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Living under more than one sun: The Nikkei Diaspora in the Americas

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ABSTRACT

Currently more than 2.5 million Americans living on the South and North American continents are Nikkei or descendants of Japanese migrants. The history of their forefathers' emigration from Japan and the meaning of ethnicity and citizenship while living in the diaspora has attracted considerable scholarly attention, which was renewed by the recent wave of sojourner migration by Latin Americans of Japanese origin into Japan. Virtually nothing is known so far about the impact of "return migration" and the "returnees' remigration" on the diaspora in Latin America. To what degree have ideas of ethnic or political loyalty, of national and cultural identity, been shifting one way or the other due to the increased proximity to their ancestors' place of origin? And how have hostile or discriminatory treatment by homeland and hostland societies impacted on the collective image of the Nikkei in Latin America? The Nikkei experience of living abroad bears the potential for rethinking the meaning of diaspora. As the return migration to the land of their ancestors has not fulfilled the postulated 'negation of a diaspora' (Clifford 1994), it has squared the sensation of being diasporic in the sense of being displaced twice and having multiple relationships with distinct nations which are neither just homeland nor hostland. Based on multi-sited fieldwork in Japan, Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay, I analyze the shifting functions of the pillars of migrant communities, i.e. family household, school and hometown associations. I argue that the Nikkei are entangled in a "squared diaspora" in which the juxtaposition of homeland and hostland itself becomes questionable, instable and fluctuating.

KEYWORDS

Squared diaspora; Latin America; identity; transnationalism; circular migration; Nikkei

Introduction

How do diasporic ties emerge? How are they maintained? How do overseas migrant societies mobilize ethnicity and nationality as strategic resources to improve their members' individual and collective life opportunities? And more specific in the context of the Japanese diaspora in Latin American countries, how are Japanese overseas communities affected by return migration, chain migration, and circular migration? These are core questions of a broader research interest in the culture and society of

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the approximately more than 2.9 million Americans who are descendants of Japanese migrants and commonly labeled as 'Nikkei'. Scholarly interest in issues of the diaspora, the meaning of ethnicity, and the impact of citizenship or integration policy on the Nikkei has been renewed by waves of sojourner migration by Latin Americans of Japanese origin into Japan (e.g. Roth, 2002; Tsuda, 2003). This study, too, has been motivated by questions on the consequences of the Nikkei's increased proximity to their ancestors' place of origin – due to the influx of material and immaterial goods from Japan, the ease of intercontinental travel and immigration, and the globalization of media industries and content. Given these conditions, in which ways have the Nikkei's ideas of cultural belonging, national identity, and political loyalty been shifting one way or the other? Like most diaspora studies, it ultimately aspires to explore the complexity and fluidity of ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship in a globalizing world.

I also argue that the Nikkei experience of living abroad bears the potential for rethinking the meaning of diaspora. I define the notion of diaspora as: a social world inhabited by people of the same ethno-national origin who have been dispersed from their ancestors' homeland to live permanently abroad, but who continue to perceive ancestry as a primary point of reference for expressing identity, loyalty, and solidarity. By consciously employing this notion of diaspora, the study design embarks on a threefold strategy in order to overcome the questionable limitations of area studies. First, diaspora research is by definition multi- and transdisciplinary work which constitutes itself around a generic term. Its academic usage originated in the humanities as a description of the specific case of the Jewish diaspora but soon branched out into area studies and finally gained recognition in social sciences, too, as a useful tool to analyze late-modern politics of identity and to question the conceptualization of nation, ethnicity, and culture as primordial, monolithic, and territorially bounded (e.g. Braziel & Mannur, 2003). Second, diaspora research is concerned with the multitude of social relations, political processes, and cultural practices simultaneously at work in two or more locations and across these spaces (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). It therefore requires a research methodology that takes the geographical variety of local and translocal processes and structures into account. Third, the Nikkei diaspora bears the potential to challenge a simplifying and conflating, yet still predominant understanding of Japanese-ness based on the unity of blood and culture (Befu, 2001). It encompasses Japanese-born emigrants and their offspring, including third- or later generations often lacking what mainstream society in Japan considers proper cultural knowledge, and descendants of mixed parentage having a comparatively better command of Japanese language, customs and habits. In any instances, wherever the members of the Japanese diaspora are residing, in homelands or host lands or moving in-between, they find themselves entangled in a multilayered web of relationships that affect their sense of being and belonging.

My own approach to the diaspora builds upon theoretical conceptions flagged out in the introduction to this special issue. It takes agency, discourse, and structures into consideration as a starting point for a thoroughly constructivist understanding of diaspora. Adapting a community model devised by Liepins (2000), I suggest understanding the diaspora in praxeological terms as a social field that is open to scrutiny in its performative, semantic, and structural dimensions. The diaspora is structured by spaces and institutionalized forces of power which are grounded in the ideas and ideologies that a given community has about itself and given shape through

performative behavior, including ritual practice, habitual behavior, and spontaneous interaction providing them with meaning. At the same time, structures and spaces enable the material manifestation and realization of meaning and determine where and how practices can occur. Values, norms, and narratives are incorporated into structures and legitimize performative behavior, while practices that are happening within spaces and structures enable meanings to be exchanged, circulated, and questioned. The empirical part of the paper will come back to these dimensions and demonstrate the circular flow of mutual impacts.

By coming to terms with the conditions that underlie the production and reproduction of diaspora, this article addresses the first two questions that were posed at the beginning. It summarizes preliminary findings of extensive reading on the history of Japanese settlements in the Americas and 3 months of multi-sited fieldwork among 15 Japanese communities in Argentina (2), Bolivia (6), Brazil (2), and Paraguay (5) in 2011. In contrast to the emigration histories to Northern America and Brazil, which are comparatively well documented, not much is known about the early experiences of migrants in Japanese settlements of minor size in Spanish-speaking Latin America, their current conditions, and more importantly for this study, the impact of ‘return migration’ and the ‘returnees’ remigration’ on the making of the diaspora in Latin America. The field visit was motivated by four objectives: to gather empirical evidence that substantiates my claim for rethinking the Nikkei diaspora; to identify model communities for eventual in-depth field work; to establish access to key persons and institutions as potential gate openers; and to explore academic networks and opportunities of international joint research collaboration. What I present in the empirical part of the article is based on interviews and casual exchanges with first to third and occasionally even fourth-generation migrants, statistical and qualitative data obtained from hometown associations and Japanese government agencies, and field notes from participating in public and private events in the communities. I also consulted various diaspora media, such as official chronicles, anniversary issues, and commercial or official diaspora media available in print or online.

Parts of this article have been composed in an experimental style in which I enhanced my understanding of the diaspora, both in concrete and theoretical terms, by writing sections in two languages consecutively. In contrast to the German version (Manzenreiter, 2013), which shares the same objective of explaining the particularities of the Japanese diaspora, this article maintains its distinctiveness by using different sets of data, both quantitative and qualitative, a more extensive consideration of historical progression and the introduction of an analytical framework. The next section provides a short outline of the Japanese migration history. In the following section, I will elaborate on the constituting particularities of the Japanese diaspora by referring to the dynamic conflation of structuring relations, discourses, and practices that constitute my analytical framework. I will demonstrate that family, school, and local community institutions are the three pillars on which overseas migrant communities maintain their sense of Japanese-ness, which quite a few of my informants see endangered due to developments and processes that are affecting these pillars. The nagging sense of crisis, enhanced by the experiences of return and circular migration, provides additional evidence for my claim regarding the significance of these institutions for the making of the Japanese diaspora. Introducing the notion of ‘squared diaspora,’ the conclusion

attempts to make sense out of multiple layers of familiarity and estrangement and demonstrates the heuristic value of using the Japanese case for the advancement of diaspora studies and theory development.

A century of diaspora building

The expansion of the Japanese diaspora in Latin America began in the late nineteenth century when overpopulation, low labor productivity, and poverty in Japan were jeopardizing the state-run project of modernizing the country. In return, countries in Latin America had plenty of undeveloped land area and great demand for manual labor and agricultural know-how. The destinations initially most sought after by migrant workers were Hawai'i and California. But the increasingly racist immigration politics of the United States pushed migration flows further south, first to Mexico (1897) and Peru (1899), and from 1908 onward predominantly to Brazil.

From the beginning, the Japanese state government played a leading role in the establishment of the transpacific migration system, including the conclusion of bilateral agreements or the licensing of migration companies that organized recruitment and placement of migrant workers on behalf of sugar barons, mine operators, and coffee plantation owners in South America. Under the terms of indentured migration (the commonly used expression in Japanese is contract migration, *keiyaku imin*), migrant workers usually were hired for a limited period of 3–4 years. But working conditions turned out being often too hard and the pay too poor to earn enough money for the return journey. Instead of coming home triumphantly as a man of wealth and 'dressed in brocade and silk' (*nishiki o kazaru*), most were forced to spend the rest of their lives abroad. When the state took over full control of migration in the early 1920s, the factual irrevocableness of migration was ultimately institutionalized. As a consequence, repatriation rates to Japan have been much smaller than in European countries, staying at a low level of 10% (Masterson & Funada-Classen, 2004, p. 52) or 15% (Endoh, 2009, p. 31) throughout the entire period.

The year 1924 saw the beginning of a new era of state-sponsored migration (*koku-saku imin*), during which the government of Japan took over all responsibilities for migration management, including planning, recruitment, transport, financing, and technical guidance. Bureaucrats in Tokyo and at the prefecture level were in charge of devising migration plans, forging agreements with governments, land owners, and corporations abroad, selecting suitable candidates and training them for work and life abroad (Manzenreiter, [Forthcoming](#)). The emigration state preferably sent entire families of at least two adults to South America where the settlers were expected to cultivate their own lots of land within officially planned colonies. The majority of Japanese prewar migrants (about 75%) reached the South American continent during the nearly two decades of state-sponsored migration. In total, by the beginning of the Pacific War there were 188,985 Japanese living in Brazil, 33,070 in Peru, 14,667 in Mexico, and 5398 in Argentina. Smaller contingents of 100 or so Japanese were recorded as residents in other Latin American countries (see [Table 1](#)).

The disastrous social and economic conditions after the defeated war, which were exacerbated by the return of millions of soldiers and settlers from the former colonies in neighboring Asia, replicated the situation of the early twentieth century. The

Table 1. Migration and Nikkei populations in the Americas.

	1 st phase (1868–1941)	2 nd phase (1945–1989)	Total (1868–1989)	Nikkei population (2006)
Latin America				
Brazil	188,985	71,372	260,357	1,400,000
Peru	33,070	2615	35,685	90,000
Mexico	14,667	671	15,338	16,750
Argentina	5398	1206	6604	35,000
Paraguay	709	9612	10,321	7000
Bolivia	222	6357	6579	13,770
Dominican Rep.	-	1390	1390	900
Cuba	616	-	616	800
Chile	538	14	552	2600
Panama	456	-	456	
Others	1305	168	1473	2273
Total	245,966	93,405	339,371	1,569,093
North America				
United States	338,459	134,842	473,301	1,240,000
Canada	35,777	11,226	47,003	68,000
Total	374,236	146,068	520,304	1,308,000

Sources: Own compilation according to data on

(1) Migration: http://discovernikkei.org/wiki/Japanese_Immigration_Statistics

(2) Diaspora: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/latinamerica/gaiyo/mede/pdfs/nikkei.pdf>

government's response to overpopulation pressures and the dire living conditions of its people equally relied on reactivating know-how and administrative structures from the prewar period to reset its strategy of exporting the population surplus. Now it was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that was in charge of planning, organizing, and controlling migration. Under its supervision, the Federation of Japan Overseas Associations (Nihon Kaigai Kyōryoku Rengōkai) was founded in 1954 with branches in all prefectures and the overseas settlements. In 1955, the Japanese Emigration Aid Company (Ijū Kaigai Shinkō Kabushiki Kaisha) was established as a financial institution for the promotion of emigration, also with branches in the settlement areas. In 1963, these de facto quasi-governmental organizations merged into the Japan Emigration Service (Kaigai Ijū Jigyōdan) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which together with the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (Kaigai Gijutsu Kyōryoku Jigyōdan, established in 1962), laid the foundation for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Kokusai Kyōryoku Kikō; JICA) in 1974 (Manzenreiter, 2014).

Brazil became once more the primary target of 'planned migration' (*keikaku ijū*). First waves of emigration reached the Brazilian coast in 1952, many years before a bilateral migration agreement was officially sealed in 1960. Similar agreements were signed with the governments of Bolivia (1956), Dominican Republic (1956), Paraguay (1959), and Argentina (1961). According to government statistics (see Table 1), about 250,000 migrants settled down in Latin America during the first half of the twentieth century. They were followed by slightly fewer than 100,000 people between 1952 and the end of the great migration waves in the early 1970s (JICA [Japan International Cooperation Agency], 1994, p. 126–127). The number of Nikkei that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs identifies as living nowadays in the region is approximately five times higher than the total amount of migrants (MOFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan], 2006). All these

figures must be taken with caution, however, as they fail to capture the different forms of undocumented migration. For example, government statistics record 222 Japanese who legally entered Bolivia between 1913, when diplomatic relations were established, and 1941. Yet a much larger number of illegal migrants had entered the country at the beginning of the century. Escaping the disastrous working and living conditions in Peru, they sought for better opportunities as miners in the Andes or in the cities of the Altiplano. Bolivia's northwestern Amazon River region was their second main destination, where they found many opportunities to make a decent income as workers for the rubber industry. A first survey by the Bolivian consulate from 1917 already reported 667 Japanese living in the country, three times more than the official statistics from 24 years later. Nearly a century later, Kunitomo (2002, p. 105) discovered during his expeditions in the sparsely populated rainforest regions of Pando and Beni many traces of early Japanese immigrants. Based on the regional spread and life stories he obtained from their descendants, he estimated that the actual number of Bolivian Nikkei was between two and four times greater than the official number of almost 14,000.

The main wave of migration to Bolivia and Paraguay began only in the 1950s. Until the official end of Japan's state migration policy in 1993, 1919 Japanese (and 3229 more from Okinawa) were recruited for the two state-coordinated settlement projects in the Bolivian lowlands, and 7177 Japanese left their home for the development of agricultural land in the south and east of Paraguay (see Tables 2 and 3). In addition, 53,657 emigrants left for Brazil, 2760 for Argentina, and 1330 for the Dominican Republic (Rengōkai [Paraguai Nihonjinkai Rengōkai] (ed.), 2007: 73). Bilateral contracts allowed for 18,000 Japanese to settle in Bolivia and as many as 85,000 in Paraguay. These target numbers proved to be over-optimistic, particularly after the recovery of the Japanese economy when Japanese manufacturers developed an insatiable demand for industrial

Table 2. Nikkei communities in Paraguay.

Name or place	Province	Start of settlement <i>Self-administration</i>	Area (ha) <i>J/total</i>	Nikkei/ <i>national</i> <i>citizens</i>	Share of population
La Colmena	Paraguari	1936 Colonia <i>1956 Bunkyo</i>	5,000/11,000	338/5,500	6.1
Chaves	Itapua	1953 Colonia (789) <i>1957 Nihonjinkai</i>	3600/64,100	169/21,156	0.82
La Paz	Itapua	1955 Colonia Fuji (JICA) <i>1955 Jichikai</i>	12,000/15,952	793/3217	24.7
Pirapó	Itapua	1960 Colonia (JICA) <i>1964 linkai</i>	53,000/84,217	1262/6754	18.7
Yguazú	Alto Parana	1961 Colonia (JICA) <i>1967 Jichikai</i>	50,000/87,762 ^a	932/8748	10.7
Piraretá	Cordillera	1984 Colonia (JICA)	533	15	...
Pedro Juan Caballero	Amambay	1956 (coffee plantation) <i>1956 Nihonjinkai</i>	53,200	607/88,189	0.7
Ciudad del Este	Alto Paraná	1958 (Colonia Stroessner) <i>1969 Kyōiku linkai</i>	26,000	189/222,274	0.1
Asunción	Central	1916 (from Peru?) <i>1960 Nihonjinkai</i>	11,700	1452/512,112	0.3
Encarnación	Itapua	1939 (from La Colmena) <i>1957 Nihonjinkai</i>	32,200	777/94,000	0.8
Total	Paraguay			6534/6.5 mio.	

^a17,203 ha flooded due to dam construction.

Source: Rengōkai [Paraguai Nihonjinkai Rengōkai] (ed.), 2007, own compilation.

Table 3. Nikkei communities in Bolivia.

Name or place	Province	Start of settlement <i>self-administration</i>	Area (ha) J/total	Nikkei/people	Share of population
Cobija	Bando	1909 (from Peru) 1925 <i>Nihonjinkai</i>		1000/50,000	2.0
Riberalta	Beni	1908 (from Peru) 1915 <i>Nihonjinkai</i>		7000/90,000	7.8
Trinidad	Beni	1910 (from Peru) 1917 <i>Nihonjinkai</i>		1300/90,000	1.4
Rurrenabaque	Beni	1914 (from Peru) 1987 <i>Nichibo</i> <i>Bunka Kyōkai</i>		500/13,000	3.8
Guayaramerin	Beni	1910 (from Peru) 1997 <i>Nihonjinkai</i>		300/38,000	0.8
La Paz	La Paz	1899 (from Peru) 1922 <i>Nihonjinkai</i>		800/850,000	0.1
Okinawa	Santa Cruz	1951 Uruma 1955 Palometilla 1956 Colonia 1957 <i>Rengō Kumiai</i>	10,000 46,890	850/6200	13.7
San Juan de Yapacani	Santa Cruz	1955 (from Brazil) 1957 Colonia 1965 <i>Jichikai</i>	27,132	750/11,000	6.8
Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz	1914 (from Peru?) 1954 COOP 1956 <i>Nikkeijinkai</i>		750/1.6 Mio.	0.1
Others	Cochabamba; Oruro; Sucre			850	
Total	Bolivia			12,430/10 mio.	

Note: All numbers rough estimates.

Source: FENABOJA, 2000, own compilation.

workers. Regardless of the massive technological and financial support that the Japanese government poured into the overseas settlements, development in the colonies could not keep up with the dynamics of rapid growth in Japan (Manzenreiter, 2014). The gap continued to deepen, particularly as the unfamiliar climate, diseases, natural disasters, political instability, and the lack of infrastructure in all respects turned out to be severe handicaps for decades to come.

The first attempt of settlement in the Bolivian province of Santa Cruz de La Sierra ended in a failure after only a few months. When the first group of 400 emigrants reached Colonia Uruma in fall 1954, they found themselves in the jungle, isolated from the world outside which could only be reached by a narrow dirt track. Neither did the settlers find the promised drinking water well nor houses in sufficient numbers. After a few weeks, many suffered from a still unknown illness that claimed 15 lives. When the rainy season began, the Rio Grande set the entire area under water, and after the flood the village was plagued by rats and new diseases. Colonia Palometilla was hastily opened as an alternative site in August 1955. But the settlers could not stay as the area was too small and ownership claims were disputed. Finally, in August 1956 they entered the area of Colonia Okinawa, followed by new groups of immigrants over the next years (Okinawa Nihon Boribia Kyōkai, 2005: 64–75).

The history of Colonia Okinawa may read like an extreme example, but it was not the most tragic, and far from being a singular case. Lack of know-how on the part of the settlers, who like the dispersed coal miners from Kyushu or manual workers from

cities had little or no farming experience, coupled with blunt misjudgment and erroneous advice by the migration planners, contributed to the sustained flow of comings and goings from rural to urban settlements, to other countries, or back to Japan. In the Dominican Republic, some bands of Japanese immigrants were shipped into remote mountainous areas as border guards against Haitian trespassers, and partially into slave-like working relations; they felt not only ill-advised, but after the fall of dictator Trujillo also betrayed and abandoned by the Japanese government. Most returned home or rather moved on to South America. In the Argentine settlement projects of Garuape in the state Misiones and Colonia Andes in Mendoza state, many plots remained undeveloped simply because the land was not suited for commercial agriculture (FANA [Zaia Nikkei Dantai Rengōkai] (ed.), 2006, p. 158–182). Similar errors of technical judgment hampered the opening of the last officially planned Colonia Piraretá in Paraguay as late as in the 1980s. Many of my informants living in the ultimately successful colonies vividly remember the lasting hardship and deprivation until adequate seed varieties, cultivation techniques, and measures against natural disasters were found. Conditions stabilized about 20–30 years after the initiation of the settlements. My informants identified the completion of road construction and electrification during the 1980s as the turning point from insecurity and poverty to lasting stability and gradually improving wealth. By this point, however, the great majority of emigrants had already given up and fled from the estates – some for better opportunities in other settlements and nearby cities, and others seeking new opportunities abroad once again. Unlike in the prewar period, return to Japan, temporarily or permanently, became an increasingly popular option for migrants.

A new chapter of remigration to Japan was opened by the revision of the Japanese immigration law in 1990, which sought to provide a supply of manual labor to the Japanese industries. As the Japanese state granted preferential treatment in terms of residence and unrestrained working permits to those who could prove their Japanese ancestry within three generations, hundreds of thousands of Latin American Nikkei migrated to Japan. Contrary to public expectations, many of the invited guest workers opted for staying and having family members join them in Japan. Within two decades, the number of Nikkei residents in Japan mushroomed from fewer than 5000 in the mid-1980s to more than 300,000 in 2005. By this time, there were more Nikkei from Latin America living in Japan than Japanese who had migrated to the Southern American continent within a century.

This massive influx of Nikkei in Japan peaked around 2008. As most of the newcomers found employment only through labor agencies in temporary and low-paid jobs sensitive to economic fluctuations (Higuchi, 2007, p. 127), the economic downturn that followed the global financial crisis in 2008 prompted large-scale layoffs of Nikkei workers and massive return migration. Alarmed by the rising costs of Nikkei unemployment, the Japanese government in April 2009 initiated a voluntary return program offering Nikkei an allowance to cover airfare and other expenses related to leaving the country. As a result of these conditions, 2009 recorded the first decline in the number of foreign residents in Japan since 1961. The triple disaster of March 2011 also contributed to the mass exodus of the Nikkei, particularly back to Brazil. Until today, the number of South American residents in Japan declined by far more than 100,000. But for many thousands more, Japan had become a place of home again, temporarily or permanently.

Pillars of the diaspora

Various patterns and waves of migration contributed to the formation of the Japanese diaspora over a hundred years. However, a visit to more than one or two communities reveals that grasping the diaspora as a monolithic social formation would be grossly wrong. The variability they display in terms of functions, structure, and meanings is large enough that it becomes difficult to speak of *the* diaspora only. Summarizing the situation in Bolivia, Amemiya (2006, p. 175) points out the country's unique pattern of compartmentalization, dividing Japanese communities vertically in terms of time (prior to 1941 vs. after 1952) and horizontally in terms of physical location (western Amazon and Andes vs. eastern lowlands). Onsite visits confirmed the eye-catching differences in durability, stability, assimilation, and segregation that Amemiya explains by the way national governments in Bolivia, Japan, and the United States had been involved in the implementation of state-sponsored migration projects. These variables, among other crucial issues such as duration of settlement, population size, degree of ethnic concentration, and distance to the host society must be taken into consideration to understand the variety of Japanese communities in other countries as well.

Migration itself is a necessary precondition for the emergence of a diaspora, but not a sufficient one. It needs more than just a social minority concentrating at one place in order to speak of the diaspora as a specific mode of existence and way of life. Of crucial significance is memory work, connecting the present with the past and reminding the immigrants and their offspring across generations of their ethno-cultural distinctiveness as the single most important reference point for collective identity. The following sections will discuss the institutional settings in which enculturation, intergenerational transfer, and mutual reaffirmation take place: the family household, the Japanese school (*Nihongo gakkō*) and the local community, and how these institutions are affected by local embeddedness and their entanglement within a dense network of relations with host nation, home country, and the Nikkei diaspora at large.

Family ties and the household economy

As a social unit, the family household provides the framing space for the primary socialization of its youngest generation. In everyday encounters, newborn family members learn from interacting with their kind the practical knowledge about role differentiation to distinguish between self and others, and the shared moralities needed for meaningful social practice. While families are an anthropological constant, there is a great variety of family types reflecting the social relations of specific historical conditions. In as much as families play a crucial role in preparing newborn generations for proper social behavior outside the household, they contribute to societal reproduction, and to the modification of society, too. Dominant principles underlying the notion of the family household in early twentieth century Japan, such as patrilineage, virilocality, and primogeniture, shaped habitual practices and conceptions that conveyed the asymmetrical arrangement of role expectations and power hierarchies based on gender and order of birth to all members of the household and, by extension, to the community. Wherever succession rules stipulated the undivided transfer of household properties to a single child, usually or preferably the first-born son, daughters and younger sons inevitably were confronted with the realities of enforced

migration, either into the groom's household or into one's own. These realities also fueled the demographics of Japanese overseas migrants.

Particularly under the precarious conditions of migration, traditional roles of the family household as source of mutual support and resource for pooled labor and capital were utilized for very different purposes. Employers in South America preferred to hire couples if not families (with at least three members of working age, between 12 and 40), as they were less prone than single male workers to flee from the often overtly harsh and exploitative working conditions on sugar and coffee plantations (Takenaka, 2004, p. 88). Private and state-owned migrant companies from Japan, such as Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushiki Kaisha (founded in 1917) or Burajiru Takushoku Kumiai (BRATAC, founded in 1929) applied the same basic rule when recruiting families, preferably from the same region, to work as 'free farmers' (*jisaku nō*) or 'agricultural employees' (*kigyō imin*) on the lands they had acquired on behalf of the Association of Overseas Emigration (Kaigai Ijū Sōgō Rengōkai) in Brazil, Mexico, Peru or Paraguay (Endoh, 2009, p. 69–72). The Japanese government and its South American allies continued to rely on the cohesion and productivity of the families after the Pacific War. As departure and settlement permits were granted only under the conditions of permanent emigration, bureaucrats carefully scrutinized applicants' family background in order not to jeopardize the success of the emigration state politics (Nakayama, 2010, p. 37). This is well documented in migrants' narrative accounts and registries in ministerial archives. It affected the almost equally balanced sex ratio of male and female migrants (4:3; Endoh, 2009, p. 37) for the period between 1952 and 1974.

For migrants themselves the family played a significant role in reducing the risks of emigration and optimizing opportunities. Crucial decisions – such as leaving the place of origin, staying despite hardship, or continuing the journey to more promising yet equally uncertain destinations such as nearby settlements initiated by earlier migrants, newly opened state-sponsored colonial projects, or regional capital cities – pertained to the entire family and were usually realized by this unit. Financial means needed for departure, onward passages, or upward mobility as independent farmer, merchant, or craftsman could only be secured through the cooperation of all household members. The other qualities needed to succeed – diligence, hard work, frugality, decency, and mutual support – were familiar to migrants from their own socialization in Japan. As they continued to cherish these virtues and attitudes within their overseas communities, they sought to pass them down to their offspring; hence, ethnicity was considered as a key factor for marital partner selection.

The excess of male migrants that characterized earlier stages of labor migration, particularly to North America, was to some degree evened out by sponsored migration (*yobiyose imin*) of brides. Suitable women and their families were approached by intermediaries in the migrants' home regions, and if mutual consent of the families was achieved, marriage could be legalized in Japan without the husband having to be present. In the first decades of the twentieth century, tens of thousands of 'picture brides' (*shashin hanayome*), who often were known to their husbands only from portrait photos, came to Hawai'i (appr. 14,000; O, 2010: 195), to the US west coast (appr. 10,000; Tanaka, 2009: 133), to Canada (appr. 6,000; Kaduhr, 2002, p. 12), to Peru (Shintani, 2007, p. 82) and to Brazil. Still in postwar times, Cotia, the largest agricultural cooperative of Japanese farmers, shipped 500 prospective brides for the 2500 young agricultural

workers (*Cotia seinen imin*) that had followed the call of prewar settlers between 1955 and 1967 (Iida, 2008, p. 103). For the humanitarian purpose of family reunion, the Argentine government reopened its doors for the first wave of migrants after 1945. Chain migration served not only to promote family formation, but also to supply ‘fresh blood’ to the ethnic community – and to spill more financial support from the Japanese government into the settlements. Many in the host societies perceived this pronounced tendency toward endogamy as indicative of the Japanese immigrants’ reluctance to assimilate – and their high fertility rate as a serious threat to the social order.

It is interesting to note that in demographic terms many Nikkei households and communities have recently come to resemble Japan’s rapidly aging society. Birth rates have plummeted, while life expectancy has increased. The change of family size and composition has come along with increasing livelihood stability, if not wealth. But clearly outmigration has been the most significant singular impact factor. Outmigration has accompanied the settlement history from the outset in all known instances, most often due to economic failure, disasters, and other external shocks. In the early 1980s, Bolivia’s largest settlements San Juan and Okinawa, although already depopulated in the aftermaths of droughts, flooding and diseases, still hosted up to 3000 first- and second-generation migrants; today their number has decreased to fewer than 800 (see Tables 2 and 3). By 2005, 90% of all arrivals had left Colonia Okinawa (Okinawa Nihon Boribia Kyōkai (ed.), 2005: 81), and 80% had left San Juan (ABJ, 2006, p. 457); Paraguayan communities in La Colmena, La Paz, Amanbay, and Chavez lost 65% of their Nikkei populations. Only in Yguazu, the last large-size colonial project initiated in 1961, more than half of the residents have stayed (Rengōkai [Paraguai Nihonjinkai Rengōkai] (ed.), 2007, p. 369) – though only half of the incoming migrants had come directly from Japan; most of the land was actually claimed by resettlers entering from earlier projects on the continent.

While during the first decades entire families and households usually moved on, since the 1990s outmigration has become individualized. On the one hand, this is due to an economic model based on large-scale agriculture, the preference of transferring the family property undividedly to a single heir, and the lack of alternative employment opportunities in the community. For that reason, parents bank on the merits of higher education and send their children to (Japanese) boarding schools in the regional cities. Still only 12% of Paraguayan Nikkei find employment with companies and 7% with Nikkei associations and public administration. The majority is in agriculture (43.7%), where the tedious and low-paid labor is left to indigenous farmhands; 20.5% work in retail, and 4.3% in the health-care sector (Rengōkai [Paraguai Nihonjinkai Rengōkai] (ed.), 2007, p. 377), where, according to my informants, the monthly income for medical doctors barely exceeds USD 1000.

On the other hand, outmigration has severely damaged families and communities due to the much higher income prospects in Japan’s manufacturing industries that lured many Nikkei away. Hundreds of thousands either dropped out of higher education or skipped employment in a respectable position to enter the land of their ancestors. According to official statistics, in 2010 about one-fifth of the Brazilian, one-third of the Paraguayan and Bolivian Nikkei populations, and more than half of all Peruvian Nikkei appeared to be living and working in Japan (MOJ [Ministry of Justice], 2011). About two-thirds of all South Americans living in Japan in 2011 were aged 20–34 years (28.2%) and

35–49 years (31.8%), and many minors (younger than 20: 22.6%, MOJ [Ministry of Justice], 2011) were also in employment. Of all the families I visited in South America in 2011, virtually every household, regardless of status or property, had one or more members currently living in Japan as *dekasegi* (labor migrant).

Since the stay in Japan coincides for many with the phase of the life cycle in which family formation is most likely to occur, the birth of children in Japan may also have an adverse effect on return mobility. An additional effect on family composition is the gradual decrease of Nikkei intermarriage. To some degree, this is a natural trend occurring over generational cycles, as surveys have revealed. Interethnic marriage of third generation Nikkei in Brazil was reported at 60% and at 80% for the fourth generation (Beltrão, Sugahara, & Konta, 2008, p. 85). In Mexico as well, the preference for intraethnic marriage decisions lasted notably longer for daughters than for sons (Misawa, 2002, p. 130), but also for them the likelihood of interethnic partnership increases with the decrease of single Nikkei males of marriageable age.

The absence of young Nikkei sometimes causes generational conflicts on the issue of elderly care. Old people's homes for Nikkei seniors, who often cannot communicate in Spanish or Portuguese, have become a new necessity – and burden on the community. In public settings, return migration is typically explained as rational behavior to earn funds needed for land acquisition or to support parents. In private conversations, however, more than once I heard complaints about children who seemed to have been spoiled by the attractions of metropolitan life in Japan and forgot about their responsibilities toward their family. Family members seem to know surprisingly little about the precarious working conditions of many Nikkei in Japan, or at least they do not mention this in the presence of a stranger. Whatever may be at the root of the gap between generations, it indicates a value change that is potentially destabilizing the community: Many of my older informants believed that the younger generation, but also present-day Japanese society, lacked a proper understanding of traditional values such as self-sacrifice and filial piety. In that regard, the diaspora is claiming to represent the 'true Japan' that has been lost in the Japanese homeland itself.

School and cultural education

Schools, next to their most obvious function as educational institutions providing knowledge, skills, and qualifications, are an essential place and agent of secondary socialization. Within schools, students refine their language skills and understanding of proper language usage, and they are familiarized with additional attitudes and behavioral norms that the community and society regard as essential. In modern societies, public and most private schools are closely linked to the state through their educational mandate and officially sanctioned curricula used nationwide. Students' sense of self is gradually expanded through interactions with teachers, peers, and older or younger age groups. Similarly, society at large, the nation and the state enter their horizon as points of reference for collective identity formation. These subjectivities are expressively performed in everyday rituals, the festive calendar and public ceremonial events. Schools perform their role as agents of cultural socialization most visibly at festival days when they become the meeting point of pupils, their families, and the community at large. In classroom activities, students are prepared for Hinamatsuri (the puppet festival on 3

March), Tanabata (the star festival on 7 July), the holiday in reverence of senior citizens (late September), and other events adopted from Japan's event calendar. For sport festivals (*undōkai*) and cultural events, schools open their doors to their pupils' families, friends, and neighbors, to offer them the opportunity to observe the progress that the young members of their community have made over the course of the past year.

Schools for their own offspring were among the earliest public institutions set up by the emigrants abroad, particularly at the isolated settlements in South America where no alternatives existed or plantation schools were considered inadequate. In Brazil, 486 Japanese schools for roughly 30,000 pupils were in operation at the end of the 1930s (Adachi, 2006, p. 120). In the state of Sao Paulo alone, there were 200 schools for 10,000 children (Goto, 2007, p. 8). Teachers often were fellow emigrants of decent education, who adopted the familiar model of Japanese school education, including Japanese language teaching materials. Moral education, as in Japan, was an indispensable part of the school and was practiced, for example, by reciting the Imperial Rescript on Education or by bowing in front of the imperial portrait. The outbreak of the Pacific War forced the closure of grassroots community schools in virtually all places that overnight turned into enemies of Imperial Japan. Yet restrictions were not equally strict everywhere, and in many places instruction was secretly continued in private households. The motivations behind the establishment of ethnic community schools were as diverse as migrants' educational backgrounds and long-term goals. Those who saw themselves as temporary migrants wanted to keep all doors open for themselves and their children; not a few aspired for their children to attend secondary education in Japan; and others entrusted their children to the community school to learn Japanese attitudes and strengthen awareness of their Japanese identity.

After 1945, Japanese schools continued to serve the dual function of knowledge transfer and moral education, even though they saw themselves increasingly obliged to national curricula and the educational missions of their host countries. This also required switching the language of teaching to Spanish or Portuguese, which to some degree was embraced by their parents. With migration shifting more toward permanent settlement, they welcomed seeing their children becoming prepared for life in the new homeland, even though they themselves could not spend time and energy on learning the language of their new homeland. Spanish or Portuguese are common languages among the young attending school and turn into first languages at home for third-generation households. Fluency in Japanese is more and more a rarity to be obtained during a study abroad in Japan on government grants. While today's parents still consider Japanese language skills to be essential for the future of the community, they are aware that local language skills (though not Guaraní, which is an official language and mandatory subject in Paraguay) are crucial for their children if they want to see them advance in their country of residence.

Local public schools, by comparison, lack in appeal as their role is restricted to basic knowledge transfer (Tajima, 1999, p. 18). These schools fail to provide what many Nikkei regard as the most important task of the school as the 'only institution for the shaping of the child's character' (*jinkaku keisei*; Nakayama, 2010, p. 46). Taking the differences of cultural objectives and educational levels into consideration, they are worried about the loss of national virtues, cultural identity, and ultimately about the risk of downward assimilation if they entrust their children to local public schools only.

Nikkei parents generally expect their schools to instill a sense of Japanese-ness (*Nihonrashisa*) within their children's minds, and more to the point, to train them in diligence, seriousness, and punctuality (Tsujiimoto, 1999, p. 4). Even today, schools continue to promote themselves within the diaspora through their statutes and rules by banking on their customers' appreciation of these characteristic virtues, even if the schools are subject to national curricula. For example, the private school of Okinawa Uno in Santa Cruz prefecture teaches classes in the morning according to the national curriculum of the Bolivian state and offers supplementary education in Japanese in the afternoon. The school brochure features among its main objectives the pursuit of 'an education that instills the students with pride and the intellect to live as Bolivians of Japanese descent (*Boribia Nikkeijin*). [...] Through the learning of the Japanese language, we enable the students to learn Japanese culture, learn and embody the good characters that Japanese have, and develop as unique human beings with rich personalities' (Suzuki, 2010, p. 75). Seven of the 11 schools run directly by the Japanese communities in Paraguay mention harmony, sense of responsibility, and diligence as typical Japanese virtues, and five of them explicitly promise to implement them through language teaching (Nakayama, 2010, p. 47).

Japanese schools enjoy a high reputation in the private education sector outside of the community as well, and in fact they largely depend on tuition fees from non-Nikkei parents to compensate for the declining number of Nikkei pupils. Teachers as well as parents fear that the shifting balance will adversely affect the role of the school as socialization agent – Suzuki (2010) summarizes teachers' worries about the ongoing 'Bolivianization' of Nikkei children. In private conversations I heard complaints about the young generation as lazy and spoiled, lacking their parents' understanding of the merits of effort, hard work, and self-sacrifice. In addition, higher education certainly has lost some of its value for social mobility in light of a future inheritance from the wealthy Nikkei padrones or the potential income as *dekasegi* in Japan.

Community institutions

Ethno-territorially defined 'hometown associations' are a characteristic form of organized mutual support that can be found throughout the Japanese settlements and Nikkei communities in South America. Usually referred to as *Nihonjinkai* (Association of Japanese), membership rights are based either on ethno-national ancestry, such as in the *Nihonjinkai* proper, or on local provenience, such as prefectures (*kenjinkai*), towns, or villages (*sonjinkai*) – though in recent years some of these organizations have opened up for non-Japanese persons who have an interest in Japan. These associations considerably vary in their size, internal structure, and scope of tasks. What they all have in common is the coordination and organization of cultural events and community life by providing the social framework and material necessities for leisure time activities and ceremonial events. They are the focal point for all issues that relate to the community and are of common concern, such as public facility management, infrastructure construction, or dissemination of information about local events, national politics, and things going on in Japan. Hence, hometown associations play a pivotal role as interface between the local community and the diaspora at large, both on domestic and border-crossing levels. They connect the local community back to Japan by channeling funds, people, and information into the place.

Today's associations developed from various forms of traditional community organization that early migrants adopted from models familiar to them from the economic and administrative organization of their homeland, such as agricultural cooperatives (*nōgyō kumiai*), chambers of commerce (*shōgyō kaigijo*), craftsmen, and trade cooperatives (*dōgyō kumiai*, for example, gardeners, hairdressers, or laundry operators; Minamikawa, 2007; Mita, 2002; Tsuchida, 1984), credit cooperatives (*tanomoshi-kō*, Dekle & Hamada, 2000), dyadic kinship networks (*dōzoku*), household groups (*kumi*), and neighborhood associations (*jichikai*) to ease the burden of farm work in times of hardship and to pool resources for community development (König & Hans-Dieter, 1994; Staniford, 1973). The associations deliberated and managed the construction of roads, sewage systems, and electricity; they also secured public services, including medical stations, schools, fire brigades, public security, and dispute resolution. Settlements were subdivided into districts (*ku*) with village heads (*kuchō*) either to be appointed by rotation or elected from the representatives of the households within a district.

Hometown associations were usually established by the settlers themselves (Mita, 1982, p. 43; Nozoe, 1978, p. 83), and in quite a few cases in response to advice by the government's migration planners (Noguchi, 2003, p. 73–76). In prewar as well as postwar Japan, prefectural offices played a crucial role in recruiting and sending migrants abroad, and they encouraged the settlers to found prefectural associations in order to maintain links with the homeland. From a practical point of view, these associations were particularly significant because they grouped people from a common background, vernacular language, and tacit knowledge that were more important in the moral economy of the Japanese diaspora than nationality or ethnicity. Quite a few prefectures, particularly in Southwest Japan where the majority of migrants came from, such as Okinawa, Hiroshima, Kumamoto, or Fukuoka, continue to have an office in charge of the overseas associations. As early as the late 1930s, around 450 prefectural or hometown associations were counted in Brazil alone, and consulate officials strived to establish a nationwide network, albeit with little success (Bunkyo [Bunkyo 50nenshi Henshū linkai] (ed.), 2007, p. 7–8). Most settlers showed little interest in the state's political ambitions and saw the association primarily in the service of their daily needs. Especially in the remote, if not isolated, regions of the Brazilian hinterland (*sertao*) or the virgin forests (*servas*) of Bolivia and Paraguay, the villagers' associations assumed a central role for public administration and the management of commons. That political, economic, administrative, and cultural agendas often overlapped under one organizational umbrella continued to be the case until the late twentieth century.

The establishment of these associations and federations did not follow a uniform pattern. In urban areas, where single male migrants dominated, membership promised distinctive incentives (such as access to the ethnic job market, or collective defense against racial discrimination) and was not mandatory. Larger federations eventually emerged and took over tasks of providing welfare or running the ceremonial and cultural life of the urban Japanese communities. Membership in the rural settlements was obligatory for every household whose head represented the family in the village assembly. Women joined the women's club (*fujinkai*), and young men the youth association (*seinenkai* or *wakamonokai*), which are both crucial for various community services and festivals; with the aging of the villagers and improved transportation, old people's clubs have also been founded.

These associations have also been very dynamic and fraught with internal challenges. Chronicles report the continuous foundation of ad hoc committees to tackle immediate problems, which sometimes later branched out as autonomous organizations. In addition, membership changed continuously due to persistent waves of new immigration and emigration. There were frequent conflicts about questions of leadership and the balancing of costs and benefits, and sometimes associations were dissolved or split up only to merge again later with other organizations. Some Nikkei openly complain about the costs of membership; in light of the current advanced division of labor between different agencies in charge of public administration (provided by the state), business management (representing the farmers' interests), and cultural life (more and more privatized), the benefits of (mandatory) membership are increasingly questioned. Many of the older migrants, however, have difficulty differentiating between the different organizations, particularly as the elites of the community also often serve on the boards of public bureaucracy and local governments. Using the name of the *Nihonjinkai* as a synonym for all ethnic organizations, the *Nihonjinkai* continues to be in charge of all activities in the community (see also Piekielek, 2010).

Many of these associations are facing challenges caused by the loss of an entire generation to be trained as future community leaders and by the dramatic difference in wealth and quality of life vis-à-vis the majority of society. Urban associations that provide only cultural services are run by core members who work on behalf of only a fraction of all Nikkei; in that regard, the diaspora resembles Sheffer's model of core, peripheral and latent members (Sheffer, 2003). In the countryside, Nikkei no longer live in isolation but rather in the midst of an indigenous or multi-ethnic population serving them as farm workers and domestic helpers. Even in Japanese-funded villages and towns, the Nikkei population share is much lower than 20% or even 10% (see Tables 2 and 3).

The striking contrast between the Japanese *colonias* and indigenous *pueblos* is visible in all socio-economic aspects: Comprising less than 10% of the population, Nikkei control over 90% of private assets; life expectancy outside the *colonia* is much lower, and child mortality within the *pueblo* is much higher. More than half of all households in the *pueblos* of San Juan and Okinawa have no access to electricity, and one-third are not connected to the sewer network. Albeit hardly openly acknowledged, everyone in the settlements is aware that Japan's development cooperation agency JICA is a major cause behind the high standard of the infrastructure, equalizing or even outperforming public services in the Japanese countryside. As the JICA department in support of emigrants and local branch offices have been closed for 20 years now, financial resources obtained from Japan are rarer than ever before, and questions on the future maintenance of public infrastructure and health care are troubling Nikkei community leaders, while community members complain bitterly about having been abandoned by Japan's foreign politics.

How to manage the future amidst these uncertainties has kept the Nikkei communities busy since the 1990s, albeit with two decades of committee work yielding no solutions. Seclusion from majority society creates more problems than solving old ones; integration is no viable option in light of the experiences of earlier migrant communities whose standard of living levelled down once they lost their cultural cohesion. Indigenization, or *genjinka*, is not only the loss of cultural identity, realized in a

distinctive language, traditions, and remembrance, but also the decline of the diaspora as a form of living. In many places, the function of lived commemoration has already been replaced by archiving the diaspora: immigration museums, commemorative plaques, monuments, and ceremonies to remember foundation days and significant anniversaries are testimonials of the official reconciliation work through which the past is revived as a model for the ideal future.

Conclusions

In this article, I demonstrated how the cultural transfer of social institutions, particularly family structures, schools, and neighborhood associations contributed to the formation and maintenance of diasporic ties throughout a network of settlements and communities scattered across the Americas. They are at the heart of the diaspora and effectively the pillars on which the Japanese diaspora as space, process, discourse, and practice is built. For the Japanese diaspora, the most significant markers of collective identity are language, practice rules derived from traditional values systems, and cultural rites that have also been transferred from Japan. By way of practice and interaction, Japanese-ness is performed, experienced and reproduced in the diaspora. Memory is conveyed in memorial architecture and collective symbols, managed by hometown associations and related institutions, practiced and performed in rituals and celebrations, and communicated in discourse and symbols. The embeddedness of communities within host societies, legal systems or the natural ecology further impacts on communities, their sense of self and relatedness. Preservation and propagation of cultural heritage and the deliberate dissociation from a host society are not necessarily two sides of the same coin; but keeping an ultimately irreconcilable distance from the majority population of the host society emerged as a secondary defensive function of the pillars of the Japanese diaspora.

A large volume of literature on Japan's recent change into an 'immigration state' (e.g. Chiavacci, 2017) has shown that the Nikkei's 'return home migration' to the land of their ancestors has not fulfilled Clifford's promise of the 'negation of a diaspora' (Clifford, 1994). Living in precarious and socio-economically marginalized positions, they are denied the experience of home in the homeland but replicate their ancestors' traumatic experience of expulsion and rejection. In the hostland of the diaspora, they are confronted with racial repulsion from white (political) elites and the indigenous majority population. Returning 'home' has squared the sensation of being diasporic in the sense of being displaced more than once and having multiple relationships with two distinct nations, which are neither just homeland nor hostland.

By introducing the notion of 'double diaspora,' Schwartz (2010) tries capturing those migrant minorities whose members are caught between sets of discrepancies between homeland and hostland that contradict each other. Double diasporic people question some of the fixed assumptions underlying the binaries of home and away, of here and there, of native and alien, of them and us. These oppositions are derived from concepts of culture and ethnicity that are neatly tied into history, language, and territory. These dualities, however, also lend themselves for mixing, cross-fertilizing, and hybridization, as seen in the case of those Nikkei who do not master the language and conventions of their ancestors' country of origin, or those

who deny contemporary Japan the qualification to know what true Japanese-ness is like. Hence, contrary to double diasporic people and their parallel affiliations with two or more distinctive territorial and cultural homelands, it appears that the Nikkei are entangled in a 'squared diaspora' in which the very idea of homeland and hostland and their juxtaposition have become questionable, unstable, and fluctuating. Being at home neither here nor there can no longer serve as a reference of identification, when it is deflected towards a host country which was perceived as homeland.

As the Nikkei's return to Japan demonstrated that reterritorialization of identity cannot be fully achieved, identification in the future may be geared toward the deterritorialized space in which Nikkei all over the Americas, particularly throughout the South American continent, position themselves. The return migration of returnees, circular migration processes, and the transnationalization of migration make the blurring of the binaries even more visible and reinforce the demand for new approaches toward a more adequate understanding of diaspora (King & Christou, 2010: 181). Research on the 'squared diaspora' of the Nikkei provides a fruitful field of investigation as it unearths the complexities of material and immaterial exchanges linking backward and forward the ethno-national 'community diaspora' in home-host countries with the transnational 'hybrid diaspora' of the Japanese host-homeland.

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