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The Socio-economic Situation of Non-Nikkei Foreign Workers in Japan

— A Case Study on Asian Overstayers in the Kanto Region —

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I. Gist of the Survey¹

The number of illegal foreign residents in Japan decreased from roughly 300,000 to some 271,000 between May 1993 and January 1999 (Table 1). Most of them are nationals of Asian countries, with approximately 62% coming from the top four countries, namely South Korea, the Philippines, China, and Thailand. It is presumed that many of them came to Japan for the purpose of "working." On the other hand, there are more than 270,000 Nikkei (foreigners of Japanese ancestry), who are legally allowed to work in Japan, meaning that there is an almost equal number of legal and illegal migrant workers. Thus, the eradication of a host of problems arising from the lengthening stay and settlement of non-Nikkei foreign workers has become a major issue.

Table 1 Trends in Number of Illegal Foreign Residents by Nationality or Place of Origin (persons)

	May 1992	May 1993	May 1994	May 1995	May 1996	Jan. 1997	Jan. 1998	Jan. 1999
Total	278,892	298,646	293,800	286,704	284,500	282,986	276,810	271,048
South Korea	35,687	39,455	43,369	47,544	51,580	52,387	52,123	62,577
Philippines	31,974	35,392	37,544	39,763	41,997	42,547	42,608	40,420
Thailand	44,354	55,383	49,992	44,794	41,280	39,513	37,046	30,065
China	25,737	33,312	39,738	39,511	39,140	38,296	37,590	34,800
Peru	2,783	9,038	12,918	15,301	13,836	12,942	11,606	10,320
Iran	40,001	28,437	20,757	16,252	13,241	11,303	9,186	7,304
Malaysia	38,529	30,840	20,313	14,511	11,525	10,390	10,141	9,989
Taiwan ROC	6,729	7,457	7,871	7,974	8,502	9,409	9,430	9,437
Bangladesh	8,103	8,069	7,565	7,084	6,500	6,197	5,581	4,936
Myanmar	4,704	6,019	6,391	6,189	5,885	5,900	5,829	5,487
Pakistan	8,001	7,733	6,921	6,100	5,478	5,157	4,688	4,307
Others	32,290	37,511	40,421	41,681	45,536	48,945	50,982	51,406

Source : Kokusai Jinryu (No. 120, 131, 144)

II. Trends of Illegal Foreign Residents and Workers in the 1990s

The number of foreigners who underwent deportation procedures for working illegally under the Immigration Control Law increased from roughly 14,000 in 1988 to some 64,000 in 1993. The figure then fell to approximately 40,000 in 1998, and this can be seen as a short-term effect of the 1990 revision of the Law, as well as the temporary suspension of a mutual visa exemption agreement between Japan and Iran. However, between 1993 and 1998, the number of illegal residents, who form the main body of illegal workers, fell by no more than 22,000. During those years, an average of 50,000 people per year underwent deportation procedures for working illegally. By simple calculation, the number of illegal residents should have exhibited a much greater decrease. Thus, we cannot conclude that the revised Immigration Control Law achieved its goals in the "long term."

III. A Statistical Analysis of Illegal Foreign Workers in Japan

1. Total : In 1998, there were roughly 48,000 cases of violations of the Immigration Control Law, and of these 40,000 were illegal workers. At the peak, in 1993, these numbers were approximately 70,000 and 64,000 respectively (Table 2).

2. Nationality : In 1993, violations were committed by people from 90 countries, and in 1997 this number had reached 100. People of Asian nationalities made up 90% of total cases, with the top four being identical to the top four in terms of number of illegal residents, namely South Korea, Philippines, China and Thailand, which made up 63.7% of total cases in 1998. The four nationalities which were the targets of this study (Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar) made up 13% of cases in 1996 (Table 3).

3. Period of Work : Generally speaking, the period of work of illegal workers has lengthened year by year. In 1992, the majority had been working for no more than one year, but in subsequent years this number increased gradually, to less than two years in 1993, less than three years in 1994, and less than five years in 1995. In

Table 2 Changes in Violations of the Immigration Control Law in Cases (persons)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Total	35,903	67,824	70,404	65,618	55,470	54,271	49,566	48,493
Illegal entry	1,662	3,459	5,227	5,598	4,663	4,827	7,117	7,472
Illegal landing	347	533	796	697	758	811	776	719
Illegal activity	882	393	306	455	439	279	430	310
Overstay	32,820	63,265	63,905	58,692	49,453	48,211	41,113	39,835
Violations of criminal laws, etc.	192	174	170	176	157	143	130	157
Illegal Foreign workers	32,908	62,161	64,341	59,352	49,434	47,785	41,604	40,535

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998).

Table 3 Illegal Foreign Workers by Nationality (persons)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
South Korea	5,534	9,782	13,890	11,865	10,730	10,529	11,444	10,346	9,360
China	481	1,162	3,167	4,989	7,311	7,595	7,403	7,810	7,224
Philippines	4,042	2,983	3,532	4,617	5,260	5,476	5,646	5,067	5,631
Thailand	1,450	3,249	7,519	12,654	10,654	6,948	5,561	4,483	3,604
Iran	652	7,700	13,982	8,886	5,628	3,246	3,180	2,225	2,219
Peru	0	172	580	1,908	2,623	2,475	2,214	1,579	1,746
Malaysia	4,465	4,855	14,303	11,913	8,576	5,260	4,034	1,694	1,350
Pakistan	3,886	793	1,072	1,406	1,531	1,326	1,418	1,152	1,255
Myanmar	0	171	303	570	899	955	834	unknown	unknown
Bangladesh	5,925	293	390	717	918	831	926	930	1,067

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

Table 4 Composition of Total Illegal Foreign Workers by Period of Stay (persons)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
6 months or less	14,370	7,850	6,116	5,594	5,224	5,221	5,697
1 year or less	22,171	11,133	6,820	5,388	5,471	4,568	4,510
2 years or less	15,465	25,072	15,153	8,835	7,549	6,702	5,811
3 years or less	5,949	12,298	17,537	10,259	7,589	5,945	5,244
5 years or less	3,289	6,242	10,116	14,753	15,323	9,552	8,082
More than 5 years	584	1,411	3,172	3,890	6,430	9,548	10,428
Unknown	333	335	438	715	199	68	763
Total	62,161	64,341	59,352	49,434	47,785	41,604	40,535

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

Table 5 Composition of Male Illegal Foreign Workers by Period of Stay (persons)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
6 months or less	10,559	4,414	3,039	2,718	2,652	2,527	2,816
1 year or less	17,680	7,103	3,797	2,837	2,978	2,291	2,348
2 years or less	11,727	18,321	9,690	5,053	4,216	3,757	3,203
3 years or less	4,440	9,269	13,022	6,862	4,670	3,361	2,971
5 years or less	2,561	4,836	7,712	11,220	11,378	6,320	5,018
More than 5 years	364	996	2,482	3,029	5,154	7,487	8,047
Unknown	190	205	287	387	112	38	405
	47,521	45,144	40,029	32,106	31,160	25,781	24,808

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

1998, the majority of cases involved a period of work of more than five years, meaning that a peak was reached in terms of both periods of stay and stock of workers (Table 4-7).

4. Sex : Men have consistently outnumbered women, but the difference has shrunk year by year. Whereas in 1992 76.5% of illegal workers were male, by 1998 this ratio had closed to around 60% (Table 8). Inversely, though the ratio of females among them was 23.5% in 1992, this had risen to 40% in 1998.

Table 6 Composition of Female Illegal Foreign Workers by Period of Stay (persons)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
6 months or less	3,811	3,436	3,077	2,876	2,572	2,694	2,881
1 year or less	4,491	4,030	3,023	2,551	2,493	2,277	2,162
2 years or less	3,738	6,751	5,463	3,782	3,333	2,945	2,608
3 years or less	1,509	3,029	4,515	3,397	2,919	2,584	2,273
5 years or less	728	1,406	2,404	3,533	3,945	3,232	3,064
More than 5 years	220	415	690	861	1,276	2,061	2,381
Unknown	143	130	151	328	87	30	358
Total of females	14,640	19,197	19,323	17,328	16,625	15,823	15,727

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

Table 7 The Trend toward Lengthening of Period of Illegal Work (% of more than 5 years)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Males	0.8	2.2	6.3	9.4	16.5	29.0	32.4
Females	1.5	2.2	3.6	5.0	7.7	13.0	15.1
Total	0.9	2.2	5.4	7.9	13.5	23.0	25.7

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

Table 8 Male/Female Ratio of Illegal Workers (%)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Males	76.5	70.2	67.4	64.9	65.2	62.0	61.2
Females	23.5	29.8	32.6	35.1	34.8	38.0	38.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

5. Age : In 1998, by five-year age category, the largest group for males was those aged 35 or under (Table 9). The next largest category was those 30 or under. The percentage of those aged 25 or under has dropped considerably, from 15.9% in 1992 to 5.8% of 1998. The ratio of those aged 40 or under increased from 13.7% to 20.5%. Thus, the mainstream groups are those aged 30 years or 35 years or under, though there have been slight increases in the ratio of those aged 45 and 50 or under, meaning in general terms that an aging tendency can be seen. For females, the ratio of those aged 30 or under has been consistently the highest from 1992 to 1998 (Table 10). In a similar way to men, the ratio of those aged 25 years or under has dropped considerably, from 28.3% to 12.7%. The age groups which are on the increase are those aged under 35, 40, and 45. For females as a whole, it can also be said that an aging phenomenon is occurring.

6. Place of work: The prefectures with the largest volume of employment were the five prefectures in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, namely Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba, Saitama, and Ibaraki, along with Osaka. In 1998, the five Tokyo Metropolitan prefectures made up a full 66% of the total.

7. Type of work : There are major differences between the work that is typically done by males and females. For males, there are two major work categories :

Table 9 Ratio of Male Illegal Workers by Age (%)

Age	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
15 or under	0.07	0.12	0.03	0.17	0.06	0.02	0.03
20 or under	1.39	1.62	0.73	0.56	0.50	0.61	0.64
25 or under	15.85	14.99	11.32	9.69	7.89	6.69	5.77
30 or under	29.35	29.06	28.69	27.56	25.66	24.34	21.09
35 or under	22.52	23.56	26.55	27.41	28.56	28.83	28.79
40 or under	13.72	14.44	16.05	16.83	18.00	18.69	20.53
45 or under	7.70	7.49	8.05	8.70	9.41	10.46	11.79
50 or under	4.22	4.28	4.36	4.65	4.90	5.16	5.72
55 or under	2.90	2.47	2.26	2.28	2.57	2.59	2.81
60 or under	1.46	1.16	1.19	1.15	1.33	1.36	1.50
Over 60	0.82	0.81	0.77	1.00	1.12	1.25	1.33
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

Table 10 Ratio of Female Illegal Workers by Age (%)

Age	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
15 or under	0.11	0.25	0.03	0.24	0.05	0.06	0.01
20 or under	5.42	5.29	2.86	2.08	1.57	1.79	1.51
25 or under	28.33	27.05	24.00	19.70	16.14	14.28	12.70
30 or under	28.09	29.35	30.60	31.60	31.01	30.55	29.68
35 or under	16.53	17.73	19.71	21.27	22.77	23.72	23.55
40 or under	8.91	8.96	10.44	11.11	12.91	13.33	14.58
45 or under	4.71	4.54	4.93	5.37	6.06	7.11	7.73
50 or under	2.77	2.57	2.81	3.15	3.52	3.58	3.69
55 or under	2.21	1.83	2.14	2.17	2.39	2.01	2.66
60 or under	1.72	1.24	1.34	1.72	1.81	1.76	1.93
Over 60	1.20	1.19	1.14	1.59	1.77	1.81	1.96
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

Table 11 Work Contents for Males (%)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Construction worker	51.0	39.7	39.2	37.4	38.3	35.2	30.5
Factory worker	27.9	31.7	26.6	25.2	27.4	28.2	30.3
Labor, etc.	5.9	10.1	9.1	9.3	4.9	5.6	6.9
Dishwasher	2.2	3.0	3.5	3.9	3.3	3.1	3.2
Cook	2.2	3.1	4.5	6.5	6.5	7.2	6.6
Bartender, etc.	1.9	2.9	4.7	6.0	6.1	6.7	7.0
Service, etc.	1.6	2.5	2.6	3.1	3.5	3.6	—
Others	7.3	7.0	9.8	8.6	10.0	10.4	15.5
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

Table 12 Work Contents for Females (%)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Hostess	34.4	36.5	38.4	36.9	37.5	40.4	43.0
Factory worker	17.4	18.1	16.2	14.7	15.3	14.0	13.3
Prostitute	11.0	10.0	6.1	3.4	2.9	—	—
Dishwasher	9.1	7.9	7.9	8.1	6.8	6.4	5.7
Waitress	7.2	7.8	11.6	15.3	15.8	15.5	14.9
Cook	3.9	3.5	3.2	4.1	4.8	5.6	4.3
Service, etc.	3.3	3.5	3.6	4.8	6.0	5.4	4.3
Others	13.7	12.7	13.0	12.7	10.9	12.7	14.5
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

Table 13 Daily Wages for Males, by Wage Level (%)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
¥3,000 or less	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	2.5	0.4
¥5,000 or less	2.2	2.9	4.0	4.7	4.1	12.1	3.7
¥7,000 or less	15.8	17.3	18.7	20.0	16.6	15.3	21.5
¥10,000 or less	65.4	62.9	60.4	56.7	55.8	57.5	57.0
¥30,000 or less	15.3	15.5	15.0	16.7	21.9	11.5	14.8
More than ¥30,000	0.1	0.2	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
Unknown	0.9	0.9	0.8	1.3	0.9	0.9	2.3
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

Table 14 Daily Wages for Females, by Wage Level (%)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
¥3,000 or less	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.7	3.0	10.0	2.3
¥5,000 or less	16.1	17.0	17.2	18.3	15.5	24.6	13.2
¥7,000 or less	30.9	29.7	31.4	33.8	31.8	15.1	32.1
¥10,000 or less	26.9	26.7	29.6	29.2	32.2	35.6	35.3
¥30,000 or less	15.3	15.6	12.8	11.0	13.9	10.9	11.8
More than ¥30,000	1.8	1.8	1.4	0.7	0.6	1.0	1.1
Unknown	6.2	6.5	5.1	4.3	3.0	2.8	4.2
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source : Shutsu-nyu-koku Kanri Kankei Tokei Gaiyo (1991-1998)

construction and factory labor, though these two categories have shrunk from around 80% of the total in 1992 to 60% in 1998. The number of people working in the restaurant industry, as dishwashers, cooks, or bartenders, is increasing, and reached 16.8% of the total in 1998 (Table 11). For women, hostessing work accounted for at least 35% of the total in all years between 1993 and 1998. This single occupation had a high ratio, followed by restaurant jobs, which together accounted for roughly 25% (Table 12).

8. Remuneration (daily wages) : Generally, for males (and females alike),

nearly 60% of workers received between 7,000 and 10,000 yen per day. Beginning in 1992, the rate began to fall, and in 1998 more than 20% of workers were receiving between 5,000 and 7,000 yen, meaning that the daily wages of men have fallen (Table 13). One can cite two points where the wages of women are different from those of men. First, some 60% of the total received from 7,000 to 10,000 yen or 5,000 to 7,000 yen. Second, the number receiving between 3,000 and 5,000 yen was relatively high (Table 14).

IV. Selection of the Area of Survey and Survey Method

Five visits were made to Isesaki City between June 1997 and January 1999, by a total of 15 joint researchers², who interviewed 22 non-Nikkei foreigners. The interviews were in principle conducted in Japanese, using a "questionnaire for personal interviews with non-Nikkei foreigners." This questionnaire was composed of 8 items concerning personal history, and 25 questions.

Isesaki City is not a place where many non-Nikkei foreign residents live. It was selected as a place where we would be able to have contact with Asian workers with the assistance of support groups for foreigners.

V. Outline of Isesaki City

1. Characteristics of the industrial and employment structure

Looking at the city's industrial features by industrial products shipment value, we find the following. In 1996, the total shipment value was 692.15 billion yen, and this figure had been on the increase since 1993 (Table 15). The largest industrial sectors in terms of value produced were transport equipment and electrical equipment, which between them accounted for 59% of total value. In 1999, there were industrial estates in six places, with a total of 55 firms located there (*Isesaki-shi Shisei-yoran* (1999)). Looking at statistics on the number of employees by industry, we find that in 1995 the ratio of workers in tertiary industries came to exceed those in secondary industries for the first time (Table 16). By industrial sector, manufacturing accounted for 37.4%, and wholesale/retail, restaurants, and service industries for 41.1%, meaning that these two sectors accounted for nearly 80% of all employment (*Tokei Kiho Isesaki* (1998)). Judging from the industrial average of the eleven cities in Gunma Prefecture, though the statistics used are around 1990, it can be said that Isesaki is a city with a "very strong orientation toward manufacturing" (Arisue (1993)).

Table 15 Changes in Isesaki City's Industry

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Number of establishments	1,302	793	756	673	649	665	631
Number of employees	23,653	22,984	21,999	21,971	20,571	21,676	20,411
Industrial products shipment value*	7,045.70	7,526.10	7,136.40	6,419.70	6,650.50	6,872.30	6,921.50

Source : Tokei Kiho Isesaki (1998) * ¥100 million

Table 16 Number of Workers in Iseaki City by Industrial Category (1995)

	persons	%
Primary industries	2,361	3.7
Secondary industries	28,601	44.7
Tertiary industries	32,913	51.5
Unclassifiable industries	66	0.1
Total	63,941	100

Source : Tokei Kiho Iseaki (1998)

Table 17 Major Nationalities of Registered Foreigners in Iseaki City (persons)

	Mar. 1989	Mar. 1990	Mar. 1991	Mar. 1992	May 1993	Apr. 1994	Mar. 1995	Nov. 1996	Nov. 1997	Nov. 1998
Chinese	72	77	144	166	169	150	149	146	155	162
North/South Korean	156	162	155	164	169	155	157	157	153	165
Argentine	19	13	44	40	45	39	44	67	63	64
Brazilian	67	345	685	1,159	1,233	1,251	1,466	2,119	2,513	2,579
Peruvian	3	135	340	597	645	734	904	1,133	1,329	1,497
Vietnamese	64	74	81	108	240	283	331	416	419	419
Philippine	24	86	80	133	172	200	230	238	236	342
Iranian	—	—	1	13	35	52	86	82	73	67
Pakistani	—	—	2	27	48	69	70	103	110	124
Thai	7	6	8	9	11	30	68	75	68	87
Bangladeshi	—	—	—	2	8	18	29	81	83	93
Others	23	36	47	62	92	88	146	163	227	308
Total	435	934	1,587	2,480	2,867	3,069	3,680	4,780	5,429	5,907

Source : Iseaki-shi Gaikokujin Toroku Kokuseki-betsu Chosa-hyo (1989-1998)

2. Iseaki City's population and foreigners

Iseaki City is the fourth most populated city in Gunma Prefecture, following Maebashi, Takasaki, and Ota. In 1990 the population was 116,000, and by September 1998 had grown to 125,000. It increased by 8,763 people during these eight years. However, the number of registered foreign residents grew by 4,973 people during the same period, meaning that 56.8% of the population increase was caused by the increase in foreigners.

Iseaki City has the second largest number of registered foreign residents within the urban areas of the prefecture, following Ota City, which as of the end of September 1998 had 6,174 foreign residents (*Toshi Jinko no Gaikyo* (1998)), and ahead of Iseaki's 5,907 (Table 17). According to the general report on urban populations released by the National Mayors' Association, Iseaki had the second highest ratio of foreign residents to total urban resident population of any city in Japan, with 4.71%, following only Kosai City, Shizuoka Prefecture, which had a ratio of 5.43% (*Toshi Jinko no Gaikyo* (1998)). In 1989, there were a mere 435 registered foreign residents in Iseaki, meaning the number grew 13.6-fold in a period of ten years (Table 17).

Looking at nationality, in 1989 just 19 nationalities were represented, but by 1998 this had grown to 50, showing that a form of "multinationalization" is taking place. Even in 1989, more than 50% of foreign residents were from China and the

Korean Peninsula, and were so-called old-comers. By 1998, this group had fallen to just 5.5%. By contrast, the Brazilian population grew five times in a single year between 1989, when the economy was booming, and 1990, and has continued to increase even toward the end of the 1990s, when the economic recession has deepened, reaching 2,579 people, or 44% of the total, in 1998. There were also nearly 1,500 Peruvians, meaning that Brazilians and Peruvians lumped together made up 69% of the total foreign population. In terms of Asians, Vietnamese and Filipinos were dominant. Of the five nationalities which formed the target of our survey, three (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Iranians) made up a small 4.8% of the population. In addition, in 1998 there were only three registered Myanmarese, and one Afghani. The first Pakistanis and Iranians were registered in 1991, and the first Bangladeshis in 1992.

VI. Gist of the Results of the Interview Survey of Asian Foreign Workers (Table 18)

1. Personal history and general features

(1) Sex : All were males. In terms of age, the largest number, 14, were in their 30s. The average age was 32.7 years.

(2) Educational background : The largest number were high school graduates, but there were also university drop-outs and graduates, meaning that their educational background was relatively high.

(3) Occupation before coming to Japan : They had held a variety of jobs before coming to Japan. The most common were non-employed or students.

(4) Marital status : Hardly any had ever been married. Out of 4 who were married, three had gotten married after coming to Japan.

(5) Family composition at home : Many came from large families, with six children being the most common answer. The average number of children in their families was 6.17.

(6) Period of stay : There was a bipolarization. Some 63% had been in Japan for long periods of 7 to 11 years. On the other hand, the next largest category was those who had been in the country for between 1 and 3 years. The average period of stay was 2.7 years, and none had ever lived outside of the Kanto Region.

(7) Initial visa status : By far the majority had first arrived using a tourist visa, though there were some cases of people who had come on a business visa and then stayed on.

2. Working conditions

(1) Working experience in Japan : By far the majority had worked in manufacturing, with only a few working in construction.

(2) How they had found actual jobs : Most respondents had found their current job with the assistance of a friend.

(3) Form of employment : All except those who ran their own businesses were "directly" employed.

(4) Workplace size : 68% were employed by companies with between 1 and 20 employees. Five worked at companies with 80–100 workers.

Table 18 Results of Interview Survey of Asian Foreign Workers (Summary of Personal History)

Sex	All males (Only 19 out of 22 were made subjects of the analysis)							
Age	In their 20s 4	In their 30s 14	In their 40s 0	In their 50s 1				
Nationality	Bangladeshi 8	Pakistani 6	Iranian 4	Myanmarese 1				
Educational background	High school graduate 10	University drop-out 4	University graduate 5					
Job before coming to Japan	Non-employed 4	Student 4	Store owner 2	Office worker 3	Sales personnel 2	Manufacturing worker 2	Tourist guide 1	Unknown 1
Marital status	Single 15	Married 4 (of the spouses, 3 were Japanese and 1 foreign)						
Existence of parents	Mother and father 13	Only mother 5	Unknown 1					
Siblings in family (Unknown 1)	3 children 2	4 children 1	5 children 3	6 children 6	7 children 2	8 children 2	9 children 1	11 children 1
Period of stay	1-3 years 4 (21.0%)	3-5 years 1 (5.3%)	5-7 years 2 (10.5%)	7-9 years 6 (31.6%)	9-11 years 6 (31.6%)			
Number of entries into Japan	Once 15	Twice 3	More than twice 1					
Visa upon entering Japan	Tourist 14	Business 3	Student 1	Sports 1				
Current visa	None 16	Spouse of Japanese national 3						
Purpose of coming to Japan	Work 14	Study 2	Visit acquaintance 1	Sports 1	Other 1			
Previous places of residence in Japan (total persons)	Tokyo 11	Gunma Prefecture 7	Saitama Prefecture 5	Chiba Prefecture 4	Ibaraki Prefecture 3	Have only lived in Isesaki City 3	Tochigi Prefecture 1	
Working experience in Japan (total persons)	Metal working /molding 11	Plating/painting 5	Plastic processing/molding 4	Parts processing 3	Construction 2			
	1 each: Plywood making, ironworks labor, general labor, cardboard making, noodle shop manager, stone cutting, computer work, development, production engineer							
How they found current job	Introduced by a friend 15	Introduced by an acquaintance 1	Opened business 2	Found by themselves 1				
Current form of employment	Direct 17	Self-employed 2						
Number of employees at current workplace (Total) (Among which were foreigners)	1-5 persons 3	5-10 persons 2	10-20 persons 5	20 persons 3	60 persons 1	80-100 persons 5		
	0-3 persons 7	3-5 persons 4	5-10 persons 5	10 persons 2	20 persons 1			
Current job contents	Parts processing 6	Metal working 6	Vegetable processing 2	Used car sales 1(self-employed) 1	Air conditioner assembly 1	Vending machine repair 1	Unknown 2 (includes self-employed)	
Years of service	6 months or less 5	1-3 years 2	3-5 years 4	5-7 years 2	7-9 years 3	10 years 1	Unknown 2	
Hourly wage (Unknown 4)	¥800 1	¥950 1	¥1,000 7	¥1,050 1	¥1,100 1	¥1,200 1	¥1,300 2	Daily wage of ¥11,000 1
Work days per month	18-20 days 2	22 days 4	20-26 days 1	Unknown 12				
Monthly income	¥160,000-¥180,000 5	¥180,000-¥200,000 2	¥200,000 6	¥230,000 1	¥250,000 2	¥220,000-¥280,000 1	Unknown 2	
Type of housing	Private apartment 9	Rooming 3	Private house 3	Company dormitory 3	Own home 1			
Way of finding housing (Unknown 1)	Offered by company 10	Friend's home 2	Found independently 2	Wife's family home 1	Found by wife 1	Brother's home 1	Introduced by a friend 1	
Monthly rent	¥0 5	¥10,000-¥20,000 3	¥20,000-¥30,000 2	¥30,000-¥40,000 1	¥40,000-¥50,000 5	¥50,000-¥60,000 3		
Health insurance	Not enrolled 17	Enrolled 2 (1 in National Health Insurance, 1 in social insurance)						

Source : Our own interview survey during 1997-1999 in Isesaki city (Report on International Symposium (1999), pp.63-64)

(5) Number of foreign workers : There were few other foreign workers at the firms they worked for, with most employing no more than 10 other foreigners.

(6) Job contents : The overwhelming majority were involved in parts and metal manufacture work.

(7) Years of service : Six people had worked between 5 and 10 years, and eleven had worked fewer than 5 years.

(8) Hourly wage : The most common was 1,000 yen, though the wages ranged between 800 and 1,300 yen.

(9) Working days : Very few worked on Saturdays or Sundays, and most had little overtime work, so it is assumed they worked about 20 days per month.

(10) Monthly income : For 68% of respondents, monthly income was from 160,000 to 200,000 yen, and a minority reported monthly income over 200,000 yen.

3. Problems with daily living

(1) Housing (all responded): The greatest number of respondents lived in private apartments. The rent they were paying was divided into two groups: eight people who paid less than 20,000 yen per month (including five who paid nothing), and eight people who paid between 40,000 and 60,000 yen.

(2) Eating (five respondents) : Either they had become used to some kinds of Japanese food, or bought their own ingredients and cooked themselves.

(3) Relationships with Japanese (five respondents) : They said they had very little contact with their neighbors. They said they sometimes fraternized with colleagues at work.

(4) Japanese language ability (five respondents) : They understood most Japanese. Most said they had learned at work.

(5) Communication with their parents (seven respondents) : Telephone was the only medium of communication they used. There was variety in the frequency of communication, with some talking as often as three times a week, and others just once a month.

(6) Illnesses (six respondents) : Three people said they had regular stomach aches, and some blamed this on stress. They complained about high medical fees. Practically none were enrolled in the National Health Insurance plan.

(7) Problems involving workplaces or work (five respondents) : They reported many problems, such as unpaid wages or gaps with the wages of Japanese workers.

(8) Who did they consult with regarding problems? (nine respondents) : Most answered either parents, siblings, cousins, spouses, or friends.

(9) Had they experienced discrimination in Japan? (all responded) : Nine said "yes," and ten said "no."

a. Within workplaces : They were made to do the hardest work ; they were treated particularly harshly ; they were called "stupid" when they didn't understand some word used at work ; they were not called by their real name ; were told to go home because the employment situation was hard for Japanese, too ; or were given different wages from Japanese workers.

b. In everyday life : They had been refused entry to taverns ; had been subjected to strange looks for wearing ethnic clothes ; or the atmosphere had become strained when they were involved in a conversation and couldn't understand the Japanese.

4. Responses regarding work and living in Japan, and future prospects

(1) What was the best thing about living in Japan? (multiple responses/all responded) : The most popular answers, with six each, were, "I've been able to earn money" and "By learning about Japan's social and economic situation, I've been able to broaden my horizons." This was followed by "I was able to save or send money back home," which was given by five. Next were "I learned how good Japanese people were" (four answers) and "I was able to find a job" (three answers).

(2) What did they want from the Japanese government or local governments? (multiple responses/all responded) : The most popular answer by far was "issue visas," with 14 people answering. Of these, six people qualified their comments, saying that the government should make checks stricter and only issue visas to people who were serious about working. The next most common answer was "Make it so that I can join the social insurance, and in particular the health insurance plan" (four people).

(3) Did they hope to settle in Japan? (all responded) : The most common answer was "For the moment I do, but will probably eventually want to return to my home country," with seven answers, followed by "I want to go back home," with six. Adding in the three who said they wanted to go home if conditions changed, 90% of respondents wanted to return to their home countries. Only two said they wanted to "settle."

(4) What did they want to do after returning to their home countries? (14 respondents) : The top answer was "I want to open a business," with nine people answering. The businesses they wanted to open included auto parts shops, stationery stores, magazine publishing companies, trading companies, accessory shops, and computer companies.

VII. Support activities for non-Nikkei foreign workers by NGOs

1. Support for a court case by the Ota Regional Branch of the JMIU (All Japan Metal and Information Machinery Workers' Union)

(1) Chronology of events : A Nigerian man working for a company in Ota Ward, Tokyo, was fired. His initial wage had been 1,000 yen per hour, but this had risen to 1,250 yen over a period of a year and a half, and the employer was going to "replace" him with a Ghanaian who a broker had introduced to the employer, and had agreed to work for 1,000 yen. This eventually led to a court case opposing the dismissal.

(2) The court struggle : The Nigerian was organized into the union. In addition to the court struggle, the union carried out a three-year campaign opposing the employment of undocumented workers at low wages and under poor working conditions. They distributed 1,000 flyers every Saturday in the community.

(3) The ruling : The plaintiff won the case. The ruling contained the following

phrase, "Now and in the future, the company must observe the various labor laws."

(4) Concrete effects of the ruling :

- ① He received yearly wage increases, and sometimes was given bonuses ;
- ② His working conditions began to improve ; and
- ③ The wages and working conditions of Japanese workers at the company were prevented from deteriorating.

(5) Facts which were exposed by the court struggle

① Employers were making illegal deductions from the wages of their foreign undocumented employee. They were not giving their employees year-end tax refunds. They were not paying legally-proper overtime wages.

② The existence of brokers is remarkable. They specialize in different countries or regions, such as Africa, the Middle East, or China, and do not infringe on each others' territories. They receive "commissions" from people looking for work.

③ The hourly wages of foreigners working at companies which are unionized are set relatively high. At some companies, foreigners receive bonuses, though they are much lower than those paid to Japanese.

④ The aging of Japanese workers at small and medium sized companies : They are typically in their 40s and 50s, and belong to the generation who came up to the Metropolitan area from the whole country to be employed in mass in the high-growth period of the Japanese economy. There are few younger workers, so small and medium sized firms are staking their survival on raising the skill level of foreign workers and keeping them on their payrolls.

⑤ The question of whether an illegal foreign worker works for a long period or not at a specific firm often depends on the personal character of the employer.

2. Results of a Medical Consultation Held by "Friends" and Other Groups (Table 19)

(1) Chronology

On Sunday, June 1, 1997, a medical consultation was held at the Isesaki City Central Public Hall. It was sponsored by "Friends," a support association for foreign workers living in Gunma Prefecture, with the cooperation of three other groups.

(2) Purpose of the Consultation

- ① Provide an opportunity for foreigners, who have few opportunities to visit hospitals or doctors, to be able to get medical examinations.
- ② Detect illnesses early, which can lead to early treatment.
- ③ Give foreigners reports on their medical examinations in their own language, and thus aid them in understanding their own health problems.

(3) Contents of examinations : X-rays, blood tests, urine tests, blood pressure measurements, consultations.

(4) Examinees : There were 94 volunteers helping out, and 157 examinees, representing 15 countries. Roughly 80% were male. They came from the Asian region, of course, as well as from Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. The age range was wide, with the youngest 5 and the oldest 67 ; the average age was 33.9 years. Their period of stay in Japan also ranged greatly, from 1 week to ten and a half years, with the average being five years and two months.

(5) Conditions

- ① The questionnaire on subjective symptoms handed out to the examinees

**Table 19 Examinees of Iseaki City Medical Consultations
by Nationality (persons)**

	Total	Males	Females
Bangladesh	48	48	0
Pakistan	39	39	0
Peru	18	4	14
Brazil	16	8	8
Iran	10	9	1
Philippines	7	2	5
India	4	4	0
Vietnam	4	4	0
Others	11	6	5
Total	157	124	33

Source : Iryo Sodan-kai Matome (1997)

(123 people, with multiple answers) revealed the following complaints: lower back pain (45.5%), headaches (41.5%), stomach pain (32.5%), fatigue (30.1%), chest pain (26.8%), insomnia (25.2%), and cough (23.6%).

② The main diagnoses made by the doctors (in response to the major complaints) were gastritis and gastric ulcers, headaches, muscle pains, urolithiasis, insomnia, dermatitis, and duodenal ulcers. In addition, many of the examinees were found to have several lifestyle-related diseases.

③ The overall results were that 53 examinees (33.7%) were found to be in good health, and the others were advised to undergo further examinations. Incidentally, 10.8% had health insurance, and 89.2% did not.

(6) Other

When asked about their working environment (141 responded, with multiple responses), 39.0% complained of heavy dust, 32.6% that they had to carry heavy objects, and 26.2% that they had to handle chemicals; 19.9% said their working environment was good.

3. The Organization of a Foreign Workers' Branch within Zentoitsu (All United) Workers Union

(1) The present situation of the Foreign Workers Branch (FWBZ)

In April 1993, the FWBZ was founded within Zentoitsu Workers Union (ZWU), a trade union for workers at medium and small-sized business. Initially it had 20 members, from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Iran.

Ippei Torii, the Secretary General of ZWU, reported that there are currently 1,700 registered members from 30 different countries. Most of them are overstayer residents. Three foreigners have been chosen as secretaries and work as full-time union officials.

The membership of the FWBZ includes more than 30 nationalities, with Bangladeshis accounting for more than half, followed in second place by Pakistanis.

When the FWBZ was first formed, there was opposition from many Japanese members who feared that their union dues would disappear into the new branch. However, this opposition has now disappeared.

In most cases the foreign members pay their union dues individually. They are

charged 3,000 yen in dues every month.

The types of job that foreign members are performing include metal press work, gilt work, plastic processing, as well as rubber and dismantling operations. Some members also work for taverns. Some correlation can be observed between type of job and region. For example, in Chiba Prefecture, there are some members working in fisheries processing.

In periods of recession, illegal foreign workers who are receiving high wages are often replaced by other illegal workers who will work for much less. When this happens, conflicts emerge regarding dismissals, severance pay, and unpaid payments for overtime work. On one occasion, for example, Bangladeshis and Pakistani were discharged, and were replaced by Thais at cheaper hourly wages. The wages received by these workers once hit a peak of between 1,500 and 1,800 yen, but now have stabilized at a level around 1,000 yen.

(2) Support activities of ZWU

ZWU's guideline on the activities of foreign members is to "make independent efforts." At the beginning, most Japanese union members rejected the very presence of foreign workers in Japan, but now most have given up this prejudice, and have started to think of how to cooperate with foreign workers who are already in Japan.

Foreign workers require consultations on many and various types of subjects. When ZWU is not capable of solving them alone, it asks other trade unions, support groups, and religious organizations, with whom it has close relations, for help and cooperation.

(3) Main results of support activity

One clear result of this support activity is that undocumented workers have become able to apply for tax refunds. When an undocumented worker wants to request a tax refund in spite of the fact that his employer has not issued him any record of withholding income tax, he or she can submit his or her own notes or records to a tax office.

VIII. Conclusion

Several other visiting study meetings on foreign workers and residents have been held in addition to those mentioned in VII above. In this conclusion, I will add from among them the support activity reports conducted by the Kanagawa City Union and the Catholic Diocese of Yokohama Solidarity Center for Migrants, in the hope that it will help to give us a more accurate understanding of the situation of non-Nikkei foreign workers in the 1990s.

1. While illegal foreign residents and workers have showed a tendency to stay for longer periods, these workers are often "replaced" for the reason that their wages had risen. There have been cases where the workers employed in this way were simply dismissed with no warning at all. This lengthening of periods of stay can be seen from the lengthening of average age, the lengthening of period of work and stay, and aging. The "replacement of illegal foreign workers" can be seen from changes in the population by nationality, as well as a bipolarization in histories of residence.

2. Regarding labor. Males tend to work in tiny firms in the manufacturing sector, a realm where the Japanese workforce is becoming aged. Females are mostly working as hostesses or in the restaurant industry. By far most foreign workers are employed directly. This is a factor behind the intervention of brokers. Nearly all foreign workers only have experience working and living within the Kanto Area. There has been no change in the fact that most workers (50–60%) receive from 7,001–10,000 yen per day, but wages have showed a decreasing tendency, and the number receiving from 5,001–7,000 per day has increased. A majority receive hourly wages of 1,000 yen, but most do no holiday or overtime work, and as a result their monthly wages are no higher than between 160,000 and 200,000 yen. In addition, though this applies to foreign workers in general, the employment and wages of non-Nikkei foreign workers has shown a strong tendency to be affected by business cycle. The main purpose of foreign workers in coming to Japan is to send money back to their families in their home countries. Most work in non-unionized workplaces. As a result, the continuity of their work, wages, and working and living conditions tend to vary according to the employer. In particularly terrible cases, the employers or other individuals threaten and hurt them physically. There are also cases where employers do not give tax refunds to the workers or fail to pay them overtime wages. With regard to worker's compensation, employers are generally reluctant to file for compensation, and even when compensation is applied for, some employers keep the money. At such workplaces, the worsened treatment of non-Nikkei workers has a deleterious effect on the working conditions of Japanese workers. In this sense, too, the existence of autonomous labor unions made up of foreigners, NGO and community unions, which allow individual membership, are very significant. At unionized workplaces, the wages of foreigners are also set relatively high.
3. In terms of living, most Asian workers live in groups in rented apartments, and cook their own meals. They have few connections with the Japanese who live around them, but can understand Japanese. They often form community networks based on nationality, and this allows information to flow very quickly. When they have troubles, they tend to consult with their families.
4. In terms of health, many Asian workers have some complaints, whether psychological or physical. Very few are enrolled in health insurance schemes, so medical fees are very high. There are quite a number of people who continue to suffer from the aftereffects of work accidents. In these cases, problems arise over who should bear their medical costs. They face many stressful factors, and efforts are required to ensure that they can maintain a stable psychological state. All nationals of a particular country are negatively affected when the reputation of that country goes down among Japanese society. In addition, many workers feel they have been subject to discrimination.
5. The greatest wish of non-Nikkei foreign workers is that undocumented workers who are serious about work be granted visas. They tend to express satisfaction over having earned money and broadened their perspectives, but generally do not hope to settle in Japan. They desire to use the money they earn in Japan to open businesses in their homelands.
6. In terms of support activities, trade unions, support groups, and religious organizations have formed networks, and aim to provide advice and solve problems by sorting out diversified problems and referring them to suitable groups. They have

produced some positive results.

Notes

- 1 This article is based on the paper presented by Nakagawa in the International Symposium : Globalization of Labor Mobility and Settlement Patterns of Migrants held by Institute of Comparative Economics Studies, Hosei University on November 20–21, 1999.
- 2 These researchers are as follows :
Hiromasa MORI, Masaaki ABE, Hiromi MORI (all Hosei University), Kennichi EBARA (graduate student at Hosei University), Tatsuya CHIBA (Tsuru Bunka University), and Isao NAKAGAWA (Takushoku University)

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