Migration and Alienation:
Japanese-Brazilian Return Migrants
and the Search for Homeland Abroad

Takeyuki Tsuda
Harper-Schmidt Instructor
Social Sciences Collegiate Division
The University of Chicago
5845 S. Ellis Avenue, Room 233
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Introduction

I was in the eighth grade when I took my "first" trip to Japan. In fact, I still vividly remember seeing the Japanese mainland from the airplane for the first time. I was peering anxiously out of the small plane window as we descended through the thick clouds. It had been a full thirteen hours since we had left Chicago, and I was eagerly awaiting my first glimpse of Japan. My mother sat beside me.

Then I saw it. At first, it was a brief blur as the plane passed over a break in the clouds. As we continued our descent, the contours of the land below suddenly became clearer as the plane emerged out of the clouds and the white haze lifted.

The Japanese countryside looked quite different from the flat, monotonous cornfields of the American midwest. The rice patties below were a luscious green and the landscape quite hilly. Some of the hillsides had been meticulously carved into terraced rice fields, an interesting sight completely absent in the midwest, where land was flat and abundant.

I was overcome with emotion upon seeing my ethnic homeland. I looked at my mother, who was also peering out the window with me.

"This is our country, mother. We have finally come home."

Such a statement may seen a bit strange, coming from a second generation Japanese-American born and raised in the United States. Except for a brief trip when I was three years old (which I had obviously forgotten), this was my first time in Japan. Yet, my mother found nothing strange in my emotional reaction upon seeing Japan.

"You are pure Japanese," she had told me many times, meaning that I was a pure Japanese descendant. However, that statement also implied a sense of cultural purity as well. My mother always felt that it would be shameful if her son, as a Japanese descendant, was not familiar with Japanese culture and could not speak Japanese fluently. As a result, she had sent me to a grueling Japanese Saturday school, where I had to take classes with students from Japan. At home, we spoke exclusively in Japanese. In fact, my mother always scorned Japanese-Americans with names like Harry Hashimoto, who had supposedly forgotten their Japanese ethnic heritage.

A few weeks earlier, my teacher in Japanese Saturday school had found it strange that I referred to my upcoming trip to Japan as "kikoku" (repatriation).

"Why is it repatriation?" he asked me. "You were born and raised in the United States."

"It's because I consider Japan to be my homeland," I replied.

"Then, what will you call it when you leave Japan and return to the U.S.?" he pursued.

"Oh, that's repatriation too," I answered in a matter-of-fact manner.

My teacher did not point out that it does not make sense to be able to repatriate to two different countries during one overseas trip. Or does it?

After the plane landed at Narita International Airport outside Tokyo, we proceeded through the gate area and arrived at the passport control checkpoint. There were two lines, one for "nihonjin" (Japanese) and the other for "gaikokujin" (foreigners). I naturally followed my mother into the "Japanese" line, but she instructed me otherwise.

"You have to wait over there," she said, pointing me toward the other line, where a bunch of Caucasian Americans stood.

Although I found it quite strange to be waiting in a line designated for "foreigners" upon entering my "homeland," it did not bother me much at that point. I knew that the only reason I did not have dual nationality was because my parents had simply failed to register me with the Japanese government before the official deadline during the hectic period right after my birth (I was a caesarian).[1] Nationality was simply a legal formality without much significance, I had told myself. When I approached the counter to present my American passport, I spoke to the immigration official in Japanese, just to show him that I was no "foreigner" like the other Americans that stood in line with me.

Upon gathering our luggage and passing through customs, we boarded the bus that would take us to TCAT (Tokyo City Air Terminal), where our relatives were eagerly waiting for us. When we got off the bus a couple hours later and entered the lobby area, a large group of relatives converged upon us (my mother has four siblings, all with families). I looked bewildered at the surrounding Japanese faces. Of course, I recognized almost none of them, since this was my first encounter with most of my Japanese relatives since I had been an infant.

A middle aged woman approached and greeted me in broken, Japanized English.

"Halo, ai amu yua anto (Hello, I am your Aunt)."

Another man (who turned out to be my eldest uncle) was asking my mother how much Japanese I understood. My relatives had naturally assumed that I had become more American than Japanese. For the first time, I felt profoundly "Other" in Japan.

During my sojourn in Japan, I was apparently identified as a foreigner a number of times despite my self-assumed fluency in Japanese, an experience that was rather perturbing to me at first.

For instance, I remember approaching a guide at Hakone National Park in Shizuoka prefecture to inquire whether he had more detailed maps of the area.

"We don't have more detailed maps," he responded. "But we do have a map in English."

Was it my lingering American accent that gave away my identity as a foreigner? Or was it my demeanor, body comportment, or manner of dress that indicated that I was not a native of Japan?

Eleven years later, when I returned to Japan to conduct dissertation fieldwork, the situation was rather different.[2] Ironically, my increased residence in the United States (mainly several more years of Japanese Saturday school) apparently made me appear more "native" in Japan than before. After living in Japan for several months, I remember attending a party arranged by one of my friends in Tokyo. After speaking with a group of Japanese for awhile, a Japanese woman (whom I had not been introduced to) looked at me and said,

"You seem to know a lot about America. Have you lived in the United States before?"

I was quite surprised and told her that I was born and raised in the United States.

"You couldn't tell I was American?" I asked amused.

"I had no idea," the woman admitted.

I always felt a strange sense of triumph whenever someone mistook me for another Japanese. However, this was not because I had finally proven to the Japanese that Japan was my true homeland. It was simply a sense of accomplishment anyone receives when his linguistic and cultural mastery in a foreign country reaches the point where he can pass as a "native."

For I no longer considered Japan to be my true homeland. America was. My first sojourn in Japan had taught me that. When returning to Japan for dissertation fieldwork, I had not referred to it as kikoku.

Migration, Alienation, and Homeland

Most Japanese-Americans have not heard much about their fellow <u>nikkeijin</u> (Japanese descendants living outside Japan) in Brazil. When I first heard about the Japanese-<u>Brazilians</u> and how they are currently return migrating to Japan as unskilled foreign workers, the topic instantly intrigued me, partly because of the apparent connections to my own personal ethnic background and experiences. I had always assumed that the Japanese-Americans were the largest group of nikkeijin and was quite surprised to hear that the Japanese-Brazilians, with a population over 1.2 million, outnumber us by over 400,000. Because of a severe Brazilian economic crisis and a crippling shortage of unskilled labor in Japan, the Brazilian nikkeijin began return migrating to Japan in the late 1980s as temporary migrant laborers and primarily work in factories of small and medium-sized Japanese companies in the manufacturing sector. Although they are relatively well-educated and mostly of middle class background in Brazil, they still earn five to ten times their Brazilian salaries in Japan as factory workers. An open Japanese immigration policy toward the "ethnic Japanese" and well-established transnational labor recruitment networks between Japan and Brazil have also contributed to the migrant flow (see Tsuda 1999a). Currently estimated at over 230,000, the Japanese-Brazilians have become the second largest population of foreigners in Japan after the Chinese and their numbers continue to increase at a steady pace despite the prolonged Japanese recession.[3] A vast majority of them are of the second and third generations (<u>nisei</u> and <u>sansei</u>) who were born and raised in Brazil, do not speak Japanese very well, and have become culturally Brazilianized to various degrees. As a result, despite their Japanese descent, they are ethnically rejected and treated as foreigners in Japan because of narrow definitions of what constitutes being Japanese and have become the country's newest ethnic minority.

What struck me initially is that this massive population movement was referred to as a "return migration" in the literature and in the popular press. Of course, this term made perfect sense to me. Although most of the nikkeijin migrants were born in Brazil, they were now "returning" to their ethnic homeland. It was a type of kikoku. But did it feel like a homeland once they returned?

This paper explores the relationship between return migration and the conceptualization of homeland. The notion of homeland is usually associated with diasporas, which refer to ethnic groups

like the nikkeijin that have been territorially dispersed and scattered across different nations and are united by a sense of attachment and longing to the country of origin (the homeland) (Appadurai 1996: 172, Bolt 1996:467, McKeown 1999:308-309, Safran 1991). Homeland in this sense can be simply defined as a place of origin to which that an individual feels personally and emotionally attached. Or course, "origin" can have various distinct meanings, resulting in different types of homeland. One's place of birth can simply be referred to as the "natal homeland." In addition, we can also speak of an "ethnic homeland," where one's ethnic group originated. For second and third generation descendants of diasporic peoples like the Brazilian nikkeijin, the natal and ethnic homeland are not the same place, and as a result, they may feel that they have multiple homelands. The Japanese-Brazilian nisei and sansei frequently consider their country of birth and residence as "home" (the natal homeland of Brazil) while also speaking of their affiliation with a distant ancestral land (the ethnic homeland of Japan) (cf. Pattie 1994:186). In this manner, although homeland has connotations of dwelling and inhabiting, it can refer to a different country which has never even been visited but simply imagined from a distance.

This is the sense in which the "return migration" of second and third generation diasporic descendants to the ancestral country of ethnic origin can be a search for a homeland abroad. However, since the ethnic homeland has only been imagined from afar, return migration can challenge and disrupt their previous feelings of nostalgic affiliation toward it. In fact, when the Japanese-Brazilians return migrate, they are socially alienated from their ethnic homeland because they are marginalized as foreigners in Japan. In response to this ethnic rejection, they withdraw into their own ethnic communities, further exacerbating their social isolation and alienation from Japanese society through a process of self-segregation. The economic marginalization of migrants in the global capitalist system as a peripheral labor force also contributes to their social alienation in Japan.

It is important to remember that alienation, a subjective feeling of estrangement or detachment from an object, is dependent on an initial identification. In other words, without prior identification and attachment to a specific society as a source of self-definition, social alienation would not be a truly meaningful possibility. In other words, the social marginalization and ethnic isolation that the Japanese-Brazilians experience in Japan produce strong feelings of alienation from Japanese society because they

had previously identified quite strongly with Japan through nostalgic and positive imaginings of their ethnic homeland. Because of their estrangement from Japanese society, Japan ceases to be an object of emotional identification and desire for them and is no longer experienced as a real homeland even if it remains their country of ethnic origin in an objective sense. Homeland is therefore not merely constituted by objective facts of ancestry and origin, but is ultimately a subjective experience that depends on feelings of personal attachment and emotional affiliation. However, the loss of the ethnic homeland among the Brazilian nikkeijin does not make them "homeland-less," but instead, leads to a type of rediscovery of the natal homeland of Brazil. The socially alienating and negative ethnic experiences that they have in Japan produce a renewed appreciation of Brazil as their country of birth where they truly belong. Therefore, this is the second sense in which the return migration of the Japanese-Brazilians to Japan is a search for a homeland abroad. By producing a greater sense of personal attachment to Brazil, it results in a (re-) discovery and (re-) affirmation of their country of birth as the true homeland. In fact, I argue that the conceptualization of a natal homeland would not be possible without migration and travel because only absence from one's country of birth can subjectively reproduce it as a place of nostalgic longing and identification.

Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland:

Social Isolation and Marginalization in Japan

<u>Cultural Differences and Ethnic Marginalization</u>

In order to understand the experiences of social alienation among the Japanese-Brazilians in Japan, we must analyze the nature and causes of their social isolation and separation from Japanese society.[4] When the Japanese-Brazilians return migrate to their ancestral homeland, they are ethnically rejected as foreigners by the Japanese because of a restrictive Japanese ethno-national identity based on exclusionary notions of racial descent and culture. As a result, despite their Japanese descent, they are ethnically marginalized and socially excluded in Japan for their cultural differences (see also Mori 1992:163).[5] Most Japanese I interviewed did not recognize any significant "Japanese" cultural characteristics among the Brazilian nikkeijin and viewed them as quite culturally foreign not only for

their lack of proficiency in Japanese, but also for their Brazilian attitudes and behavior. The remarks of one local Japanese resident were quite representative of this general Japanese reaction:

> There's a lot of iwakan [sense of incongruity] towards those who have a Japanese face
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> but are culturally Brazilian. If they have a Japanese face, we interpret this to mean they
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> are Japanese, so we initially approach the nikkeijin this way. But then when we find
>
> they are culturally different, we say they are foreigners.

In fact, the Japanese-Brazilians are constantly called "gaijin" (foreigners) by the Japanese, especially when their names are not known, when they are being referred to collectively or impersonally, and when they are being introduced to others. Of course, they are called by their personal names in most familiar contexts, but those instances when the gaijin label is used makes them acutely aware of their status as ethnic outsiders in Japan.

Virtually all of my Japanese-Brazilian informants were acutely aware of the social isolation and separation they experience in Japan because of their status as culturally alien foreigners. For instance, Martina, one of my more talkative informants, had this to say:

> I have no social relationships or friendships with the Japanese, only with other
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> Brazilians, and remain very isolated from them at work and where ever I go. It's
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> because we're foreigners in Japan. If a group of Japanese are sitting and talking, they
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> don't let you into the conversation—they don't even give you a chance. Because
>
> you're a foreigner, they just let you sit there and simply forget about you. Occasionally,
>
> someone might ask you a brief question, but that's about it.

When my Japanese informants were asked about their ethnic reluctance to interact with the Brazilian nikkeijin, they commonly stressed the difficulty they have relating to foreigners who are culturally different . A young Japanese factory worker elaborated as follows:

> Because we live in an ethnically homogeneous society, the Japanese are simply bad at
>
> dealing with foreigners they don't know well and can't communicate effectively with.
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> We don't cope well with ethnic diversity and are not used to people who are different,
>
> like the nikkeijin. We have no way to react and adapt to foreigners in our midst, so we

just prefer to stay away. Some will stop to help foreigners if they need assistance, but

most just look at them and ignore them.

Since a majority of the Japanese-Brazilian return migrants cannot speak Japanese effectively, language is obviously the most significant cultural barrier that discouraged the Japanese from interacting with them. At the factory where I conducted participant observation (which will be called Toyama), many Japanese workers did not even attempt to speak with their nikkeijin co-workers because they were afraid that they would be unable to communicate. Others had attempted to start conversations with the Brazilian nikkeijin, but were quickly discouraged when faced with difficulties. One Japanese worker shared his experiences with me:

When there's a Japanese-Brazilian working next to me, I sometimes exchange a few

words with him. They seem to comprehend, but they can't say a whole lot in Japanese

or just tell me they didn't really understand. It's no use because we can't really

communicate very well. So I just figure there's really no need to talk to them since we

can get by just as well without saying anything to them.

As a result, most of the Japanese at Toyama had learned to react to the Japanese-Brazilians with detached indifference.

Although most of the Brazilian nikkeijin are not phenotypically distinct from the Japanese, because they wore different uniforms from the Japanese workers at Toyama as temporary workers contracted from outside labor broker firms, they could be clearly ethnically identified. As a result, they were immediately subjected to social exclusion on the basis of this visible ethnic marker. Although they cannot be as readily distinguished outside the factory, some of my nikkeijin informants emphasized the immediate social marginalization they would experience as soon as the Japanese discovered they were culturally different foreigners who cannot speak the language well. According to an older nisei man:

Once the Japanese find out you aren't fluent in Japanese, they realize to their surprise

that you aren't Japanese and therefore distance themselves. They completely sideline

you and you can't become part of their group. You are treated like an object in Japan.

My [Japanese] neighbors have therefore decided not to say a single word to me and

remain completely separate.

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This social separation of the nikkeijin as ethnic outsiders on the basis of cultural difference is a reflection of Japanese group dynamics, where any means of social differentiation seems to produce mutually exclusive social groups constituted according to insider/outsider distinctions.[6] This was true even among the Japanese workers themselves, who generally remained within their own separate social groups structured by differences of gender, factory section, company affiliation, or length of employment. Most notable was the social separation and relative lack of interaction between men and women, who always stood apart when they congregated for the morning <u>cholei</u> (assembly) and sat at different tables during break and lunch. Although men and women were dispersed on the assembly line, they would converse mainly along gender lines and generally did not initiate extended cross-gender interactions, except for supervisors delegating work tasks to the female workers and those with romantic or flirtatious interests (primarily men).[7]

The Japanese workers were also clearly divided among work sections at Toyama. I constantly noticed that those workers who were temporarily transferred to a different section (called <u>oen</u>) did not speak to those around them and always returned to their own sections during break.

"When you do oen in another section, it's extremely hard to fit into a new group," one Japanese worker admitted to me.

Likewise, newly hired Japanese employees would initially be socially isolated from the others and would only be gradually incorporated into the work group. In addition, temporary Japanese workers contracted from outside broker firms confronted the same social isolation at Toyama as the nikkeijin.

"When a Japanese worker from an outside subcontracting firm enters our section wearing a different uniform, we look at them like they are different people," a Toyama employee remarked. "We don't make social contact with these people."

In other words, the social separation between the Japanese and the Japanese-Brazilians is not simply a process that occurs only between culturally different ethnic groups but is a specific manifestation of a broader Japanese pattern of social group segregation. The social exclusion of the Brazilian nikkeijin by the Japanese is a "normal" reaction of in-group members to "outsiders," which is simply exacerbated in this case because the group differences are much greater. This pattern of social segregation is undoubtedly reinforced by internal group sanctions. Indeed, some Japanese

workers at Toyama told me that if they associated too frequently with the nikkeijin, they risked being ostracized and social alienated from their own Japanese group. Consider the remarks of one of my closest Japanese informants:

> Japan really has an island country mentality. If you speak with foreigners too much, the others start saying bad things about you. If you become too friendly with the foreigners, you might be seen as a bit strange and even become a <u>nakama hazure</u> [a social outcast]. There was this one guy in my section who was being friendly one day to this new nikkeijin girl. The other guys questioned his motives and teased him during break, saying things like 'if you pay her enough, maybe she'll have sex with you.'

In this manner, the influence of Japanese groups dynamics and pressures cannot be ignored when analyzing the social isolation and separation of the Brazilian nikkeijin in Japanese society.

Of course, there is more involved here than simply exclusionary group dynamics based on "us" versus "them" distinctions. It was quite evident that the ethnic avoidance behavior of the Japanese is sometimes motivated by latent ethnic prejudice toward the nikkeijin which is based on both negative preconceptions of their migration legacy and social status and unfavorable opinions of their "Brazilian" cultural behavior (see Tsuda 1998b). I was told a number of times at Toyama about Japanese workers who do not interact with nikkeijin foreigners simply because of ethnic dislike. Likewise, some nikkeijin feel that ethnic prejudice is the main reason they have little or no contact with their Japanese relatives.[8] Such individuals claim that their Japanese relatives look down on them or are ashamed to meet them because they are seen as having returned to Japan as impoverished migrants despite the fact that their parents or grandparents "abandoned" Japan decades ago with intentions to succeed economically in Brazil. Reportedly, certain Japanese do not even want to admit that they have nikkeijin relatives who emigrated to Brazil to escape economic hardship in Japan (cf. Ishi 1992:70, 1994:39).

The Japanese tendency to avoid the nikkeijin because of ethnic prejudice sometimes leads to residential segregation as well. Although most Japanese-Brazilians are provided housing by their employers, those who attempt to find housing on their own encounter a certain amount of ethnic discrimination. Even in Oizumi-town (Gunma prefecture), which has the highest concentration of Japanese-Brazilians in Japan, some landlords refuse to rent to the nikkeijin, usually citing differences in

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"customs" and communication problems. Local Japanese residents who do not wish to live next to the nikkeijin or consider their "Latino" cultural ways to be a disturbance sometimes move out of their apartment. As a result, certain apartment buildings are gradually taken over by the nikkeijin in residential districts where they are highly concentrated.

There was also some indication among my Japanese informants that prejudice toward the cultural differences of the nikkeijin and the lack of inter-ethnic understanding made them wary and cautious, if not a bit afraid to interact with the Japanese-Brazilians. For instance, some Japanese residents in Oizumi expressed considerable unease and discomfort, if not a certain amount of fear toward groups of Japanese-Brazilians in public. When the nikkeijin are in the factory wearing a uniform and working diligently, there is no problem, but when groups of them cluster in the streets, especially at night, they are seen suspiciously, distrusted, and actively avoided by some. One male Toyama worker remarked:

> When I see nikkeijin standing around in groups, it's no different from a group of
> Iranians. I don't like it--it's very suspicious (ayashii) and bukimi (unnerving, eerie,
> ominous), although it may be normal behavior for them. They tend to cluster in the
> dark and speak Portuguese loudly. I don't feel safe, so I don't go near them.

A similar reaction was shared by Japanese residents in Machida city toward a group of Japanese-Peruvians who played soccer matches at a local university playing field. Because they danced, drank, made noise, and played South American music on the radio after the matches until 10 PM, complaints were received from local residents who saw the nikkeijin as "too frightening to pass by." As a result, the university stopped renting the grounds to the nikkeijin (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, October 14, 1992). Ethnic segregation is not merely based on a simple reluctance to overcome barriers of cultural difference, but is usually motivated at a deeper level by ethnic prejudice as well, where these differences are regarded in a negative manner.

Self-Segregation and Immigrant Communities

In this manner, the social disruptions and dislocations caused by migration leave the Japanese-Brazilians in a socially marginalized state in Japan because of a strong tendency among Japanese to keep their social distance from the ethnically unfamiliar, which is exacerbated by closed Japanese group

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dynamics and ethnic prejudice. However, the social segregation of immigrant minorities is not only externally constituted by the dominant majority but is also self-initiated. Not only are the Brazilian nikkeijin socially excluded by majority Japanese society, they respond to their ethnic rejection by actively withdrawing into their own groups and isolating themselves in an act of ethnic self-segregation, thus contributing to their own social marginalization in Japan.

Clearly, a process which Gregory Bateson identified as "symmetrical schismogenesis" seems to be operating here where the divergence between two groups progressively increases as they respond to each other in identical, mutually alienating ways (see 1958: Chapter 13). In other words, as the Japanese ethnically distance themselves from the Japanese-Brazilians, the Japanese-Brazilians respond in kind to the Japanese, thus resulting in a cumulative increase in social separation. This type of reaction was quite evident among a number of my nikkeijin informants and is illustrated by the experiences of Marcos, a nisei who spoke good Japanese :

When the Japanese realize we are not Japanese but nikkeijin foreigners, they suddenly distance themselves from us. My Japanese neighbors in my apartment don't talk to us and stay apart. We tried in the past to talk to them and make friends, but they weren't willing to oblige. So we said, let it be this way. If they don't want to associate with us, why should we bother to be friendly to them? We just decided not to talk to them either and just live our lives amongst ourselves as Brazilians.

Likewise, another informant told me that he is the type of person who responds to social rejection with a corresponding attitude.

"If the Japanese don't give me their social trust," he remarked, " I don't given them mine and simply stay apart from them."

In this manner, most of the nikkeijin do not actively seek out relationships with the Japanese, mainly because the Japanese do not seek out relationships with them, thus exacerbating the social distance between the two ethnic groups. However, although both groups contributed to this mutual ethnic schismogenesis, it was quite evident that the Brazilian nikkeijin were more socially reluctant than the Japanese. In fact, despite predominant stereotypes of Japanese ethnic insularity and Brazilian sociability, what struck me repeatedly in the factory was that the Japanese generally were more willing

to interact with the nikkeijin than vice versa. Although even brief interactions between the two groups were quite rare, in almost all cases, the exchange was initiated by the Japanese and not by the Japanese-Brazilians. In fact, I witnessed almost no examples at Toyama where a nikkeijin voluntarily initiated an interaction with the Japanese. Even those Brazilian nikkeijin who were spoken to by the Japanese did not sustain the interaction but simply smiled, perhaps spoke a few words, and eventually broke off the conversation, sometimes appearing somewhat uncomfortable.

Indeed, the extreme unwillingness of the Japanese-Brazilians to talk and interact was even noted by a number of Japanese. Matsuyama-san, a jovial Oizumi store owner who liked to converse with his nikkeijin customers by offering them tea (which is how he became one of my best Japanese informants), was most vocal about this issue:

> I'm bored of my Japanese customers and like talking to the Brazilian nikkeijin. But it's always disappointing because I try to talk to them, but they make no effort to have a conversation or to make contact with us. They just smile or mutter a few words and have no intention of getting acquainted. I don't know why they don't try to speak with us—even if it were in broken Japanese, it would be fine.

A couple of Toyama workers also noted how the nikkeijin appeared to be quite "shy" in this regard.

As is evident in the above case, the ethnic novelty of the nikkeijin seems to motivate some Japanese to speak with them out of pure curiosity, an incentive absent among the Japanese-Brazilians. However, the main reason for the greater social reluctance among the Japanese-Brazilians was language. Because the Brazilian nikkeijin are of Japanese descent and none of the Japanese could be expected to know any Portuguese, Japanese became the exclusive language of interethnic communication by default. The fact that the Japanese could speak in their own native tongue whereas the Japanese-Brazilians were expected to communicate in an unfamiliar language obviously made it much easier for the former to speak to the latter. However, it seems that pure linguistic difficulty cannot fully explain the ethnic hesitation of the nikkeijin. In fact, I frequently observed that even those nikkeijin who spoke Japanese quite well rarely bothered to say anything to the Japanese. A number of times, I simply assumed that such individuals did not speak much Japanese and was quite surprised when I later discovered that they were actually proficient Japanese speakers.

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This social reluctance on the part of the nikkeijin seems to be based on their acute consciousness of Japanese ethnic expectations and a resulting sense of cultural inadequacy. Although the Japanese-Brazilians have been marginalized as foreigners in Japan, this does not mean that they are freed from Japanese ethnic pressures. Unlike foreigners who are complete cultural and racial outsiders, the nikkeijin foreigner is expected to comply with Japanese cultural standards to some extent because of essentialized ethnic assumptions in which those of Japanese descent are expected to possess a certain amount of Japanese cultural facility as well (see Tsuda 1998b). This is undoubtedly a product of a strong Japanese ethnic identity defined by common blood ties (race) in which a cherished Japanese culture is expected to be "inherited" among those of Japanese descent regardless of national boundaries because it is transmitted through family socialization. Therefore, there was a strong expectation among most Japanese that the nikkeijin have retained a considerable amount of Japanese culture, even if they were born in a foreign country, because they were raised by Japanese parents (cf. Ono and Wakisaka 1973).

Many Japanese-Brazilians in Japan are acutely aware and quite sensitive to such Japanese ethnic pressures. In addition, a good number had also internalized these essentialist ethnic attitudes from their Japanese parents in Brazil, even mentioning that their parents had strongly felt it is "shameful" for Japanese descendants to grow up without proper mastery of the Japanese language. As a result, such individuals felt considerable embarrassment and shame (vergonha) in Japan because they could not speak Japanese properly and were acutely aware of being seen as culturally "inadequate Japanese" (see also Ishi 1994:26). For instance, this was quite apparent in the experiences of one of my young male nisei informants:

> I am ashamed of speaking Japanese wrongly because I have a Japanese face. Even if
> they know you are a nikkei, the Japanese expect you to know the language, so they ask
> you questions. I can tell they become disappointed when they realize you can't speak as
> well as they thought. This happens in the factory all the time. Japanese workers
> sometimes come up to me and just talk normally, as if they just assume I'm naturally
> fluent in the language. It's always embarrassing when I can't quite understand what they
> tell me.

In fact, such feelings were expressed even by those who spoke Japanese quite well, such as the following nisei woman who had been in Japan for quite some time:

> At home [in Brazil], I spoke Japanese with my parents. But I know it's not correct Japanese, so in Japan, I freeze up and get nervous when I have to speak Japanese. I feel ashamed and embarrassed when I speak wrongly and surprise and disappoint the Japanese. So I used to do everything possible to avoid talking to any Japanese at all and having any type of social contact with them.

The ethnic pressure to speak like a native is even stronger outside the factory in local stores and neighborhoods where the Brazilian nikkeijin are not readily identifiable and are therefore assumed to be Japanese because of their phenotype. Because of essentialized Japanese ethnic assumptions which correlate race with culture (cf. Yoshino 1992), the nikkeijin, who are "racially" Japanese but culturally Brazilian are seen as ethnic anomalies and peculiarities in Japan. As a result, a nikkeijin speaking inadequate Japanese can lead to reactions of surprise, disorientation, and estrangement on the part of Japanese. This further discourages many Japanese-Brazilians from interacting with the Japanese because of fear that it will lead to an awkward social situation.

In addition to such self-imposed ethnic pressures, the temporary sojourner mentality of the Japanese-Brazilians also causes them to socially isolate themselves in Japan. Although many Japanese-Brazilians are beginning to settle long-term or permanently in Japan (see Tsuda 1999b), many continue to view themselves strictly as sojourners who intend to return to Brazil in a couple of years after accumulating sufficient savings. This leaves them little incentive to make special efforts to integrate themselves into Japanese society and establish long-term, meaningful relationships with the Japanese. However, despite their self-perceived temporary status, the Brazilian nikkeijin have already created very extensive and self-contained ethnic communities in various parts of Japan (such as in Oizumi, as well as in Hamamatsu and Toyohashi cities in Aichi prefecture), which are supported by a vast array of Brazilian restaurants, food stores, discos, barbers, entertainment centers, clothing stores, and nikkeijin churches. Large labor brokers are especially active in such communities, providing extensive employment, housing, transportation, and other social services mainly in Portuguese. Nikkeijin assistance centers offer everything from information and translation to counseling services, and local

government offices have bilingual nikkeijin liaisons who take care of alien registration and other administrative needs. Therefore, although the nikkeijin remain only a small part of the local population and are residentially scattered among the Japanese, such cohesive immigrant communities enable them to conduct their lives exclusively within their own extensive social and institutional networks, causing them to ethnically segregate themselves in Japanese society. Because virtually all of their consumer, administrative, economic, informational, and sociopsychological needs can be met within these self-contained, ethnic communities, the need to interact with the Japanese is sometimes almost eliminated.

In this manner, it is quite clear that social segregation and isolation is not simply imposed on the subordinate ethnic group by the dominant majority through its exclusionary practices. Minority individuals themselves partake in their own social marginalization through a process of ethnic self-segregation. To passively portray minority groups as mere victims of majority discrimination is to deprive them of agency to constitute their own social and ethnic status within dominant society (whether in a positive or negative way). Undoubtedly, the Japanese are not the only ones who do the excluding and are not solely responsible for the ethnic marginalization of the nikkeijin, who form their own ethnically exclusive social groups. Ethnic segregation is therefore constituted by the exclusionary responses of both the majority and minority groups through a process of mutual ethnic distancing or symmetrical schismogenesis.

The Global Economy, Flexible Capitalism,
and the Marginalization of Migrant Labor

However, mutually constituted ethnic barriers are not the only cause of the social marginalization of culturally different immigrants. In order to understand the alienated social relationship between immigrant workers and natives at the local level, it is also necessary to examine broader national and global capitalist forces within which these relationships are embedded (cf. Lamphere 1992).

Because of the increasing movement of capital and commodities across national borders under one global marketplace, advanced industrialized economies like Japan have come to increasingly rely on migrant workers as an informal and flexible source of labor in order to cut production costs under intense global competition from developing countries with cheaper labor forces.   Although many

Japanese companies have moved production to Third World countries, those that remain in Japan have been forced to restructure. However, because most are unwilling to streamline production by downsizing and dismissing their regular workers (Dore 1986; 93), they have become dependent on an expanding informal labor force of temporary and disposable workers, who serve as a flexible economic "cushion" that enables them to adjust to business cycles and temporary declines in production in a cost effective manner. Because the supply of casual domestic workers has become insufficient,[9] migrant workers such as the Japanese-Brazilians have been channeled into this marginal sector of the labor market. In other words, advanced industrialized countries have exploited global migration as a source of casual labor in order to maintain cost-effective, flexible schemes of capitalist production and accumulation that enable them to remain competitive in an increasingly global economy.

This economic marginalization of migrants under global capitalism also socially marginalizes them in the companies where they work. Since most Brazilian nikkeijin are <u>hi-seishain</u> (informal, temporary workers) who are "borrowed" as outside contract workers from labor broker firms, they do not belong to the companies where they work as formal employees (<u>seishain</u>) and are therefore socially segregated and separated from the regular Japanese workers. In addition, because they are constantly transferred by their labor broker to different companies depending on changing production needs, most of the Japanese-Brazilians at Toyama did not stay in the factory for more than a few to several months. Therefore, there was little incentive for the Japanese to establish personal relationships with them.

"You might try to befriend a nikkeijin worker," a Toyama employee explained, "but them they suddenly disappear the next day without warning. So I just don't bother with them anymore."

This undoubtedly also accounts for the detached indifference with which most Japanese workers at Toyama reacted to the constant circulation of nikkeijin workers in and out of the factory. On their side, the Japanese-Brazilians found little use in establishing meaningful and long-term relationships with Japanese workers because of their status as transient outsiders. In this manner, the economic confinement of migrant workers to the peripheral labor market becomes a significant social barrier that makes both migrants and their hosts unwilling to interact with each other, demonstrating how larger capitalist forces within which migrants are situated structure their social alienation. The Brazilian nikkeijin are thus socially marginalized as both ethnic and economic outsiders.

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Identification and the Imagined Ethnic Homeland

As we have seen, the social exclusion and marginalization of the Japanese-Brazilians in Japanese society involves a complex set of factors. In addition to their status as a culturally different ethnic minority, their social isolation is also internally motivated by self-imposed ethnic pressures and self-segregated immigrant communities. This is exacerbated by an employment system structured by a global economic need for flexible, temporary migrant labor forces, which leaves the nikkeijin socially separated on the factory floor.

However, social alienation is not merely an objective state of isolated separation from society, but a subjective individual experience of estrangement from society. Even if individuals are detached and socially isolated from society in an objective sense, this does not necessarily lead to feelings of alienation from society. From a critical Durkheimian perspective, George De Vos (1973:252, Chapter 17) makes a somewhat similar observation by arguing that anomic social conditions do not always produce a corresponding experience of personal alienation.[10]

Regardless of their level of social marginalization and isolation, individuals will not feel alienated from a society with which they have not previously identified. Although alienation and identification are opposites, the former is dependent on the latter for realization. In other words, alienation from an object becomes subjectively possible for the individual only because of prior identification since one cannot feel truly alienated from something that was never the source of personal attachment in the first place.[11] This is the sense in which alienation is an experience of personal estrangement from what was initially familiar and close. In this manner, objective social conditions of separation and subjective experiences of alienation are mediated by relative states of personal identification and must be conceptually differentiated.

This fundamental point was not sufficiently considered by the classical theorists of alienation themselves. For instance, Durkheim (1951) tends to assume that anomic social conditions would automatically produce subjective experiences of social alienation among individuals (and thus increase the suicide rate) without considering levels of prior individual identification with society as a critical independent variable. In an analogous manner, Marx seems to equate objective material conditions

which separate workers from their labor and the products of labor with the psychological experience of alienation. However, workers who are socialized in a capitalist system of wage-labor, where labor and its products are seen as valuable only as exchangeable commodities, may never have identified with these as personally inalienable in the first place and therefore may not feel alienated from them, even if they are owned externally by the capitalist and thus confront workers as alien, hostile, and dominating forces in the form of accumulated capital. The relative absence of subjective feelings of alienation among workers despite objective conditions of alienation under capitalism is therefore caused by an absence of prior identification and is not merely a result of "false consciousness," as some Marxists may claim.

Japanese-Brazilian return migrants subjectively experience their social isolation and separation from Japanese society as profoundly alienating because of the strong personal affiliation with their ethnic homeland of Japan that they had developed in Brazil before migration. This identification was not based solely on a consciousness of their Japanese descent or the influence of their parents, but was also a response to the positive images of their ethnic homeland that have proliferated in Brazil.

As Brazil's largest and oldest Asian minority, the Japanese-Brazilians are socioculturally well-integrated in mainstream Brazilian society. However, they continue to maintain and assert a strong identity as a distinctive "Japanese" ethnic group because of their status as "positive minorities" who are respected for their distinctive cultural qualities and social position. Much of this ethnic prestige and pride that the Brazilian nikkeijin enjoy as a Japanese minority comes from their affiliation and identification with the highly regarded First World country of Japan. As Cohen notes (1997:184-185), a common feature of diasporic peoples is the idealization of the ancestral homeland as a positive and powerful source of collective identification.

For first generation diasporic migrants, memories of the homeland do not consist of general images of an entire people or nation but are usually based on concrete and particular local places, such as the family home, a certain neighborhood, a specific village or home town, as well as specific sights, smells, and landscapes (cf. Shammas 1996). This was the case among many of my issei (first generation) nikkeijin informants in Brazil. In contrast, since the second and third generation Japanese-Brazilians lacked concrete and first-hand sensory experiences in Japan before return migrating, they

tended to imagine their ethnic homeland in much more abstract terms, evoking general images of the Japanese people, nation, and culture.

Undoubtedly, the idealized perceptions that the Japanese-Brazilians had of their ethnic homeland were partly constructed from images of Japan passed down from their parents and grandparents. They were also based on the ethnic activities featured in their local communities. However, these sources seemed to have a rather limited impact on their imaginings of the ethnic homeland because they did not come from current Japanese society. As a result, most of the positive perceptions that the Japanese-Brazilians had of Japan were derived from global mass media networks, which have become the primary means of imagining homelands from afar (Appadurai 1996:38, 49, Gupta and Ferguson 1992:11). Reports and stories about Japan in Brazilian newspapers, magazines, television programs, and commercials have saturated Brazilian society with favorable images and impressions. In addition to current news, there are plenty of stories featuring Japan's economic accomplishments and prosperity as well as new Japanese products and technological innovations. The effectiveness of this global flow of images about Japanese economic and technological prowess is further enhanced by the limited but increasing availability of high quality Japanese products in Brazil (video/electronic equipment as well as automobiles), which are admired for their reliability and technological superiority. These positive media images of Japan's industrial development, prosperity, and advanced technology are accompanied by favorable portrayals of Japanese culture based on hard work, intelligence, endurance, and dedication. Of course, this global traffic of information that the Brazilian nikkeijin received of their ethnic homeland was not simply limited to Japan's modernity as a First World nation—there are also plenty of nostalgic images of Japanese tradition, epitomized by ancient Japanese shrines, samurai, and kabuki. Such traditional Japanese images are received from Japanese films and videos, books and vacation guides, and even Brazilian television.

This global dissemination of positive impressions about Japanese modernity, culture, and tradition gave tangible form as well as contemporary relevance to Japanese-Brazilian perceptions of Japan, enabling them to imagine their ethnic homeland in a very idealized manner as a place of nostalgic longing and desire. This strengthened their feelings of personal attachment to Japan and made their identification with their ethnic homeland more meaningful and substantive. In fact, because their

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positive imaginings of First World Japan were in vivid contrast with much less favorable perceptions of Third World Brazil (which the Japanese-Brazilians portray quite negatively), their strong sense of affinity with their ethnic homeland even produced restrictive "Japanese" identities which excluded majority Brazilians.[12] In this manner, the development of global communications and mass media has enhanced the possibilities of the collective imagination (cf. Appadurai 1996:8, 21-22, 53-54), allowing diasporic peoples scattered across various nations to maintain a strong sense of collective identification and attachment with their countries of ethnic origin.

Identification and Alienation:
Homeland Lost and Found

<u>The Loss of the Ethnic Homeland Abroad</u>

This strong prior identification with Japan as the ethnic homeland that the Japanese-Brazilians had developed in Brazil is the fundamental cause of their feelings of alienation from Japanese society when they return migrate. Because of their personal sense of attachment to Japanese society, they expect to be socially accepted in their ethnic homeland. Although few expect to be embraced just like another Japanese, many anticipate a certain amount of receptivity from the Japanese consistent with a type of ethnic "homecoming" of Japanese descendants. At the very minimum, they wish to be treated warmly as equals in the manner in which Brazilians treat foreigners. As a result, when such expectations are sorely disappointed by their ethnic segregation and isolated separation in Japan, the result is a profound sense of social alienation, which was manifested in reactions of discontent, displeasure, and even dismay bordering on outrage.

Since I conducted fieldwork in Japan several years after the return migration of the Japanese-Brazilians had begun, some of my informants had already heard (from previous migrants who had returned to Brazil) about the social isolation that the nikkeijin experience in Japan before they actually migrated and were not as surprised by the treatment they received from the Japanese. However, a good number of my informants claimed that they did not expect such strong social separation between themselves and the Japanese and felt quite deceived. Those with even stronger prior expectations of social acceptance and inclusion in Japan referred to their social marginalization as foreigners not only

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as a surprise, but as a "shock," indicating a more powerful experience of social alienation. My roommate, Rodney, was certainly one of them:

> In Brazil, we were always proud of our Japanese ancestry and our ties to Japan and thought of the Japanese people in positive ways. Although I don't speak Japanese that well, I thought the Japanese would accept us because we are Japanese descendants. Coming to Japan and being treated as a foreigner despite my Japanese face was a big shock for me, a shock I'll never forget. I think it's unfair that we are not socially accepted here simply because we've become culturally different.

I was also struck by the number of times the Brazilian nikkeijin referred to their social separation in Japan as "discrimination" or even used the more ethnically charged term of "racism." For example, consider the comments of an older nisei man:

> The Japanese always keep us separated from them because of the prejudices that they have. I was offended when I first saw the separation at Toyama. There are some Japanese who simply don't like us and don't trust us because we are Brazilian. So they don't try to talk with us or make friends--they don't even speak one word to us. If you don't understand Japanese culture and act just like the Japanese, they discriminate against you and you can't enter their group. The Japanese are racists, so even the [Japanese] Brazilians experience discrimination here. In Brazil, this type of discrimination exists only toward blacks.

In this manner, because of their strong previous affinity and identification with Japan, a majority of my informants were quite bothered and disturbed by their ethnic exclusion in Japan, indicating an acute awareness of a state of isolated social separation typical of the alienated individual. As Marilyn Ivy notes, the recovery of a precious object of nostalgic longing can be an unwelcome experience (1995:10). In fact, the Japanese-Brazilians experience much more social alienation than non-Japanese descent migrant groups in Japan, who are ethnically unrelated to the Japanese and have no personal affinity to the country. For instance, the non-nikkeijin Peruvians who also worked in my section in Toyama did not seem to be bothered by their social isolation and ethnic exclusion on the factory floor when compared to the Brazilian nikkeijin.

"I don't think the Japanese are cold and impersonal," one of them remarked when I broached the subject. "So maybe they aren't the friendliest people in the world, but that's simply how they are. It's like comparing apples and oranges. There is no use complaining about it."

In fact, this individual did not completely ethnically isolate himself like the Japanese-Brazilians at Toyama but frequently interacted with certain Japanese workers, sometimes in a joking manner, although real communication was impossible. Undoubtedly, because the Peruvians never identified personally with Japan nor migrated to Japan with any expectations of social acceptance, they do not feel socially alienated even though they experience the same (if not more) social marginalization from Japanese society than the Japanese-Brazilians. Ironically, the immigrant group that is most ethnically related to the host society can often experience the most social alienation.

For second and third generation ethnic return migrants like the Brazilian nikkeijin, such experiences of social alienation in the host society lead to a loss of ethnic homeland because alienation, by its very nature, precludes any feelings of identification. As mentioned earlier, homeland is not simply a country of origin in an objective sense—it must be imbued with positive emotional affect as a place of desire and longing to which the individual feels a strong sense of personal attachment and affiliation. Because return migration has caused the Japanese-Brazilians to feel socially alienated, Japan has become a place of detachment and estrangement instead of attachment and identification and can no longer be experienced as a true homeland. Even though Japan technically remains their country of ethnic and ancestral origin in an objective sense, it is no longer associated with the feelings of affiliation and fondness that make homelands subjectively meaningful.

The "Rediscovery" of the Natal Homeland Abroad

In this manner, instead of discovering their ethnic homeland in Japan, the Japanese-Brazilians find marginalization and social alienation instead. This loss of ethnic homeland undoubtedly produces a disorienting state of unrootedness. In fact, one of my informants, Roberta, even remarked, "nós somos um povo sem pátria" (we are a people without a homeland). Such statements reveal a consciousness of the double marginality and social liminality that the Japanese-Brazilians experience as people who have become ethnic minorities in both of the societies in which they have resided. Although they were

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socially differentiated in their natal homeland of Brazil as an ethnic minority because of their perceived "Japanese" racial and cultural differences, when they return migrate to their ethnic homeland of Japan, they are also treated as ethnic minorities because they are so culturally "Brazilian."

However, for most Brazilian nikkeijin, this initially disorienting state of unrootedness caused by migratory displacement is temporary. While their search for the ethnic homeland in Japan is decisively unsuccessful, they eventually reaffirm and "rediscover" their natal homeland of Brazil during their sojourn abroad. Although the Brazilian nikkeijin remain an ethnically distinct minority in Brazil, minority status does not always entail social marginalization. In contrast to the complete social exclusion and segregation they face in Japan as outside foreigners, they have become fully incorporated in mainstream Brazilian society as a well-respected and socially accomplished minority group which has become culturally assimilated to a considerable extent. Most of the Japanese-Brazilians live in the most developed urban areas of Brazil, are well-educated and solidly middle class, and enjoy complete social acceptance among Brazilians in general, both in terms of personal social relationship and institutional participation. Virtually all of the younger generation Japanese-Brazilians I interviewed in Brazil claimed never to have experienced <u>any</u> type of discrimination in Brazilian society. Although a strong tendency to ethnically cluster remains among some of them, this social segregation is not externally imposed upon them by ethnic exclusion from mainstream Brazilian society but is voluntarily maintained by the Japanese-Brazilians because of their own ethnic preferences and ethnically exclusionary practices toward majority Brazilians (cf. Reichl 1995).

When the ethnic rejection and marginalization that the Japanese-Brazilians experience in Japan is contrasted with the ethnic acceptance they enjoy in Brazilian society, they come to realize that the natal homeland of Brazil is the place where they truly belong and originated. In this manner, their country of birth is reconceptualized as the true homeland in contrast to their country of ethnic origin. Milton, one of my good friends at Toyama, expressed this common sentiment:

> We come to Japan and realize Japan is not our country. It is the country of our parents and grandparents. Although we are Japanese descendants, we don't belong here. We can't enter Japanese society because the Japanese don't accept us. Instead, our country is Brazil. It is where we were born and where we grew up.

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Even Roberta, who initially felt "homeland-less" when socially rejected in her ethnic homeland of Japan, eventually came to reassess Brazil as her real homeland.

"At least in Brazil, they accept us and treat us well," she acknowledged. "In Japan, they reject us as foreigners even if we are Japanese descendants. Brazil is the country where we really belong."

However, Brazil does not become the true homeland for the Brazilian nikkeijin simply because they have been denied their ethnic homeland in Japan. Homelands are never found merely by default. In order for a country of origin to become subjectively meaningful and significant as a source of personal attachment and identification, it must be infused with positive feeling and affect as a place of desire. For the Japanese-Brazilians, Brazil emerges as the real homeland through the migration process because it is reconceptualized in favorable terms and imbued with positive meaning when contrasted with the negative social experiences they have in Japan. When they return migrate and are confronted by the exclusionary nature of Japanese society that marginalizes even Japanese descendants, they begin to value and appreciate the socially receptive nature of Brazilian society to a much greater extent than before. Such a renewed respect for the openness and hospitality of multiethnic Brazil, which they had previously taken for granted, strengthens their emotional identification with their natal homeland. This was evident in the comments of a young nikkeijin woman:

> It was quite a shock when I first came to Japan and saw how the Japanese separate themselves from us. The Japanese don't even accept their own descendants anymore and treat them as foreigners. This is completely different from Brazil, where people talk to foreigners, make friends with them, and accept them. Brazil accepted our Japanese parents when they first migrated there. Before, I just took these things for granted, but after coming to Japan and seeing how the Japanese don't accept us, I value the friendliness and kindness of my country [Brazil] much more.

In addition to the ethnically unreceptive nature of Japanese society, the Japanese-Brazilians also develop other negative perceptions of Japanese culture and behavior, which again produce an increased awareness of the various positive aspects of Brazilian society that they had previously not sufficiently appreciated. Because of their social alienation in Japan, virtually all of the nikkeijin become quite critical of Japanese social relationships, describing them as cold, impersonal, and lacking affection. In

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response, many of them reminisce (almost nostalgically) about the emotionally warm and affectionate social relationships they had in Brazil. Many (especially nikkeijin women) also note the gender inequality prevalent in Japan, both at the workplace and in spousal relationships in contrast to which they portray Brazil as a society of more equality and mutual respect among the sexes. Other aspects of the Japanese which are frequently brought up for specific criticism are their excessive dedication to work and company at the expense of fulfilling family or social lives, their group conformity and obedience, and the overly restrictive and structured nature of their lives, which many nikkeijin again contrast with their more favorable social experiences in Brazil.[13] In this manner, as they discover many of the negative aspects of Japanese society and culture in Japan, they simultaneously "rediscover" the positive aspects of Brazil, which produces a renewed appreciation of their country of birth.

As Brazil is reconsidered and reconstituted in such a positive manner by the Japanese-Brazilians abroad, it no longer remains simply an affectively neutral place of birth, but suddenly becomes an emotionally charged, almost idealized object of desire worthy of a true homeland. As a result, many of them ironically feel a greater sense of personal attachment, loyalty, and identification with their Brazilian homeland in Japan than they ever did in Brazil. When speaking of Brazil, some of my informants (especially those who had been living in Japan for several years) recalled their natal homeland with rather fond memories. Although the Japanese-Brazilians were frequently critical of many aspects of Brazilian society when they lived in Brazil, I observed a notable tendency among them to praise Brazil in Japan, even to an exaggerated extent, which was rare among them back home. Brazil is still characterized as a country with serious political, economic, and social problems, but other aspects of Brazil are spoken of highly and contrasted favorably with Japan, such as its people, culture, material living conditions, natural resources and agriculture, sports heroes, and food. One of my informants spoke about this positive reassessment of Brazil in the clearest terms:

> Brazilians always think other countries are much better. The Japanese-Brazilians saw
> Japan in this way too. But now, I realize we were wrong. We didn't know what we had
> in Brazil. There is no better place than Brazil to live, especially because we were born
> there and have no cultural problems. The people are better there and so are the
> conditions of living. I value Brazil much more now.

Some Brazilian nikkeijin in Japan even used affect-laden terms such a nationalism, patriotism, and love to express their renewed sense of emotional affiliation to Brazil as the natal homeland.

"In Brazil, I never gave too much value to the Brazilian country, but now I do," a sansei woman said. "I feel more patriotism towards Brazil." Another declared: "my sentiments for my homeland of Brazil and my love for the country will never leave me no matter how long I stay in Japan." Others expressed similar feelings. This greater sense of Brazilian national allegiance and pride among the nikkeijin in Japan is also symbolized by the prominent display of the Brazilian flag in their ethnic stores and restaurants, although the flag is hardly ever displayed in Brazil.[14]

In this sense, the search for homeland abroad among Japanese-Brazilian return migrants has concluded with an ironic twist. Although they do eventually find a homeland, it is not the one they initially expected. Instead of discovering their ethnic homeland abroad, they instead rediscover their natal homeland <u>while abroad</u>. In other words, homeland becomes not the country in which they are physically present, but the country from which they are currently absent. However, it is frequently absence which enables a place of origin to be conceptualized as a homeland.

As a result, homelands are often discovered and articulated in the process of migration and travel (cf. Clifford 1997). Migrants' encounters with foreign societies frequently disrupt the taken-for-granted nature of their own country and infuses places with relativity by producing evaluative contrasts between home and abroad. Since migration frequently results in negative experiences of social rejection and alienation abroad, the lives and social experiences migrants had back home suddenly appear quite favorable in contrast, causing them to recognize the positive aspects of their own country that they had not previously acknowledged to a full extent. In this manner, the new positive meanings that home acquires abroad produce a greater sense of national allegiance and identification toward the country of origin, enabling it to be experienced as the true homeland.

However, homelands are not merely positively conceived places of origin, but are also infused with feelings of emotional longing and desire. This is another reason why the true meaning of homeland can be experienced only while abroad because the temporarily loss of one's own country through the physical separation of migration further enhances its nostalgic desirability as an object of identification.[15] In addition to positively reconceptualizing Brazil during their sojourn in Japan, the

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Japanese-Brazilians also develop very strong feelings of saudade (homesickness and emotional longing) for Brazil because of their prolonged absence from their country of origin.[16] "Eu me sinto muito saudade do Brasil" (I feel a lot of longing/homesickness toward Brazil) is a sentiment commonly heard among Brazilian nikkeijin migrants in Japan. In fact, 60 percent of them cite saudade as the biggest social problem they experience in Japan (see Kitagawa 1997). In order to matar a saudade do Brasil (alleviate their longing and homesickness toward Brazil) many Japanese-Brazilians engage more actively in Brazilian cultural activities in Japan than they ever did in Brazil by participating in samba parades, organizing Brazilian festivals, buying and eating Brazilian food at ethnic food stores and restaurants, playing in nikkeijin soccer leagues, wearing Brazilian clothes, and consuming Brazilian media products available in Japan (satellite TV, music, newspapers, magazines, and videocassettes). In this manner, places of origin are recognized as homelands through travel and migration because their absence makes them objects of emotional longing and nostalgic desire, which is a critical part of any experience of homeland.[17] For the Brazilian nikkeijin, this undoubtedly intensifies the positive affect attached to Brazil and increases their emotional identification with their country of birth, making its status as the true homeland even more compelling.

Undoubtedly, migration and homeland are mutually constitutive. On one hand, migration and travel become meaningful only because migrants have a place of origin (a homeland) from which they can depart and return (Ivy 1995:30). At the same time, homeland becomes meaningful only through migration since relocation abroad enables positive feelings toward one's place of origin to be articulated and then infused with sentiments of desire and nostalgic longing. Homelands are therefore realized in absentia because the dislocations of migration expose individuals to experiences in foreign societies that favorably contextualize their own country--experiences which are not possible if they had stayed home. As a result, geographical detachment from one's own country is ironically necessary to produce an emotional attachment to it as a homeland. When the Japanese-Brazilians resided in Brazil, they did not refer to it as a pátria (homeland) but simply viewed it in affectively neutral terms as their country of residence and birth. Only when they travel and reside abroad does Brazil acquire the positive meaning and emotional salience that makes it a homeland. Indeed, according to Doreen Massey (1992:11), "[I]t

is interesting to note how frequently the characterization of place as home[land] comes from those who have left…" Edward Said elaborates further:

> Exile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with one's native place; what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both. Regard experiences <u>as if</u> they were about to disappear….Only someone who has achieved independence and detachment, someone whose homeland is 'sweet' but whose circumstances make it impossible to recapture that sweetness, can [understand this] [emphasis in original] [1984:55].

Searching for Homeland Abroad:
Alienated Migrants, Disalienated Nationals

Conceptions of homeland among diasporic peoples are undoubtedly historically contingent and unstable and constantly shifting over time (cf. Bammer 1992:vii, McKeown 1999:310, Safran 1991). However, I have suggested that not only does the nature and intensity of attachment to a homeland vary historically among diasporic groups in response to continued dislocation, so does the nation considered to be the homeland itself. Before the Japanese-Brazilians return migrate to Japan, they had ethnically situated themselves in Brazil by appropriating multiple homelands like certain other second and third-generation immigrant minorities. In addition to their natal homeland of Brazil, many of them emphasized their Japanese descent and heritage and retained a strong sentimental attachment to Japan as the ancestral homeland because of the prestige it conferred on them as an ethnic minority group. Because Japan is associated with positive images that contrast starkly to the negative aspects of Third World Brazil, a good number of Japanese-Brazilians developed feelings of nostalgia and longing toward First World Japan. Such sentimental longings for a far away place of origin and belonging is what gave Japan the emotional salience and desirability that homelands must inspire in order to become a powerful source of personal identification. In contrast, there was a notable lack of positive affect and desire directed toward their natal homeland of Brazil, which was often the subject of social, economic, and political criticism among the nikkeijin. As a result, ethnic ancestral connections to Japan were initially prioritized over natal ties to Brazil in the conceptualization of homeland.

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As we have seen, however, when the Japanese-Brazilians actually return migrate to Japan, it does not feel like an ethnic homeland. Instead of an expected "homecoming" befitting Japanese descendants who have returned to their ancestral roots, they confront ethnic rejection, marginality, and social alienation as "foreigners" because of their cultural differences and exclusionary notions of Japanese ethnicity. As a result, most Japanese remain socially distant for numerous reasons ranging from a simple reluctance to interact with the culturally unfamiliar and the closed dynamics of Japanese social groups to prejudice toward the Brazilian nikkeijin. However, the ethnic segregation of immigrants is not simply the result of exclusionary practices of the host society, but is also self-constituted to a certain extent. When confronted with a cold Japanese ethnic reception, the Japanese-Brazilians themselves become reluctant to interact with the Japanese and withdraw into their own groups, thus reproducing the same ethnic exclusivity of which they accuse the Japanese and contributing to their own social marginalization in Japan. In addition, the social marginalization of migrants is not only locally constituted but also configured by the logic of global capital, which economically marginalizes them under the demands of flexible accumulation and further exacerbates the social segregation they experience as culturally different immigrant minorities. As a result, the Japanese-Brazilians have become true strangers in their own ethnic homeland.

Such experiences of ethnic marginality are disturbing and profoundly alienating for many Brazilian nikkeijin precisely because they had developed a strong personal attachment and identification with Japan in Brazil. Since alienation is a subjective state of estrangement from what was previously familiar and close, it therefore presupposes a prior identification in order to become a subjectively meaningful possibility. In this manner, the amount of social alienation experienced by migrants in the host society is not simply determined by the extent of their social marginalization and separation in an objective sense, but also depends on their previous level of personal affiliation with the host society. As a result, those who migrate to completely foreign countries with which they have no ethnic connection or personal attachment are frequently less socially alienated than ethnic return migrants like the Japanese-Brazilians. Although the former may experience greater social exclusion and marginalization in the host society,[18] because it was never a source of personal identification in the first place, such objective conditions do not produce a strong subjective experience of social alienation. If the host

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country is already strange and unfamiliar, there is really nothing to be socially estranged from after migration since alienation from the already alien is a conceptual impossibility.

Ironically, therefore, return migrants who are the closest and most familiar with the host society feel the most alienated after migration when confronted by ethnic and social exclusion. Because alienation is anchored around the loss of the previously familiar, ethnic return migrants potentially have more to lose. In this manner, the social alienation caused by return migration to Japan is experienced by the Japanese-Brazilians as a loss of a positively imagined ethnic homeland that they had previously appropriated for themselves as the foundation for their ethnic identity in Brazil. Therefore, even if Japan remains the land of ethnic origin in an objective sense, it is no longer subjectively experienced as an ethnic homeland, since the requisite feelings of emotional attachment and personal identification are now gone.

In this manner, the increasing movement of populations across national borders can be quite disorienting for the migrants involved, disrupting their previous sense of ethnic identity and place. Because return migration results in alienation from the ethnic homeland, it has now become impossible for the Japanese-Brazilians to nostalgically imagine an idealized ancestral land on which to base their sense of ethnic rootedness. Indeed, feelings of ethnic disorientation caused by the dislocations of migration were frequently expressed by my informants in Japan.

This sense of ethnic unrootedness that prevails among the nikkeijin undoubtedly illustrates the negative consequences of transnationalism. Transnational practices and processes such as international migration that transgress the boundaries of specific nation-states are frequently seen as liberating and empowering because they provide sites for resistance, struggle, and adaptive responses that subvert the dominant hegemonic order. For instance, transnational practices and social relationships constructed by subordinated migrant groups are sometimes seen as the basis for social movements and struggles of resistance against the nation-state and global capital (see Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc 1994:290). In a similar vein, Arjun Appadurai (1996) claims that "postnational imaginaries" emerge from transnational practices, producing new forms of allegiance, social organization, and discursive consciousness that escape and transcend the hegemonic confines of the nation-state and hasten its decline. Transnationalism thus liberates the imagination, making possible an emancipatory postnational

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political order. For Aihwa Ong (1999), the practice of flexible citizenship on a transnational scale in which individuals obtain political rights and residential basis in multiple countries is a personally advantageous adaptation to the vicissitudes of global capitalism and shifting international political conditions. Likewise, Roger Rouse argues that transnational migrant communities, by allowing individuals to maintain active social relationships over large geographical distances, enable them to effectively respond to changing economic constraints and limited opportunities in various locales by constantly circulating between these places (1991:13-14). Despite this celebration of the emancipatory and empowering effects of transnational mobility, it is also quite evident that increasing flows of people (as well as information, images, capital, and commodities) across national borders can produce disorienting experiences of unrootedness, ungroundedness, and social alienation, resulting in a loss of stable identities and a firm sense of place. This contrasts with the greater sense of belonging, identity, and origins among people who remain territorialized and grounded in a specific locality. Deterritorialization can be destabilizing and disorienting as much as it can be enabling and emancipatory.

Of course, deterritorialization and decenteredness are now regarded as a permanent condition of postmodernity. In terms of migratory groups, the concept of diaspora is now increasingly invoked to describe the movements and distribution of ethnic populations around the world in order to capture the qualities of dispersal and dislocation, unboundedness and unrootedness. The constantly shifting and territorially transgressive nature of diaspora is understood to destabilize and challenge territorial spaces, national borders, and bounded cultural discourses. Others have taken this notion of diasporic unrootedness further, arguing that the transnational connections that keep diasporic communities together need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland but through shared experiences of displacement, suffering, and resistance (Clifford 1997:249-250). According to Clifford, diasporas are thus decentered and based on shifting multilocal attachments (1997:248-249). Likewise, Iain Chambers claims that migratory movements have destabilized the notion of a fixed "home," which can now be conceived only as a temporary and mobile habitat that is constantly reconstituted in different locales through travel and dislocation, making a true "homecoming" impossible (1994:4-6, cf. Bammer 1992:vii). Thus, a postmodern condition of homelessness is now understood to prevail in a deterritorialized, diasporic world that can no longer be conceptualized through the notion of durable,

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fixed places as homelands (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:9-11, cf. Malkki 1992:25) because dispersed peoples function within "transnational migrant circuits" that are no longer centered and orchestrated around one locale (Rouse 1991:14). Others argue that homelands have been radically reconfigured to become shifting and hybrid imagined communities that encompass both the familiar "here" and foreign "there" and are no longer singular, coherent, and confined to specific territorial boundaries (Bammer 1992:ix, Massey 1992:12-15).

Indeed, the recent migratory movements of the Japanese-Brazilians have resulted in the loss of the Japanese ethnic homeland—the common ancestral attachment that they share with other Japanese diasporic groups scattered across the world (such as Japanese-Americans, Canadians, and Peruvians). During the initial transnational moment when the Japanese-Brazilians uproot themselves from Brazil and relocate to Japan only to be marginalized and alienated from Japanese society, their socially liminal state seems to render them a diasporic people without a homeland. However, migratory uprootedness does not necessarily produce a permanent state of unrootedness where migrants are deprived of a stable place they can regard as a homeland. For the Japanese-Brazilians, the initial ethnic disorientation and "homelandlessness" caused by diasporic dislocation eventually leads to a reorientation based on a shift from the ethnic to the natal homeland. When denied their ethnic homeland in Japan, they are forced to reconsider their ethno-national roots by renewing and strengthening their attachment to Brazil as the true place of origin. As a result, the dislocations of migration ethnically decenter the Japanese-Brazilians but eventually recenter them by producing a reconceptualization of homeland abroad. It is precisely the deterritorialized disorientation of the postmodern condition that produces a search for stability and a sense of rootedness in a specific place (Harvey 1989:300-301) as a means to overcome the malaise of continued displacement.

Therefore, the loss of ethnic homeland caused by return migration is what enables the rediscovery of the natal homeland. Migration and encounters with other societies relativizes the sense of place through comparisons between home and host country, making the former appear in a much more favorable light when regarded from a contrastive, negative foreign context. Moreover, since the home country attains its true salience as a desirable place of origin and attachment only when it is infused with nostalgic longing, homelands are truly realized though migratory displacement. Physical absence

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produces feelings of homesickness and unfulfilled longing among migrants for the positively re-imagined home country because of its temporary (or permanent) loss, thus reproducing it as a precious object that they nostalgically wish to regain. This further increases its desirability and value as a source of positive affect and personal identification, enabling it to emerge as the true homeland. In this manner, homelands are constituted by migration and travel because they are discovered as emotionally charged places of origin and affiliation only outside their territorial boundaries. This contradictory process where homelands can be truly experienced only in their physical absence creates an ironic situation among return migrants like the Japanese-Brazilians where their homeland was Japan in Brazil but becomes Brazil in Japan.

Diasporas are frequently understood to be deterritorialized, transnational communities that undermine and subvert the territorial and ideological integrity of the nation-state and its power to constitute individual subjectivity and loyalty (cf. McKeown 1999:308-309). For instance, according to Roger Rouse (1991), transnational migrants are increasingly grounding their activities and lives not around specific localities or singular national identities, but within a new "postmodern social space" of transnational communities spread across a variety of sites, which is causing a disarticulation of the nation-state. James Clifford argues that the allegiances and identities of diasporic peoples are based on dispersed communities and collective histories of displacement that are outside the nation-state and resist ideologies of nationalist assimilation (1997:250-252, cf. Appadurai 1996:172-173, Rouse 1991:16). Although these scholars recognize that diasporas are often developed around loyalties to distant nations of origin and therefore can invoke their own nationalisms, Clifford claims that such diasporic nationalisms are not coterminous with existing nation-states (1997:251).[19] Likewise, Appadurai feels that diasporic attachments to nations of origin simply produce shifting, multiple loyalties that reveal a primary allegiance to a "nonterritorial transnation" which renders nation-states mere territorial receptacles for cross-cutting diasporic communities and pluralistic diversities (1996:172-174). In an analogous manner, others emphasize how deterritorialization leads to diffuse and constantly shifting attachments to multiple places as well as creolized, hybrid identities that are de-essentialized and not rooted in the nation-state as a coherent place of origin (Malkki 1992).

In contrast, I have argued that migratory dispersal does not render the Japanese-Brazilians a people without a national homeland whose sense of allegiance and origins can no longer be conceived in the territorialized nation-form. Instead of becoming ethnically unanchored postmodern subjects with multiple, shifting loyalties or deterritorialized, transnational affiliations that subvert the nation-state, migrants frequently remain within the scope of existing national hegemonies. While migration may result in the loss of certain national homelands, it can also lead to an eventual reaffirmation of other nations as the true place of origin. For the Japanese-Brazilians, the migratory process causes natal and cultural ties to Brazil to be eventually prioritized over formerly imagined, racial and ancestral ties to Japan in the experience of homeland. In this manner, transnational dislocation may simply produce a reorientation of ethnic roots and identities within the framework nation-states as homelands. The increasing dispersal and dislocation of populations in the "postmodern" world does not necessarily entail a decline in the power of nation-states to constitute experiences of origin and ancestry that provide people with a firm sense of collective belonging and common identity. In other words, the deterritorialization caused by diasporic migratory movements frequently reaffirms national loyalties. As a result, transnational communities like diasporas that are not grounded in a firm sense of place or spatially confined to a specific national locality are not necessarily becoming the primary basis for identity and affiliation. Traditional nation-states continue to provide individuals with a sense of rootedness in a world where people are constantly uprooted.

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Notes

The research for this paper consists of over twenty months of intensive fieldwork and participant observation in both Japan and Brazil. Eight and a half months were first spent in Brazil studying the Japanese-Brazilian communities in two separate cities in the southeastern region of the country. During my one year stay in Japan, I conducted participant observation by residing in two cities in the greater Tokyo area with high concentrations of Japanese-Brazilian immigrants and by working for four intensive months in a large factory with them. Close to 100 interviews were conducted with the Japanese-Brazilians, as well as with Japanese citizens (factory workers and city residents), company managers, labor brokers, local and federal government officials, school teachers (responsible for classes with immigrant children), and journalists. The research has been generously supported by Fulbright Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad, Social Science Research Council, and Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships, as well as grants from the Wenner-Gren Foundation (grant #5757), the Regents of the University of California, and the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of California at Berkeley.

[1] In Japan, nationality is granted under the blood-based, jus sanguinis principle. If either parent is a Japanese national, the offspring are automatically granted Japanese nationality, regardless of place of birth.

[2] For an analysis of my fieldwork experiences in Japan as an ethnically ambiguous anthropologist, see Tsuda (1998a).

[3] This is excluding the approximately 650,000 Korean-Japanese who are still registered in Japan as "foreigners." Although 80 per cent of them have been born and raised in Japan, they are not granted Japanese citizenship and many have not naturalized.

[4] There is little social interaction between the Japanese-Brazilians and the Japanese even though they work in the same factories and live in the same towns and apartment buildings. According to a recent research survey, 44.3 per cent of the Japanese-Brazilians in Japan report that they have almost no social contact with the Japanese and 15.8 percent have only minimal contact (Kitagawa 1996).

[5] In a similar vein, Ong (1996:738-739) observes that notions of cultural difference (instead of racial difference) are being increasingly employed in the ethnopolitical discourse in Western Europe to marginalize immigrant or minority groups.

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[6] Although the group model of Japanese society has been challenged by certain scholars, who have advocated other models such as social exchange and conflict theory (Befu 1980, Krauss, et al. 1984, Sugimoto and Mouer 1986), it remains undeniable that group dynamics remain the primary foundation of Japanese society.

[7] It is interesting to note here that gender segregation generally did not exist among the Brazilian nikkeijin.

[8] 74 percent of the nikkeijin have little or no contact with their Japanese relatives (Kitagawa 1997).

[9] For instance, in 1990, the demand/supply ratio for part-time workers was 4 to 1.

[10] According to De Vos, in order to understand the complex relationship between social disruption and the psychological experience of alienation, psychodynamic features related to personality must be taken into account.

[11] Richard Schacht makes a somewhat analogous point: "I shall take it as axiomatic that a type of alienation is a meaningful human possibility only in cases where a corresponding type of identification is a meaningful human possibility [italics in original]."

[12] Notions of homeland among diasporic peoples can become a means to exclude other ethnic groups (Cohen 1997:106).

[13] See Tsuda (1999c) for detailed analysis of the negative perceptions that the Brazilian nikkeijin develop toward Japan.

[14] The only exception is during the World Cup when the Brazilian flag is sold by the thousands and is literally plastered on every store, office, home, car, and T-shirt.

[15] Nostalgia is an emotional longing for what has been lost and destroyed (Rosaldo 1989:69-70) or what is in danger of being lost through absence. As a result, nostalgic desire is predicated on distance between subject and object (Ivy 1995:10). For migrants, it is not temporal distance that is involved (as is the case with attempts to rediscover and reinvent the traditional past) but geographical distance. The concept of nostalgia itself was coined in the late 17th Century to refer to feelings of homesickness among Swiss mercenaries fighting abroad (Rosaldo 1989:71).

[16] See Scheper-Hughes (1992:435-436) for a discussion of the complicated Brazilian emotion of saudade.

[17] Marilyn Ivy discusses this issue in the context of travel in Japan. For instance, the concept of furusato (loosely translated as native hometown or village) was not articulated and did not gain currency in Japan until the Japanese began leaving rural areas for the cities en masse during Meiji urbanization (1995:103-104).

[18] Immigrant workers in other countries are also socially isolated from the host society for many of the same reasons as the Japanese-Brazilians (see Stull, Broadway, and Erickson 1992).

[19] Nationalist sentiments among diasporic peoples may support and fuel nationalist movements back home (Appadurai 1996:38). Sometimes, such "long-distance" nationalism involves exiles and political refugees who direct nationalist struggles in their home countries from the safety of First World suburbs (Anderson 1998). Although these may be struggles against current nation-states for ethnic political autonomy, the homelands of many diasporic peoples are established nation-states that they support through political or financial means. Thus, they do not always subvert the hegemony of the nation-state as Clifford suggests.