Ethnic Identity and Locality Production among Nikkei Peruvians in Japan: An Analysis through Immigrants’ Associations

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The 1990 amendments to the Immigration Control Act allowed Latin Americans of Japanese descent to migrate to Japan. In the context of their long-term settlement and the increasing number of a second generation born and raised in Japan, this paper analyzes the role that associations where Peruvians of Japanese descent—Nikkei Peruvians—congregate play in the preservation of an ethnic identity and the production of a sense of locality in Japan. Both ethnic identity and locality production are discussed under two instrumental conceptualizations: situated locality and community-oriented locality. The paper concludes that both types of locality are produced in the associations and communal groups in which Nikkei Peruvians have congregated. However, only a limited number of members—mainly directors and organizers—aim to produce a situated locality, a locality that resonates with the Japanese society. In contrast, most of the members and activities produced in these associations devote only to cover the cultural and socialization needs of their own ethnic group, a community-oriented locality.

Keywords: migration, Nikkei Peruvian, ethnic identity, locality, immigrant’s associations

1 Introduction

Latin Americans of Japanese descent officially started to migrate to Japan in 1990 when the Japanese government amended its Immigration Control Act. The revised law permitted foreign nationals of Japanese descent—also known as Nikkei—up to the third generation to reside and work in Japan without any restrictions. The Japanese government justified the entry of Nikkeis under premises that saw their
migration as temporary. Nikkei migration was expected to be like the one of Japanese seasonal workers—known as dekasegi—who move temporarily during winter from their farming communities to industrial centers in urban areas to work in manufacturing (Matsuyama 2010:160). At the same time, Nikkeis’ consanguineous relationship was considered a synonym of similitude and easy assimilation. Because Nikkeis had “Japanese blood,” they had to be ethnically similar, keeping the Japanese customs and language and not representing a threat to the myth of “ethnic homogeneity” in the Japanese society (Takenaka 2010:222; Córdova Quero 2009:21). The ethnic-based immigration policy attracted mostly Nikkeis from Brazil and Peru, who were also encouraged to migrate due to the economic recessions striking South America in the late 1980s. Ironically, these Nikkeis rapidly became Japan’s new “ethnic minorities” instead of smoothly assimilating into Japanese society.

This paper analyzes the experiences of identity construction and locality production of Peruvians of Japanese descent, also referred as Nikkei Peruvians. Such experiences are analyzed through the associations or communal groups in which Nikkeis have organized to meet the different demands that arise as a result of their long-term, and possibly permanent, residency in Japan. Immigrants’ associations play an important role during the process of immigration. Although initially immigrants tend to consider themselves as guest workers, committed to their countries and communities of origin, as time goes by, immigrants realize their stay may not be as short as they thought. Family reunification and the arrival of the second generation tend to promote the creation of associations.

Immigrants’ associations test the relationship between the immigrant group and the host society (Castles, de Hass and Miller 2014). At the same time, associations permeate the situation of the immigrants’ incorporation process, either by acting as means of acculturation and assimilation, or as mechanisms to preserve an ethnic identity different to the one of the host society. For this reason, immigrants’ associations can function as “an empirical window into ways of being and belonging” outside the borders of the nation-states where immigrants come from (Sardinha 2009:89). This is what led me to analyze Nikkei Peruvians’ associations.

More than twenty-five years since the Nikkei migration to Japan started, how have
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Nikkei Peruvians organized in collectivity and with what purpose? How do these associations contribute to the maintenance of an ethnic identity and the production of a sense of locality in Japan? These questions are elaborated considering two ways of belonging: belonging to an ethnic group, which is defined in an ethnic identity; and belonging to a physical-contextual space where a person lives, locality. This paper examines various Nikkei Peruvians’ associations by comparing their activities and purposes. I argue that Nikkei Peruvians’ associations—the activities, meanings, and symbolisms produced in them—are the result of two forms of locality production which varies among members, communal and personal levels, and the dynamics of the Japanese society and the immigrant community in which they are produced. Nonetheless, all of them are part of the immigrants’ incorporation process into the Japanese society.

The findings reported in this paper are drawn from an ethnographic study through participant observation and semi-structured interviews carried out in the Kansai region between 2015–2016. During this time, I made weekly and monthly visits to two associations directed and integrated mostly by Nikkei Peruvians. In Hyogo, I worked with Latin Community and in Kyoto with Lazos Culturales. Likewise, I observed and participated in the activities of religious and folkloric groups integrated mostly by Nikkei Peruvians who reside in the cities of Kobe, Osaka and Kyoto. The ethnographic work was mostly done with Peruvians of Japanese descent, but I also interacted and interviewed Non-Nikkei Peruvians—those who are not Japanese descendants—other Latin Americans and Japanese participants.1)

This paper is organized as follows. The second section discusses two instrumental conceptualizations on locality and ethnic identity which are used to analyze Nikkei Peruvians’ associations. Before entering into the discussion of the ethnic associations observed, Section Three offers a brief historical review of the Nikkei Peruvian community in Peru and the changes that their migration to Japan had for a redefinition of an ethnic identity. Finally, Section Four examines three different types of associations in which Nikkei Peruvians in the Kansai region have organized to satisfy the cultural and socialization needs that result from their long-term residency in Japan.
2 Different Ways of Belonging

2.1 Belonging to an ethnic group and belonging to a place

Migration is an event that problematizes people’s notion of ethnic identity, and this is more noticeable on ethnic return migrations. In general terms, ethnic identity is considered as a sense of belonging to a group which shares similar socio-cultural values that differentiates it from others (Sardinha 2009:51). According to the anthropologist Frederick Barth, ethnic groups are a “form of social organization” that individuals use “with the purpose of interaction” (Barth 1969:13-14); thus an ethnic identity is constructed to meet specific purposes, in particular when individuals are confronted with “others,” a different ethnic group (Sardinha 2009:51). Even ethnic return immigrants are often treated as foreigners in their so-called “ethnic homelands” (Takenaka 2009). This means immigrants confront a new “other” in the host country what may lead them to form alliances with other immigrants who share the same ethnic identity.

Ethnic association and ethnic community are categories that represent collective forms of an ethnic identity (Handelman 1977). On the one hand, the ethnic association is constituted when members, recognized as part of the same ethnic group, develop common interests and try to establish organizations in order to exert some kind of political pressure (Handelman 1977), but also can refer to associations of cultural and religious nature (Eriksen 2010). On the other hand, the ethnic community indicates the highest degree of incorporation into the ethnic group, with a high degree of institutional organization. Besides the operationalization of an ethnic network and shared goals and purposes, this category incorporates a form of “territory,” a “fixed-space, which [members] recognize as an ethnic unit existing within comparatively permanent territorial boundaries” (Handelman 1977:197).

Besides issues of ethnic identity, migration is also an event that problematizes people’s notion of locality. In general, locality refers to a sense of belonging to a place. Shutika (2008:276) defines it as “the process of place attachment” constituted through the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships that are maintained through repeated contact and that produce “a sense of alliance between those who
reside in a specific locale." In the context of migration, locality production only occurs when the social relationships between the "newcomers" (immigrants) and the "old settlers" (natives) are sufficiently significant to allow the "newcomers" to feel as people who belong and that take part in the "narrative events of the community life" (Shutika 2008:276-277).

Broader conceptualizations consider locality as contextual and relational rather than positional. For Appadurai (1996) while in a physical-spatial aspect the neighborhood serves as a physical social form, locality production is "a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of situated community" (Appadurai 1996:189). Cultural practices such as initiation rituals, rites of passage and folklore are processes that produce "local subjects"; they are forms to "embody locality" and "locate bodies in socially and spatially defined communities" (Appadurai 1996:179). Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005:29) define it as an "elective belonging": the feeling of spatial attachment, social position and forms of connectivity that individuals recreate in different places. Meanwhile, Cheng (2005) makes the distinction between place-oriented and people-oriented locality. Place-oriented locality refers to a construction that includes all the possible individuals that reside in a specific territory while people-oriented locality refers to a "bounded community." A people-oriented locality is constructed to denote a specific group of people who live in a place. In other words, not all the residents of a place are considered "local subjects" according to the group that defines it.

2.2 Situated locality and community-oriented locality

Two premises can be identified from the previous conceptualizations on locality: one that highlights its physical-spatial value, and other which focal point is its contextual-relational value. What I propose in this paper is that when analyzing immigrants' associations we consider two instrumental conceptualizations on locality, articulating them with the sense of belonging to an ethnic group which immigrants may try to maintain in the host society. I suggest that a sense of locality can have a dual value in the case of immigrants' associations, especially for those ethnic groups which are incorporated as ethnic minorities.
On the one hand, locality can refer to a sense of belonging to a physical space where an individual resides and the social relations and meanings that are produced in it. I call this locality a “situated locality.” An immigrant with a situated locality has acquired a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the community life around its residency—neighborhood, war, or city—being recognized at the same time as a member of it. Given this value, both “natives” and “newcomers” are part of the community, which is confined in a particular physical space. This sense of locality implies that the immigrant adjusts to the values and “ways of doing things” in the host society.

On the other hand, the meaning given to locality can transcend the boundaries of a physical space and be understood as the sense of belonging to what is defined as “our.” The meaning of what is “our”—what belong to us—is a subjective value that depends on the social relations among individuals who belong to the same ethnic group. Thus, displaced or moving groups, such as immigrant populations, can produce a sense of locality that does not depend directly on the natives’ acceptance to conform to what is defined as part of the community, since “community” is defined only by the immigrant group. This sense of locality is what I call community-oriented locality. This kind of locality can be produced by ethnic associations when meaningful social relations have been created. Its main purpose is to create “local subjects” who feel identified with the social and cultural values of the minority group, the immigrants’ ethnic group.

Considering both relational conceptualizations to analyze the different ways of belonging ethnically and locally proposed above, in the following section I examine briefly the historical context of the Nikkei Peruvian migration. I focus on the way Nikkei Peruvians have constructed the meaning of their Nikkei identity both in Peru and Japan. Subsequently, the different ways in which Nikkei Peruvians have associated in Japan is discussed.

3 Being Nikkei: An Ambivalent Discourse

A significant number of studies have analyzed the Nikkei dilemma, the
contradictory ways in which Japanese descendants were incorporated as foreigners in the Japanese society despite their Japanese descent. Earlier research on Nikkei communities has discussed the process by which Nikkeis redefined their ethnic identity as opposed to the Japanese. Among studies on Nikkei Brazilians, Čapo Žmegač (2005), Tsuda (2000), De Carvalho (2003) and Roth (2002) argue that Nikkei Brazilians, as a result of the ethnic rejection they experienced in Japan, reconstructed their ethnic identity by taking pride in their national identity. For Nikkei Brazilians, showing patriotic symbols such as their national flag and recreating dances like samba was a way to show pride in their Brazilian heritage (Tsuda 2009:216). On the other hand, among the less numerous studies on Nikkei Peruvians, Takenaka (2010) argues that contrary to Nikkei Brazilians, Nikkei Peruvians reinforced their identity as Nikkei to separate themselves from the undocumented Peruvians and “false Nikkeis”—those who had forged the Japanese family register.

Why Takenaka’s results on Nikkei Peruvians are so different from those on Nikkei Brazilians? Although the term Nikkei is a category that designates those Japanese who migrated massively to North and South America in the late nineteenth century and their descendants, such ethnic status of “Japanese” has acquired different meanings in the respective host societies due to different historical and social contexts. Nikkei identity is not fixed, but recreated in each generation and society.

3.1 Being Nikkei in Peru: institutionalized and an attribute of success

Although Japanese migration abroad began in 1868 as a consequence of the changes brought during the Meiji government, the Japanese migration to Peru did not take place until 1899. The first group of migrants arrived in the city of Callao to work as contract workers in sugar plantations. The Peruvian government sought to meet the demand for labor that the agricultural revolution in Peru had generated and which had been affected by the abolition of the “Coolie” treaty with the Chinese government (Takenaka 2004). While the same thing happened with the Japanese contract migration in 1923, due to the deplorable working conditions and the abuses of Peruvian landowners (Shintani 2007:81-82), between the years 1899-1941, approximately 33,067 Japanese immigrants had entered to Peru (Masterson 2004).
What is characteristic of the first generation of Japanese immigrants, known as Issei, is that in a short time they were able to leave the sugar plantations, establishing small businesses in nearby cities. The Issei were able to stop being seasonal workers—*dekasegi*—to become settlers (Masterson 2004:51). The apparent success of the Japanese raised anti-Japanese campaigns and ignited discrimination by the Peruvian community. However, it also “encouraged ethnic solidarity among Japanese immigrants” (Moorehead 2010:6). Resentment against Japanese immigrants continued during World War II, time when around 1,500 Nikkeis were deported to detention camps in the U.S. while their properties were confiscated (Fukumoto 1997).

After the war, Japanese immigrants and their descendants gradually regained their properties, re-opening their small business and institutions. The Nikkei community, however, suffered major changes. Despite the “non-assimilative character” of their Japanese parents, who tried to keep Japanese roots in their children by funding schools based on Japanese programs, the second generation—known as Nisei—were more oriented towards Peruvian “cultural life” (Shintani 2007; Masterson 2004). Among Nisei there was a major rate of intermarriages, most of them had religiously acculturated, lost their Japanese language skills and developed closer ties with the Peruvian society (Masterson 2004:220-221).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the favorable recovery of the Japanese economy brought a renewed interest in foreign investment and opened new opportunities for the institutionalization of the Nikkei community in Peru. The improving conditions also strengthened Nikkeis’ commitment to work under mutual aid associations and collective centers. Their institutionalization was mainly due to the fact that Nikkei Peruvians tried to maintain a “group boundary […] by identifying elements of Japanese culture as key markers of Nikkei identity” and creating associations with restrictive membership (Moorehead 2010:8). Nikkeis in Peru had to keep certain Japanese values—Nikkei values—such as honesty, hard work and perseverance (Takenaka 1999:1465-1466). These values were seen as the ethnic boundary that differentiated Nikkeis from Peruvians, giving them the right to be members of the community. Moreover, the success of the Nikkeis in Peru—measured by their social mobility, entrepreneurial skills, higher education and a middle class status—was
considered the result of their Japanese descent. This conception was not only ascribed by Peruvians, but also self-internalized by the Nikkei Peruvian community (Shintani 2007:90-91).

In conclusion, the Nikkei identity in Peru, which was promoted before the mass migration to Japan, was one that exalted and attributed the success and economic mobility of Nikkei Peruvians by virtue of their Japanese descent. Nikkeis for having “Japanese blood” should be successful and try to improve their social status. Nikkeis in Peru achieved a high degree of institutional organization which allowed them to establish what Handelman (1977) categorizes as an ethnic community. The unstable political situation in Peru during the 1980s propelled the return migration of second and third generation Nikkeis from 1990 onwards. Nikkei Peruvians in Japan would cover the labor demand in the manufacturing industry, which placed them in a lower social status than the one they enjoyed in Peru and which would be difficult to climb. In addition, Nikkei Peruvians would lose their established ethnic community and social networks which they enjoyed in Peru.

3.2. Being Nikkei in Japan: “We are all Peruvians”

Contrary to the expectation of the Japanese government, Nikkei migrants were not temporal workers; neither were they easily assimilated into Japanese society. Several factors can explain this in the case of Nikkei Peruvian migration. First, from the beginning Nikkei Peruvian migration was made up of single individuals and marriages, spouses that in most cases were not Japanese descendants. Second, the Nikkei community in Peru was a community with a higher degree of “mixed descendants.” According to a JICA survey in 1992, 30 per cent of Nikkei Peruvians were mixed—only one of their parents was a Japanese descendant—compared to only 10 per cent of Nikkei Brazilians (cited in Takenaka 2003:223). Third, second and third generation Nikkei Peruvians who migrated to Japan, although at different levels, were highly acculturated to the Peruvian culture and social life.

As the comments of Carlos and José illustrate below, despite their Japanese descent, many Nikkei Peruvians knew little about Japanese customs and the Japanese language:
When I arrived in Japan I knew nothing of Japanese. At home, my grandparents spoke some Japanese words, but that was all (Carlos, second generation Nikkei). Imagine, on the plane, we all looked like Japanese people. But when we arrived and they gave us the room we were going to live, no one knew we needed to take off our shoes (Jose, third generation Nikkei).

Even if the situation for each Nikkei was different, during the first years after migrating to Japan, Nikkei Peruvians still lacked fluency in the Japanese language. This combined with their working positions—performing manual, repetitive work in factories, surrounded only by other compatriots—did not represent a great linguistic advancement even after several years living in Japan. Thus, although many Nikkei Peruvians met the physical requirement (i.e. a phenotype that made them indistinguishable in the eyes of the Japanese) they were treated as foreigners both by the legal system and the Japanese society.

Whereas in Peru to be Nikkei was a symbol of prestige and recognition of an improved social status, in Japan Nikkei Peruvians did not enjoy such socio-economic mobility. Their position as unskilled labor, dependent on contractor services, with a limited linguistic competence and a desire to go back to Peru quickly, made Nikkei Peruvians to reconsider the validity of their “ethnic proximity” with the Japanese.

The comments that emerged between Kenzo, a third generation Nikkei, and his wife, when he was questioned if he considered that being Nikkei had offer him more opportunities in Japan, can exemplify the distinction between being Nikkei in Japan and Nikkei in Peru:

Here in Japan, privileges in Japan? (laugh). From a Japanese to me... I don’t think so. Even though I have a Japanese last name, and a Japanese given name, I always have to write my name in katakana because I am not Japanese despite my descent. […] In Peru... well, the truth is that in Peru I was seen as “something” that was not a Peruvian. (His wife interrupts and says, “And because Peruvians feel inferior and get excited when they see a foreigner, and when they hear last names like “Hayashi” and “Takeda” which sound amazing) They are
surprised. (His wife continues, “and because the Nikkei are recognized for their institutions and all that. Before all their schools were based on membership [you had to be of Japanese descent], now any person who can pay can enter.”)\(^9\)

This sense of denial that Kenzo exemplifies in how he cannot write his name with kanji is heightened by the fact that his wife, a Peruvian with non-Japanese ancestry, has been treated better in her workplace:

For example, my wife, now that we returned to Japan, got a job where she has all the social services, where before they start working they give them a talk on their rights as workers. She is treated with the same rights of a Japanese [...] that does not happen to me.

In general, Non-Nikkei spouses of Nikkei Peruvians, or those who do not have the Japanese phenotype, have greater freedoms both in terms of their Japanese competence and the performances and opinions they can express. Most Nikkeis due to their physical similarity are judged more critically by the Japanese. That is why most Nikkei Peruvians resort to different strategies to make clear that they are foreigners, such as the use of Latin American names, or clothing not common in Japan.

The meaning of what is to be Nikkei and the role Nikkeis must play has changed since the Nikkei migration to Japan started. These changes were evident during the speech given at a symposium celebrating the twenty five years of Peruvian migration to Japan, held in Yokohama in 2015. During the event, Pedro Makabe, who was president of the Japanese Peruvian Association (APJ in Spanish) for that fiscal year, expressed:

In reality, the Nikkeis are Peruvians. We are Japanese descendants, but above all we are Peruvians. In the APJ we are trying to spread the idea that the Nikkei community should integrate and contribute efficiently and effectively to the development of Peru. For example, the Nikkei cuisine that has become so famous is not really Japanese cuisine. It is Peruvian cuisine. It takes some things from
the Japanese cuisine but uses Peruvian ingredients; therefore, it is a creation of
the Peruvian cuisine. And Nikkeis are the same. We are essentially Peruvians.
We owe to Peru and our duty is to contribute to its development from our own
style and our Japanese values. It is the same for the Nikkeis who have come to
Japan, what is important is that they keep their Peruvian roots. (International
Press 2015, July 29)

The speech by the president of the APJ was symbolic since it was the first time an
authority of that association—the main association in charge of the Nikkei
community in Peru—asked Nikkei Peruvians to feel more identified with their
Peruvian roots. This view, however, is not new. It is a vision highly promoted inside
the immigrant community through different Internet portals, digital and print media
like Kyodai and Mercado Latino which are widely distributed throughout Japan. In
addition, both Peruvian and Nikkei Peruvian entrepreneurs have made use of the
term “Peruvian” without distinguishing if they are Japanese descendants or not. In
this way, the term Nikkei has lost strength in Japan and it is usually used only to
refer to the institutionalized community of Nikkeis that exists in Peru.

4 Identity Constructions and Locality Production through Associations

4.1 As for the versatility of their identity

Contrary to the research done by Takenaka (2004, 2010), I found that regarding
their associations, Nikkei Peruvians have set aside the category of “Nikkei” to make
use only of the term “Peruvian.” Even if their condition as Nikkei is something they
recognize and accept, in their associations, Nikkei Peruvians have not made use of
strict ethnic markers such as their physical appearance—whether they have a
Japanese phenotype—or nationality. In Japan, Nikkei Peruvians have discovered that
they can be “Peruvians,” “Latinos,” or “foreigners.” Of course, each ethnic category can
put them in an unfavorable position; but it also offers them some benefits in their
social life, and, in particular, expectations regarding their performance in the
Japanese society.
Moorehead (2010) argues that for Nikkei Peruvians “being gaijin [foreigner] is a master status that carries a stigma” (Moorehead 2010:17). Since the categorization of gaijin implies that they are permanent outsiders, never being able to “become” Japanese and “unassimilable to Japanese social life” (Moorehead 2010:17). Nonetheless, being “foreigners” can also offer them freedoms in their social performance and parenting customs. Such categorization can provide them with a “social license” to avoid certain standards or expectations (Matsuyama 2010:175) both individually and in collectivity.

In their life in Japan, Nikkei Peruvians have created social relations with “others” whom they consider ethnically similar. Similarities in language, cultural expressions and “ways of doing things” have led Nikkei Peruvians to discover their identity as “Latinos.” Matsuyama (2010:182) argues that the return to a Latin American identity is not only created by “a feeling of yearning, or search for identity,” but a personal revaluation. To be “Latino” represents a “new field of prestige”; a form of cultural capital that can generate new opportunities for employment, socialization or recognition in the Japanese society (Matsuyama 2010:181-183).

In the case of associations, the category of “Latino” or “Latin American” serves to promote a pan-ethnic solidarity among Spanish speakers, which give Nikkei Peruvians opportunities to obtain a greater audience both in the form of spectators and potential members. Nonetheless, there are also limitations due to the diverse forms of cultural manifestations and the kinds of festivities that exist between the groups that are included in such categorization. In addition, while Nikkei Peruvians represent a minority group in Japanese society, they are the majority within the Spanish-speaking communities of immigrants in Japan.

The “return” or rediscovery of their ethnic identity as Peruvians for Nikkei Peruvians is also the result of the growing up of the second generation. The attribution of an ethnic identity as “Peruvians” is not only an individual strategy to recreate a physical land to belong—a nation, homeland—but a strategy to inculcate an ethnic identity different to the one of the Japanese. The need for spaces where the second generation can “feel” and learn to be Peruvians is the main reason for the conformation of the associations that are discussed below.
4.2 Nikkei Peruvians’ associations in Kobe, Osaka and Kyoto

According to the ethnographic work carried out in the cities of Kobe, Osaka and Kyoto, Nikkei Peruvians have organized in three types of associations: 1) Voluntary associations, which promote the inclusion of Peruvians in the Japanese society; 2) religious associations, oriented to attend the Eucharistic celebrations offered to the Spanish-speaking community and, in particular, to maintain the celebrations for the Lord of Miracles; and 3) cultural associations, which seek to promote Peruvian folklore and cultural manifestations.

The activities produced in these associations go beyond the simple sum of individuals who know each other and identify themselves as part of the same ethnic group—and who have established an ethnic network—because members in these associations work in an organized way to meet common goals. Their ethnic character is recognized through the festive practices that reproduce “cultural forms of self-recognition and revitalization of Peruvian beliefs, traditions and folklore” (Merino Hernando 2002:108). The associations mentioned hereinafter are not remote entities, unknown among each other, or with secret activities and objectives. These associations are public, voluntary in nature, and seeking the formation of a network of collectivities. Nonetheless, they have moved away from those associations which aim only at making personal profit, or that have acquired a bad reputation among the Peruvian immigrant community in Japan.

(1) Voluntary associations: Hyogo Latin Community and Lazos Culturales de Kioto

*Hyogo Latin Community* (hereinafter HLC) is a self-help group for Spanish speakers located in the Takatori Community Center. It started as a project of the ONG World Kids Community, becoming independent and self-funded in 2011. The association has operated continually for more than sixteen years, and it relies on an extensive network of Latin Americans spread all around Japan. One of HLC’s main objectives is to help maintain a Latin American ethnic identity among the second generation of Spanish speakers who live in Japan. Therefore, one of the association’s first activities was to organize a Spanish workshop for kids. Barbara, a second generation Nikkei, who participates in these activities since the beginning, explains:
At first, we had only five children in the workshop. Four were Peruvians and one was Japanese but with Paraguayan descent. We wanted our children to learn Spanish, but we did not have the tools or the space to do it. [...] Since most of us were Peruvians, we had many Peruvian children at the beginning. Now there are more children from international families. Before we were only immigrant families [...]^{13}

It should be noted that although the association is not aimed exclusively to the Peruvian community, since most of its members are Nikkei Peruvians and its directress is also a third generation Nikkei Peruvian with a social network among Nikkeis, the association acquires a Peruvian ethnic character during most of its activities. This is particularly observed in its biggest and most representative annually event: the “Peruvian Festival in Kobe.” And it is in this event where I mostly focus my analysis on locality production.

The “Peruvian Festival in Kobe” is the biggest event organized by Peruvians in the Kansai region. To the seven-hour event attend more than 600 people, including the Nikkei Peruvians who organize the event, Japanese volunteers, artists and public which include Japanese and other Latin Americans. Authorities from the Peruvian embassies and consulates in Tokyo and Nagoya as well as the Japanese authorities from Hyogo prefecture and the city of Kobe attend the celebration. During the event discourses recognizing the presence of Peruvian and Latin American immigrants in general are produced. In this way, there is an official recognition about the participation of Peruvians in the community life of the cities in Hyogo prefecture—in particular, the participation of core members of HLC. HLC’s directress, for example, participates in the Councils for Foreigners that Hyogo prefecture and the city of Kobe carry out every year. Members of the association are also involved in disseminating information coming directly from Japanese associations for Spanish speakers in the area. Thus, the activities carried out in HLC resonate with the Japanese civil society and the government to a certain degree.

As an event that congregates a mass of people, the “Peruvian Festival in Kobe” serves to produce a situated locality, since as Shutika (2008:297) argues “always that a
The multitude is allowed to congregate in a particular place, the people legitimate their right to that place. The presence of Peruvians in a space that is public and visible is significant because it allows opportunities of socialization between Japanese and Peruvians, and other Latin Americans, which are generally atypical in their daily life. Moreover, the performances and symbolisms—dances, traditional music and food—show Nikkei Peruvians as “people with culture” and with an inherent cultural capital, which is recognized by the Japanese public. The event also serves to legitimate the right of Nikkei Peruvians to reproduce cultural practices and festivities that are common in Peru. As a Nikkei Peruvian mother who attended the 2016 event comments: “The Japanese have their matsuri [festivals] and all that. Their festivities are beautiful, but it is not the same for us. I bring my children to let them experience at least a little of Peru.”

For the main members of the association, the event symbolizes a way to guarantee future support in their activities and a shared responsibility between HLC and the Japanese authorities. This can be illustrated in the following comment given by
HLC’s directress:

The 2016 event will be our eighth edition. Now there are more Peruvians who participate in the event and more sponsors, now we can offer a better event. In part, this is because there is a major promotion of Peru in Japan and because the Japanese Peruvian community is more settled now. [...] We try to show that Peruvians can do something else besides working in factories. This does not mean that our community has integrated into the Japanese society, but this kind of events promotes multicultural understanding. If we do a good event, the Japanese authorities will continue supporting our activities.¹⁴

Furthermore, the event organized by HLC does not only generate discourses on ethnic identity among Peruvian immigrants, the festivity also includes the projections of the locality, the city of Kobe and Hyogo prefecture. The “Peruvian Festival” projects Kobe as an “international city” that complies with its policies aimed at creating a “City where People with International Sensitivity Gather and Grow” (Basic Policy Kobe 2011). Pictures of the festival and narratives of the event are published in the Japanese local newspaper and in the pamphlets of the Takatori Community Center every year, as part of the multicultural activities supported by Hyogo prefecture.

Nonetheless, not all the members and participants have the same level of engagement with the Japanese civil society. In fact, most of the participants do not reside in the city of Kobe, or Hyogo prefecture. Nikkei Peruvian folkloric groups from prefectures such as Shiga, Nagoya and even Tokyo have also attended the event. These groups despite being part of different local contexts (i.e. with a higher concentration of Nikkeis) feel identified with Nikkei Peruvians residing in Kobe and share the same ethnic markers. Therefore, we can say that the “Peruvian Festival in Kobe” also serves to exalt a sense of community that is not physically but ethnically bounded; it produces a community-oriented locality. The event also gathers most of the Peruvian collectivities integrated by Nikkei and Non-Nikkei, reinforcing the discourses that identify both categories as belonging to the same ethnic group. On the
other hand, the event “places” the participants within the context of their migration to Japan. The children of Nikkei immigrants who participate in the event identify ethnic markers—dances, music, food, socialization practices—that are established as typical of the Peruvian culture and, when they come into contact with those of their same generation, see their situation in Japan as something “common”; something that happens in Japan.

*Lazos Culturales de Kioto* (hereinafter LCK) is a recently created association. It was registered in Kyoto International Community House in 2014 as an association of foreigners. It does not receive the support from any Japanese organization and lacks a permanent physical space where its members can operate. As in the case of HLC, the association is not exclusive for Peruvians; however, most of its activities are oriented to that public. The initial activities carried out by LCK offered mutual aid activities—cooking lessons and a handicraft workshop—among the Nikkei Peruvian families that lived in Kyoto. The association was established with the help of a Japanese man, who also organized a Japanese workshop and functioned as intermediary between the Japanese authorities and the Nikkei Peruvian members to gain access to halls and community centers. However, there was little participation at the beginning and most members lacked human and social capital to promote their activities.

Since 2016 LCK operates with a specific objective: to promote the Marinera dance—a Peruvian folkloric dance—in Japan. LCK also works under the Association of Peruvians in Japan (ASPEJA), which is a non-profit organization created in 2013 through the request of the embassy and the two Peruvian consulates with the objective of establishing an organism for consensus among the different Peruvian associations that exist in Japan. As part of ASPEJA, LCK’s members are oriented to function as “cultural ambassadors” between Peru and Japan. This position became clear in one of the speeches that the Consul of Nagoya conveyed during an event where LCK launched its first International Marinera Contest Kyoto 2016:

> The international Marinera Contest proposed by LCK is an interesting event because it is a very effective way to spread a cultural aspect that is an icon for
Peru, as it is the Marinera dance. [...] I always want to congratulate parents that support and encourage the “cultivation” of our national dance. As long as Peruvian children feel the Peruvian, dance the Peruvian dances, and spread the Peruvian [culture], we are sure that our cultural values will remain [among the community]. [...] as long as there are people, parents, associations that support, promote and encourage the practice of these cultural values we are confident that we will continue having Peru not only in our hearts but also we will be able to share it with our Japanese friends [...][15]

Unlike HLC’s vision of offering self-help services for a better integration of Latin Americans and their children, LCK’s main activities only focus on promoting the Peruvian culture in the Japanese society. At the same time, the members seek to attract the Peruvian public to become consumers of the cultural events they organize. Therefore, their activities mostly produce a community-oriented locality. To the Marinera contest that LCK organized in 2016, for example, only Peruvian authorities
attended the event. Although there were some Japanese among the public, most of the audience were Peruvian participants and their families. The event was published in the Spanish media both in Peru and Japan, but it was not covered by any local Japanese media. Since LCK lacks Japanese support it relies on alliances with other Spanish-speaking associations, most of them profit oriented.

Nonetheless, in order to negotiate the use of spaces like community centers and to gain opportunities to promote their Marinera activities among the Japanese public, the core members of LCK have been involved in some way with the Japanese civil society. The dance group of the association participates in different international and multicultural events organized in the city of Kyoto and the surrounding areas. In a certain way, a weak situated locality is also produced in this association although its impact is less pronounced than in the case of HLC.

(2) Religious and folkloric groups

Perhaps one of the earliest forms of collectivities among Nikkei immigrants, outside the workplace, was through religion. Soon after their arrival, Nikkei immigrants found in the Catholic Church a place that, although recognized them as immigrants, welcomed them under the category of “universal Christians.” Since the early years of their migration to Japan, Nikkei Peruvians began to negotiate the recognition of their cultural manifestations within the Catholic Church. Thus, in 1990, Nikkei Peruvians as well as Non-Nikkei Peruvians residing in the city of Kobe were able to celebrate, for the first time, a mass in honor of the Lord of Miracles—a highly venerated image in Peru. From 1994 to 2007, the church in Sumiyoshi, Kobe, would even allow a pilgrimage to take place in the surrounding streets to the congregation. These celebrations have been replicated in different parts of Japan: in Shiga the celebration started in 1993, Kanagawa in 2001, Hirakata (Osaka) in 2009, Isesaki (Gunma) in 2011, among others.

During my observations in a congregation in Osaka that did not officiated masses in Spanish until recent years, the Nikkeis and Peruvians who participated in the Spanish masses expressed that the reason for creating a religious group was the accessibility of the religious authorities to their Peruvians practices. The priest
allowed them to use the physical space of the church to practice their Marinera
dance, as long as they were committed to the communal norms and responsibilities of
the congregation. This is how an associative entity dedicated to the activities of the
Spanish masses was formed. In their position as a majority ethnic group in the
masses in Spanish, the Nikkei Peruvian families of this congregation in Osaka sought
the incorporation of the veneration to the Lord of Miracles, despite the fact that other
congregations in the same prefecture where already taking place. The celebration of
the Lord of Miracles resulted in the creation of a more restrictive kind of group,
which was only conformed by Nikkei Peruvians and Non-Nikkei Peruvians.

Nikkei Peruvian families who participate in the ecclesiastical and conviviality
celebrations—such as Palm Sunday, or more ludic celebrations like Mother’s day—
aim to indoctrinate their children in a Catholic faith and the community life of the
church. At the same time, in their position as a majority group, Nikkei Peruvian
families have managed to incorporate cultural elements of Peru into their
celebrations. Thus, the religious activities organized by these associations produce
both types of locality. On the one hand, members who are part of the ecclesiastical
committee produce a situated locality. Their group becomes part of the Catholic
community in Japan, which means shared responsibilities with the groups of the
Japanese and the English masses, represented mainly by Filipino immigrants. In the
religious association observed, given that the majority of the members of the Spanish
group are also members of the Marinera group that practices in the church, Peruvian
Nikkeis have the responsibility to participate, with their dances and Peruvian
cuisine, in the events—mostly charity events and international masses—organized by
the congregation, even if these events are not part of the activities of the Spanish
group.

On the other hand, a community-oriented locality is also produced since the main
objective of the Nikkei Peruvian families who attend the Spanish masses is to
produce “local subjects,” individuals who follow the Catholic faith under particular
manifestation of the Peruvian culture. During a meeting held in the congregation I
observed, Nikkei Peruvians met on a weekday to decide how they would vote for the
new Spanish committee to be selected on the following weekend. The justification was
that they had to select only Nikkei Peruvians or Non-Nikkei Peruvians because if people of other nationalities entered the group, the celebration of the Lord of Miracle, which Nikkei Peruvians consider as a particular aspect of the Peruvian culture, would not be the same. Therefore, even though Nikkei Peruvians have associated through religious groups for the Spanish masses, they have tried to do it while incorporating particular aspects of the Peruvian community limiting the participation of other ethnic groups in their activities.

The folkloric associations I could observe among Nikkei Peruvians were mostly dedicated to practice Marinera and other Peruvian dances. Although there is not a proper dance academy in the cities examined, informal dance groups are well known among the community since most of them participate in the events organized by voluntary associations like HLC and LCK. Most of the dance groups are also associated with religious congregations, being an indispensable element in the celebration of the Lord of Miracles. Generally, Nikkei Peruvians’ folkloric groups negotiate the use of spaces obtained by other associations or, in some cases, use restaurants and small businesses owned by other Nikkei Peruvians. Their activities are mainly carried out inside their ethnic community, reason why I consider that the locality produced is a community-oriented locality. Nonetheless, some groups like “Este es mi Perú”—a well-known Peruvian folkloric group in Osaka—have also become involved in the civil society of the cities were their members reside, being invited to participate in multicultural events or matsuri organized by the Japanese authorities.

5 Conclusions

According to the Nikkei Peruvians’ associations observed, I can conclude that Nikkei Peruvians have not tended to organize in collectivities with rigorous ethnic markers like being of Japanese descent or having a Japanese phenotype as it was the case of the Nikkei Peruvians in Peru. Instead, Nikkei Peruvians in Japan have chosen categories that position them as part of broader ethnic classifications; they have used categories like “foreigners,” “Latin Americans,” or simply “Peruvians.”
Under such positions, Nikkei Peruvians have created formal and semi-formal associations with purposes ranging from keeping a Latin American identity in the second generation as in the case of the Spanish workshop organized by HLC, to more ludic activities as in the case of the Marinera contests organized by LCK.

Nonetheless, Nikkei Peruvians’ long-term residency in Japan has resulted in a rediscovery of their Peruvian ethnic identity. The arrival of the second generation has been one of the main causes of this reinvention of the Peruvian culture in Japan, which is particularly noticeable in the Marinera contests where the majority of the participants are children and teenagers who speak more Japanese than Spanish, but that have passports that identify them as Peruvians. Moreover, there has been a boom among the Peruvian authorities and the Nikkei Peruvian entrepreneurs who are trying to promote Peruvian cultural manifestations in Japan. Some Nikkeis’ associations are more oriented toward this kind of “cultural revival” as in the case of LCK and most folkloric groups. However, it is difficult to measure whether the Marinera contests, organized by associations like LCK in Kyoto and “Este es mi Perú” in Osaka, can resonate with the Japanese society in the long run.

It is much more accurate to conclude that locality is reproduced differently among the kind of associations immigrants organize into and the role that individuals play in them. In the case of Nikkei Peruvians, most key members—directors and organizers—tend to produce a sense of local belonging that includes the Japanese society in what they define as “community.” In other words, they produce a situated locality; recognizing that meaningful relationships with the Japanese are necessary in order to make use of the local resources to carry out activities that help the Nikkei Peruvian community to gain recognition as part of the civil society in Japan. Most Nikkei Peruvians who participate in the associations I observed, however, are not equally involved in their activities, or in some cases they belong to different local contexts—a different prefecture or city. Their participation still produces a kind of local belonging. This locality is community-oriented, since it is based on the notion of a shared Peruvian ethnic identity and contextualized in their migration experience to Japan. This kind of community-oriented locality is manifested in most Nikkei Peruvians’ associations I observed, what defies previous studies on Nikkei
communities which have concluded that Nikkeis would assimilate into Japanese society after they decide to settle in Japan. This analysis of Nikkei Peruvians' associations can illustrate part of the integration process of the immigrant community. However, further research focused on second generation Nikkei Peruvians in Japan is still necessary.

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Notes
1) The name and specific place of the religious groups observed are not included to keep the privacy of the participants. In the case of the voluntary associations, their respective directors allowed the use of their names. People’s names are pseudonyms.
2) The core of Barth’s theory is on considering the ethnic group as one where its members self-identify as “us” and are identified by “others” as part of a different ethnic group; the ethnic boundary is created only by the dichotomy between “us” and “them” (Barth 1969:6-11).
3) Handelman (1977) argues that, depending on the level of incorporation that the individual has towards the ethnic group, four levels can be distinguished: ethnic category, ethnic network, ethnic association and ethnic community.
4) Handelman only considers as ethnic associations those that fulfill a political purpose. However, Eriksen (2010) generalizes the ethnic association as an extension of the ethnic category. For him the ethnic association “embodies the presumed shared interests of the ethnic category at a collective, corporative level” (Eriksen 2010:50).
5) Takenaka (1999:1466-1467) argues that although Nikkei associations in Peru officially allow the entry to any Japanese descendant. In reality, there is a preference for those whose both parents are Japanese, or of Japanese descent, and those who come from a middle-class family.
6) I borrow this expression from the answer most participants gave me when questioned whether there was a difference between being Nikkei and Non-Nikkei.
7) Carlos, second generation Nikkei, resides in Hyogo prefecture since 1990. He is married to a fourth generation Nikkei and has three daughters. Personal interview (February 21, 2016).
8) José, third generation Nikkei, arrived in Yokohama in 1990. He currently resides in
Hyogo prefecture with his wife, a Non-Nikkei Peruvian, and his son. Personal Interview (February 27, 2016).

9) Kenzo, third generation Nikkei, came to Japan in 2004. He moved repeatedly back and forth between Peru and Japan until he married a Non-Nikkei Peruvian and decided to settle in Kyoto. Personal interview (March 24, 2016).


11) Although belonging to the associations described in this paper is not limited to a certain nationality or being of Japanese descent, there are certain moral rules and a period of probation necessary to enter to these associations. However, the events they organize are open to the general public.

12) The Takatori Community Center is located in Nagata, Kobe. The center is the successor of the “Takatori Relief Base” which was the center of operations for the volunteer efforts after the Great Hanshin, Awaji earthquake in 1995. It houses ten NPOs and NGOs, including Hyogo Latin Community. Its goal is “building a community where residents with different cultures, nationalities, ages, and disabilities can understand each other and enjoy a fulfilling life as members of the same community” (Takatori Community Center Pamphlet. n.d.).

13) Barbara, second generation Nikkei, migrated to Japan and settled in Hyogo prefecture where she owns a house and lives with his husband and two children. Personal interview (January 23, 2016).


15) Fragment of the speech given by the Consul of Peru in Nagoya, Gustavo Peña Chamot, at the end of “Kyoto Unido 2016,” an event organized by LCK to promote its first Marinera contest in Kyoto (February 2, 2016).

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