be accepted" (*kan na kagiri ukeireru*) (IPSS 1988). In 1990, the revised ICRRA created fourteen employment visa categories. Thirteen of these visas are designated for highly skilled migrants, including such classifications as engineer, investor/business manager, intra-firm transfer, specialist in humanities/international services, and professor. Access to these visas is largely dependent on immigrants' level of completed higher education. In 2003, the E-Japan Strategy II, a national policy to improve development in Japan's IT sector, included a plan to accept thirty thousand highly skilled migrants (especially IT workers) by 2005 (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet 2003). It was the first time that the government set a clear numerical target for importing a highly skilled workforce. In response to this policy, the immigration law was revised in 2006 to facilitate the entry of IT workers from overseas. The Japanese government's attempts to attract highly skilled migrants

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

continued. In 2012, the Ministry of Justice proposed a point system for highly skilled workers (*kdojinzai pointo*) in which individuals are given points according to their level of education, employment situations, research outputs, and salaries. Foreigners with higher points enjoy privileges such as a shortened residence requirement for permanent residency. In 2015, the new visa category, highly skilled professional (*kdosenmonshoku*) was established. Though ultimately a relatively small number, there were people that did qualify for this category and were granted a five-year visa and early eligibility for permanent residency along with other benefits, including permission to bring in caretakers, either their parents or household servants (MOFA 2015).

Many of the skilled migrants working in Japan were initially international students. Every year, around ten thousand graduates obtained employment visas to work in Japan. The Chinese have been the largest in this group. The majority of skilled workers, however, have been recruited overseas by human resource agents at various international job fairs and via intrafirm transfers.

Since 2009, the largest sending countries of engineers have been China, Korea, India, and Vietnam. China has been the largest sending country of engineers since the 1990s. In 2018, the total number of Chinese engineers and specialists in humanities and international services living in Japan was 80,825, or 38 percent of the total number of people having this visa status. Most Chinese engineers and IT workers were recruited from China. Although big Japanese companies would go to the job fairs on campuses of elite universities to directly recruit students, most of the recruitment is done by human resource agencies that dispatch workers. Many IT professionals we interviewed arrived in Japan via these companies. Three of them graduated from the same provincial university in a southwestern province of China. The IT dispatching company that recruited them in 2003 had been soliciting new graduates from their university and other academic institutions in inland China for several years. Five of them from the same area were grouped together and underwent a six-month language training program before being sent to Japan. Upon entering Japan, they were "thrown" into different companies, as one of them explained:

> [We] had no idea what a dispatching company was in Japan. We were their employees, but they sent us out to other companies. The company was small. Altogether there might be 20 or 30 people. We were maybe the fourth cohort [they had recruited]. The company had been bringing in people from universities in China, including some very good universities, for several years. They just threw them out [*diu chu qu*] through dispatching and then let them be. After a year or so, we thought we had all more or less made [a] contribution to the company [*jin le li*]—we had paid off the debt, so we all gradually left, changed jobs and went our own ways.

Some early Chinese engineers soon learned the rules of the game and set up their own dispatching companies, called "soft houses" in Japan, and started to recruit people in China. Many of these soft houses are transnational in nature and can hire people in China using the category of intra-firm transfer to channel in human resources and dispatch them to companies in Japan.

The same process has taken place in India and Vietnam. Although Japan, being a non-English-speaking country, was not on the global mobility circuit for Indian IT workers (Xiang 2006), there has always been hundreds and sometimes over a thousand Indian IT specialists entering Japan every year either as engineers or through intrafirm transfers since the mid-1990s. The number accumulated, and by 2018 around 7,000 Indians were working in Japan as engineers.

Paralleling the spike in their compatriot students, there was a sudden rise in the number of Vietnamese skilled migrants. While there were only 197 Vietnamese working in Japan as engineers in 2004, 28,722 individuals were registered as either engineers or specialists in 2018. With the aspiration to globalize Japanese businesses and enlarge the global talent pool, Japan's major recruiters have been penetrating many countries' higher education institutions to search for talent (Conrad and Meyer-Ohle 2018).

"IMPORTED DIVERSITY"

For non-Asian immigrants, especially those from North America, Europe, and Oceania, the largest working category has been specialists in humanities and international services. Additionally, as mentioned above, the United States has the highest number of instructors in Japan—people working in education, especially as assistant language teachers at Japanese elementary and secondary schools. The rising Japanese economy in the 1970s and 1980s elevated Japan to the rank of a developed nation. Thought of as an economic miracle and a society with distinct cultural practices, Japan piqued the interests of many in the West. However, what has turned many of those who had mere cultural interests in Japan into immigrants was a program called the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program.

The JET program started in 1987 and was part of Japan's effort to internationalize its local society while also expanding its influence around the world (JET Programme 2019). According to the official JET website, the number of countries Japan recruits from grew from four English-speaking countries—the United States, UK, Australia, and New Zealand—to over forty in 2015, including many European countries, China, Korea, Mongolia, and Russia. In its over three decades of operation, more than sixty thousand people from sixty-three countries have participated in the JET program. Most of them

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

came from English-speaking countries and became assistant language teachers (ALTs). People from non-English-speaking countries became coordinators for international relations (CIRs), who were hired to assist the local government in organizing various international events. A minority of them became sports exchange advisors (SEAs). Thus far, two-thirds of the JET participants have come from North America, especially the United States. Some of them were interested in Japan, and JET became a gateway to their dreamland. Others were seeking an adventure upon finishing college. Being a JET teacher in rural Japan was not only exciting, it also provided the financial means to live adequately. Quite a number of JET participants fell in love with Japan and stayed on. Some became romantically involved; others started businesses or made Japan a lifelong intellectual project. The JET participants are typically granted the instructor visa if they are assigned to be ALTs. If they become CIRs or SEAs, they usually receive the specialist in humanities and international services visa.

The numerous private English-language conversational schools and centers have also been an entry point for many native English speakers. If it had not been for this entry channel, many of these individuals who had vague interests in Japan would never have found a way to spend extended time in Japan. Language teaching certainly provided Tina the means to come to Japan. Her family used to serve as a host family for international students studying in the Washington, DC, area, and every year they welcomed a new student. For six or seven years before she graduated from high school, every student was from Japan. She was intrigued by them. "I really just wanted to go [and] see what Japan was like for a year." In her senior year of college, she applied for various teaching programs and was offered a job by a private language instruction provider to teach in a small town "in the middle of nowhere on the sea." She has remained in Japan ever since.

The demand for English teachers, coupled with the existence of programs like JET, explains the larger presence of people from English-speaking countries such as the United States, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In addition, the working holiday visa allows young people the flexibility to explore a new country and decide whether they would be interested in residing there.

In short, Japanese immigration policies are selective. There are people who are deemed more desirable, and special programs have been created to attract and accommodate them. The skilled technical workers, mostly from other Asian countries, are considered important supplemental human resources to help Japan remain competitive in the global knowledge economy. The English teachers and "cultural ambassadors"—as some JET participants called themselves—on the other hand, reflect Japan's project of "imported diversity" (McConnell 2000), designed to create a more internationalized society.

Marriage Migration: For Love and Business

I was sitting with Meiyun, a slim woman in her mid-thirties, in an air-conditioned fast-food restaurant in Fuqing City, Fujian. Glaring sunlight filtered through the glass window and shone warmly on her bare skin, turning her dyed long hair into golden silk. I was there to give her a present, Japanese stockings, from her brother in Tokyo and to talk to her about his situation. Her brother A Qiang was an undocumented migrant I met at a Chinese church in Tokyo. He had been smuggled into Japan several years earlier. The smugglers were brutal with him. Upon his arrival in Japan, they locked him up and demanded RMB 210,000 (at that time the equivalent of more than 3 million yen) for the smuggling fee. The family had taken out high-interest loans and could come up with only half of the money. A Qiang signed a contract agreeing to pay the

15

rest in installments when he started working. The snakeheads had some internal disputes; one of them was just smuggled in and owed a lot of debt to the others. A violent conflict ensued, and the next day A Qiang was found unconscious on the sidewalk of the building he had been forcefully confined in. He had been thrown from the fourth-floor balcony. Miraculously he survived, but the trauma left him with permanent brain damage. He said he had no memory of what happened to him in that room. Meiyun and I were piecing together information and suspected that he must have been tortured. A Qiang was probably thrown out of the building because they thought he was either dying or already dead. "Those were really bad people. I hope they will pay for their evil deeds [*e ren you e bao*]."

Eyes still red, Meiyun suddenly beamed, "Oh, soon I am coming to Japan too." Seeing my puzzled face, she said, "No, no, I am not coming through smuggling [*toudu*]. Several days ago, the 20th of this month, I was informed that a man is coming from Japan to meet me. He is the person I am going to marry." "Does your husband agree?" I asked, knowing that she was married with two children. "It is just a fake marriage," she explained.

As it turned out, the marriage was part of a carefully planned family migration strategy. Two years earlier, Meiyun's husband had contracted smugglers to go to Europe. At the time, he was in the process of applying for refugee status. The two of them filed for divorce before he left so she could be more flexible in deciding her future course of action. Meiyun asked a friend of hers who had succeeded in using a fake marriage to migrate to make the arrangements. "One person brings another [*yi ge la yi ge*]," Meiyun explained. "It cost more than 200,000 RMB, but it will give [me] a year's legal status. Besides, it is safer." Japan had started a campaign to crack down on those overstaying their visas and undocumented workers in June of that year. Marriage migration was also under scrutiny. There was no guarantee Meiyun's plan would

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

succeed, but she did not have many other options. She noted that "the easiest way to go there is as a student. But, you have to have a high school diploma. Not many people in this region have a high school certificate. It used to be possible to fake a diploma. But now everything is in the computer. You can't buy a diploma anymore. The only means left was through smuggling. It is really dangerous." Meiyun told me her husband's income as an asylum seeker in Germany did not provide them the means to afford a comfortable life. She and her thirteen-year-old daughter lived with her husband's brother's family. Her family's household registration was in another village, but her daughter went to junior high in the town where they lived. "On September 1st, I have to pay 10,000 RMB for her school fees." An in-town student, however, needed to pay only several hundred RMB. "For the best high school in town, you pay 50,000 RMB and it is difficult to get in." Her sixteen-year-old son was boarding in her hometown high school and visited them on the weekends. "He needs at least 500 a month for pocket money. The child now really spends money. I don't allow him to go to play video games. If he goes, he will go in in the morning, and get out at midnight." Meiyun and her husband hoped their children could graduate from high school and enter a college so their lives would be different. Meiyun herself did not go to high school. She married at the age of eighteen and had never really worked regularly. The mounting financial pressure made the family decide that it might be easier if she could go to Japan via the channel of a fake marriage, especially since both her brother and her husband's brother were in Japan.

This conversation took place on August 25, 2003, when I was doing fieldwork in Fuqing and Changle, two towns in China's Fujian province. Going abroad was still in the air the people breathed. People talked about snakeheads and smuggling in the same tone that they talked about a street vendor peddling food. Marriage was one of the less risky channels for migration. In the end, Meiyun did not manage to get to Japan, partly because Japanese immigration tightened inspection.

Undoubtedly, many international marriages are completely sincere and began from romantic relationships. Fake marriages—a purchased commodity—make up a small minority. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that marriage has become a major channel of international migration in Asia, especially for women from developing countries, when other means to enter a country are not available.[16] Between 1991 and 2017, over 110,000 Chinese and 90,000 Filipinos entered Japan with a spouse or dependent of Japanese national (*nihonjin haigusha nado*) visa; and the majority of them were marrying into Japanese families. International marriage serves as an important means for them to leave their country to look for a better life for both themselves and their families. At the same time, importing foreign brides had been considered a reproductive strategy for some rural Japanese households. In the 1990s, some local governments organized matchmaking tours to neighboring Asian countries, in hopes of finding young women for the bachelors in their villages.[17]

An infrastructure exists for international marriage migration. The nexus of different actors—including governments, matchmaking agencies, technologies, social and personal ties, and humanitarian organizations—together shapes this form of migration.[18] According to a survey conducted by Yoshitaka Ishikawa (2010), in 2007, over three hundred matchmaking agencies, mostly oriented toward China, were scattered in different parts of Japan. Most of these agencies were run by people who had themselves experienced international marriage. They operated by recruiting through the internet. The Immigration Bureaus of Tokyo and Osaka revealed that 70 percent of Chinese women who entered Japan via these urban centers as "spouses of Japanese nationals" in 2006 came through marriages arranged by matchmakers. The number of arranged marriages by agencies among Filipinas, however, was much smaller. Most Filipinas marrying Japanese men reported that love was the basis of their unions. Given that some of the Filipinas' regular residence was in Japan, Ishikawa (2010, 11) speculates that many romantic relationships leading to marriage commenced when the Filipinas worked as entertainers.

Significant regional and racial patterns can be detected in the international marriages in Japan. Japanese men and Asian women from the Philippines, China, Korea, and Thailand composed the majority of these relationships. The Microdata sample of the 2005 census shows that among cross-border marriages that involve a Japanese and a foreigner in which the wife is younger than forty, less than 30 percent of the marriages were between a Japanese woman and a foreign man. Among these foreign men, over half of them were Koreans, most likely Zainichi—Koreans who had lived in Japan since before the end of World War II. Americans and British are among the top ten foreign nationalities that marry Japanese; they are much more likely to be male than female. More than five times as many men from the United States and England married Japanese women as women from the United States and England married Japanese men (Hanaoka and Takeshita 2015). It has also been noted that the age gap is particularly large in marriages involving Chinese and Filipino wives. Nearly 60 percent of Filipino and over 54 percent of Chinese wives under forty had husbands more than ten years older than them.

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The Global Networks of Mobility

The infrastructure supporting migration into Japan involves many more channels. Aside from the patterns of migration that are particular to the Japanese immigration regime, discussed above, much of the infrastructure is part of the evolving global network of mobility. Institutional arrangements such as student exchange programs, social networks formed through homestays and travel, and the globalizing education systems and labor markets have all played important roles in increasing the stock of immigrants in Japan.

The flourishing exchange programs between Japanese universities and institutions around the world have built bridges for many young people to enter Japan. For example, my home institution, one of the largest private universities in Japan, has established exchange programs with over five hundred universities worldwide and receives more than two thousand exchange students every year.[19] Xavier, a US citizen, was a former exchange student. A gamer, he grew up fond of Japan. During his third year in college, he participated in a one-year exchange program. He had a great time during his year in Tokyo and hoped to stay longer. He was able to apply for a graduate program in Japan and has continued to live in Japan ever since. Many immigrants from Europe and North America, and increasingly also from China and Korea, are similar to Xavier. Those who enjoy their experiences in Japan as exchange students find ways to either stay on or return after they graduate.

Japan is just one node in the globalized education network. Student mobility has become part of an internationalized higher education system (Knight 2008). There were European students who, when looking at the different study-abroad destinations, chose Japan because it was a more unusual, cool, or exotic place than either other European countries or places in North America. As Thomas explained, “My sisters all went to the States. I just wanted to go somewhere different.” He spent a year in a small provincial city and enjoyed it. Upon returning to Germany, he applied to enter graduate school in Tokyo.

The education market especially that of higher education, is globalizing. Japanese universities increasingly offer more and more degree programs that use English as the medium of instruction in hopes of training Japanese students to be global talent, on the one hand, and gaining the ability to recruit international students, on the other. The Japanese government also grants scholarships to international students. Thorsten, from Switzerland, had only a vague desire to go overseas to study in 2006. But Japan presented him an opportunity that was hard to turn down. Talking about how he ended up in Japan, he reminisced:

> I don’t think I had a very clear reason why. It was more about the … I wanted to go overseas for my studies. But um … for me, like Europe and America wasn’t interesting enough. I wanted to go somewhere different. So, I think Asia. And I had a few friends that heard about this university. And, also when I applied, I actually got the scholarship that covered all the tuition.… I didn’t really have a very clear idea of like … Japanese culture. And the only reason why I came was because of the scholarship.… I knew a little bit about Japan, but … at the time I just knew it as the strongest economy of the world, or the economic world. And I wanted to know how that happened, in a way.

Not only is the education market globalizing, but so is the labor market. Japanese companies have been recruiting overseas for nearly three decades. The Career Forum, aiming to recruit university graduates fluent in English and Japanese, held its first job fair in Boston in 1987 and has since expanded to London, San Francisco, Sydney, and Los Angeles, in addition to those held in Tokyo and Osaka.[20] We encountered foreign professionals who found their jobs in Japan through one of these career forums. More and more Japanese firms have been looking toward Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries for talent and use Singapore as a gateway. Major Japanese companies have set up global human resource departments in Singapore, hoping to facilitate the channeling of global talent into Japan.[21] According to a human resource manager from a Japanese telecommunications company, Singapore has surpassed Boston in recruiting international employees in his line of business. The rapid increase in the entry of skilled migrants, especially engineers, from ASEAN countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines in the 2010s demonstrates the accelerating pace of talent recruiting by Japanese companies.

Technology increasingly plays an important role in facilitating global mobility by its ability to connect the world. Some individuals found jobs through Facebook or LinkedIn and were interviewed through Skype. Many among the generation who came to Japan in the twenty-first century used the internet to find information about schools, jobs, and other opportunities in Japan.

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

The Ties across Borders

In 2014, 927 Nepalese cooks arrived in Japan. This was the second year that the number of Nepali cooks entering Japan surpassed that of their Chinese counterparts, who had made up most of the imported foreign cooks for the past two decades. In 2016, 67,470 Nepalese were living in Japan, making the Himalayan nation the largest South Asian country sending people to Japan. What has led to this sudden rise in Nepalese immigrants, especially cooks?

According to Kharel (2016), it might have all started with the cook Tanka Gaire. India has been the traditional destination for Nepali emigrants, many of whom worked in restaurants. An Indian restaurant group, Nanak, started its first restaurant in Fukuoka in 1984, bringing with it the Nepali cook Tanka Gaire to Japan. An Indian curry boom took place during the bubble era in the late 1980s, creating a great demand for reliable restaurant workers. The Nepali immigrants I talked to emphasized proudly that Nepali workers were hardworking, trustworthy, and cheap. Indian restaurant owners preferred them over Indian cooks. They arranged for many Nepalese to come to Japan and work in their restaurants. Eventually they entrusted those Nepali cooks to recruit from their own village social networks. This chain migration created a community that has a concentration of migrants from several villages. Kharel (2016) estimates that over eighteen hundred Nepali cooks in Japan were from Malma, a small village near Kathmandu. The Japan-bound population accounted for three-quarters of the total population of young people in that village.

The first generation of cooks learned the ropes, opened their own restaurants, and then started recruiting more people from Nepal. As a result, over three thousand Nepali Indian restaurants emerged in Japan. These restaurants also double as migration brokerage agencies and have used the skilled labor category to import Nepali workers for a fee that runs as high as US$15,000 (Kharel 2016). Restaurant owners have been the pillars of the Nepali community. When I visited Everest International School, the first Nepali ethnic school in Japan, I was told that 80 percent of the Everest students came from families that ran restaurants.

Social networks, especially kinship and friendship ties, have always been considered crucial in producing and perpetuating migration (Massey et al. 1993) and are an important component of the migration infrastructure (Xiang and Lindquist 2014). Personal ties feature centrally in all migration patterns. Brokers need personal ties to recruit. As Meiyun's narrative, relayed above, shows, one person brought another. Institutional recruiting also relies on networks to disseminate information. Many people became migrants because of the recommendation or persuasion of friends and relatives. Huang Yan, a Chinese woman from the Northeast, said she "muddle-headedly" (*xilihutude*) followed her friends to Japan. She worked at a hotel after graduating from a junior college specializing in hospitality services. "Going to work and getting off work like that everyday, [I felt] really bored, and thought I should study something to enrich myself [*chongshi ziji*]," she said. She and her friends enrolled in a Japanese language class in their town. It happened to be a class that dispatched students to Japan. "My friends were all dragging me, saying 'let's go together.' " Together, over a dozen of them came to Japan.

In East Asia, owing to historical ties, geographic proximity, close economic relations, and the high volume of transnational human mobility especially since the 1980s, a dense regional social network has been established linking individuals and organizations among Japan, China, Korea, and Taiwan. Personal connections are used in business arrangements and sometimes lead to the establishment of institutional ties. In many cases, the institutional and social ties are inseparable. For instance, many student migrants from China, Korea, and Taiwan relayed how their teachers provided them with the necessary information to study in Japan.

Personal relations also initiate and create more opportunities for migration in less connected regions. Short-term and long-term homestays for the purpose of language learning and cultural experience have been popular among Japanese youth, especially high school students. Masha was from Rwanda. She had her first encounter with a Japanese person when she was in junior high school. "There was this Japanese student that came to do homestay in our own family. And we stayed with him for a year. And then, we got to know about Japan from him and when we finished high school I came to Japan. I came to Japan to do undergrad in 2006." When she started studying in Japan, her younger brother also joined her. Their connections, thus, brought Japan closer to this African country.

Sometimes personal encounters leading to migration are accidental. Oliver, the freelance translator working in the gaming industry, made a friend during his short visit to Japan. The friend went to the same school and was a translator in the industry. He had translated a game that Oliver liked. "I was like, 'I really liked that game!' And he was like, 'I worked on that game!' And I was like, 'We should be friends!' So, we stayed in touch, and in college, I majored in Japanese and minored in music and probably was going to go on to a career in basket weaving, so it was like, 'What do I do?' And this guy mentioned they were hiring, and he was like, 'Okay. I'll make sure your resume gets seen.' And I did the interview and ended up getting my first job at that company." Oliver has continued living in Japan and in 2016 obtained permanent residency.

Not all roads lead to Japan. Yet, in the map of global human migration exist many channels that direct people to this island country. These channels shape the demographic contour of immigrants in Japan. Different actors are involved in building

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use

and controlling these channels. The state bureaucrats decide who and how many are to be admitted across the borders; sometimes they modify the criteria and stipulations following the intervention of international humanitarian organizations. Businesses, such as language schools, labor brokers, and corporations, recognize that their profits, if not survival, are dependent on the promoting and expanding of flows of people. Social networks and institutional programs extend opportunities for mobility to a wider population. Technologies have functioned to make migration more accessible. These different actors have built and actively altered the migration infrastructure from the back alleys and the side doors to the welcome gate and bridges.

Observing the patterns of migration into Japan, several features are salient. The first important characteristic is that geographic proximity and historical links lower thresholds and pave the way for migration. East Asia has numerous historically developed, interlinked institutional, and social ties. When demands for labor and fee-paying students emerged, neighboring Korea, Taiwan, and China had been among the first countries Japan taps into. The majority of migrants in Japan are from China and Korea—most of the Koreans are descendants of migrants who entered Japan during the colonial period (1910–1945). The historical ties and close social and economic connections have continued to pull in new migrants through business operations, education programs, and low-wage labor import.[22] China surpassed Korea as the number one sending country of immigrants in 2007. Its economic reform starting from the 1980s and the sheer size of the population naturally made China the largest source of migrants entering Japan.

With the strengthening economies, China and Korea have become potential competitors in the geopolitics of East Asia. Japan now is increasingly looking toward Southeast Asia, hoping to tap into its labor pool and access the region's developing market. Japanese companies have rapidly expanded offshore production and marketing in Southeast Asian countries. These ties and Japan's increasing presence in the region have made Japan a familiar and convenient migration destination. The sudden increase of Vietnamese students and trainees, for example, testifies to the strengthening of such linkages.

Through years of occupation and the continuous presence of military bases, the strong US-Japan alliance is also reflected in the prominent presence of Americans in Japan. Many spouses to Japanese nationals were former JET teachers and military stationed in Japan. The United States has also been the sending country of the largest number of English teachers.

Second, Japan's reluctance to accept unskilled labor migrants—despite its urgent need for them—combined with resistance to change its self-perception of being an ethnically homogeneous nation has resulted in the immigration of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Brazilians and Peruvians and their families since the early 1990s. Since this pattern of migration was de facto labor import disguised as ethnic return, an industry has emerged to direct this group of migrants to the shop floor of Japan's manufacturing industry. As will be shown in chapter 3, this particular pattern of migration has determined their economic locations in Japan and severely limited their geographic and social mobility.

Third, Japan's postwar economic development and urbanization have also had effects on its traditional household system in rural areas and the more general realm of intimacy, resulting in the immigration of hundreds of thousands of foreign women from mainly East and Southeast Asian countries. The demand for labor in the sex industry spurred the creation of the entertainer visa category. Women from Southeast Asia were the first group of workers imported into postwar Japan. The love that kindled in the nightclubs and karaoke bars eventually led to marriage and the settlement of many women in Japanese society. Meanwhile, the demand for reproductive labor made international marriage an accepted channel of migration. These trends created a feminized migration from countries such as the Philippines and Thailand.

Fourth, a distinct characteristic of migration into Japan is the role of migration industry–businesses that profit from facilitating population mobilities. Because of the gaps produced between the restrictive migration regime and the productive and reproductive demand in Japanese society, a transnational migration industry has risen to bridge the institutional gap (Liu-Farrer and Tran 2019). From international students' mobility and ethnic Japanese Brazilians' entry into Japanese industry to international marriages and IT recruitment, the brokers assume an indispensable role in channeling people into Japan.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that Japan is connected with the global mobility infrastructure. In the contemporary world, educational institutions and labor markets have globalized. Individuals' education and career mobility are no longer territorially bound. Movement across borders has become a normative and accessible practice embraced by the younger generation, who grew up in a world in which all kinds of information is easily available. The internet and budget travel have turned geographic distances into an afterthought. Many people who come to Japan are used to being mobile and have previous experiences abroad. Thus, for them, Japan was just one more place filled with adventure. As a result of such a global mobility norm, the origins of Japan's immigrants have become increasingly diverse and the new immigrants' patterns of movement and settlement have also become varied, sometimes to the point of being unpredictable. How do immigrants move within and through Japan? And how do they find mooring? These questions will be explored in the following chapters.

EBSCOhost - printed on 11/22/2023 3:39 AM via UNIVERZITA PALACKEHO V OLOMOUCI. All use subject to https://www.ebsco.com/terms-of-use