CHAPTER THREE

JAPANESE PEOPLE OVERSEAS: AN AUSTRALIAN CASE-STUDY

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the relevant literature for this research, and have developed the sojourner concept, elaborating on its variations. In this chapter, the focus is upon the population movements of Japanese people in order to deepen insight into contemporary migration. The previous chapter has dealt with theoretical issues of permanence or temporariness in relation to sojourning. The characteristics of contemporary Japanese sojourners and settlers in Australia, and the grounds for their movement to Australia, will be described by reference to the relevant literatures, including official Australian and Japanese government census data regarding Japanese residents of Australia. In the first section, the trends in Japanese arrivals in Australia will be examined, with special attention to post-Second World War movements. More recent migration movements, related to the significant developments in multi-lateral relationships between the two countries, will be described in the second section—the relevance of this research has emerged with the dramatic rise in the number of Japanese settler arrivals since the 1980s. In the third section, a comparison between temporary and permanent status of Japanese residents and an examination of their attitudes towards naturalisation is presented. The last section of this chapter will show the characteristics of the long-term and permanent movements of Japanese people by analysing their arrivals and departures data.

3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE VISITORS: AN OVERVIEW

3.1.1 Japanese Emigration in Pre- and Post-War Periods

Currently, Japanese residents in Australia’s major coastal cities form a somewhat visible sub-class of wealthy expatriate business people, some of whom have already settled in Australia. Previously, in pre-war and the immediate post-war period, Japanese emigrants, to whatever destination, were generally characterised as ‘economic refugees’.
Japan’s flimsy economy promoted the mass migration of these ‘economic refugees’. Their main purpose was to accumulate capital to ensure a secure life back home in Japan (some examples of early Japanese emigrants to the United States of America from the late 19th to the first quarter of 20th century have been described in Chapter II). Many had no option but to leave their homes to keep bread on the table for themselves and their families. However, their improved living standard, and their general satisfaction with their new living conditions, promoted the emergence of new and different kind of emigrant. In socio-graphic terms they are, by and large, characterised by their own individual movement, which now includes a career-oriented and professionally-motivated change of residence.

Contemporary Japanese migration to Australia contrasts sharply with earlier Japanese migration, particularly in terms of the financial position and professional motivation for emigration. They participate in local activities of the host community more readily than the previous ‘economic refugee’ migrant. But, the recent Japanese emigration of permanent settlers to foreign lands is not itself a mass phenomenon and the numbers of such emigrants are still small.

3.1.2 War Brides

The analysis of current Japanese settler movements is often related to the range of choices available to the individual. Immediately after the war, Japanese people were not able to apply for Australian citizenship and it was difficult for them to stay permanently. The

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1 Wilson and Hosokawa (1980: 44) depict the characteristic patterns of Japanese immigrants to the United States of America as follows: the vast majority of Issei (first generation Japanese-immigrants) were young male bachelors who came from agrarian families. Kitano agrees that the majority of Issei were from “individually poor families”, but he adds, “they are from a respectable class of people who set much store by the ownership of land” (1976: 11). Many Issei were initially transient workers whose motivation to save in order to obtain a secure life back in Japan derived from the fact that they were second or third sons who did not have a prospect of inheriting family land. Iwata indicates that most Issei were unmarried males under thirty-five leaving their homeland to seek better economic conditions (Iwata 1962: 27). On the contrary, Yamamoto (1996) argues, that many Issei are first sons who were responsible for supporting their (often extended) families.

2 Nihon Keizai Shinbun (17 June 1993) reports that the major destinations for Japanese emigrants have shifted from South-Central America to Canada and Australia with a predominance of techno-professional migrants.

3 Australia has had very tight restrictions on Asian immigration since Federation