CHAPTER SIX

THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF SOJOURNERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

This concluding chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, the various types of sojourners will be described. This has been one of the main objects of this study from the outset. The second section introduces some types of Japanese emigrants with a general focus on their social backgrounds in contemporary Japan. Then, in relation to data-analysis from previous chapters, I will explain how the sojourner community is maintained. Then, I will conclude with some illustrations that highlight features of the sojourner community, and discuss issues that should be considered in future sociological research.

6.1 Refining the Sojourner Concept

6.1.1 Process and Outcome of Permanent/Temporary Residency

This research has continuously confronted the fact that the sojourner concept is associated with temporary residency, and we have attempted to address some serious conceptual difficulties that have had to be overcome. The following problem inevitably emerges.

If the sojourner is defined as a ‘foreigner who stays temporarily in the host society’, then the application of this concept is not possible until the outcome of individual settlement experience is established.

Thus, it is necessary to undertake further empirical research to determine the meaning of temporary or permanent residence. This is central to the sojourner concept itself and the characteristics we ascribe to it. Having searched for appropriate categories in the definition of the sojourner, we have come to the view that an individual settler’s physical and mental modes must also be examined. Some observers, (e.g. Siu, 1952; Uriely, 1994) look at the social status of respondents, their cultural stances, and their self-identification. Others (e.g. Harvey, 1978; Thompson, 1980) have undertaken research into return migration and present the statements of individual respondents (see Chapter
II). The former, apart from their analytic character as ethnicity studies, adhere to the concept of the sojourner, while the latter is concerned with societal backgrounds which influence a migrant’s decision to return to their home country, and does not entertain the possibility that the definition of the sojourner is applicable to the context of foreigner settlement patterns. Those empirical observations provide valuable insights to understand sojourners at a micro level. On the other hand, the Australian government’s data is based on a simple classification of ‘arrivals and departures’ which is interesting data if we take account of the sojourn of migrants, such as return movements, at a macro level, though there is little analytical inquiry into what could be behind those movements.

When we focus on the processes by which settlers or sojourners settle, rather than force all the data into the abstract straight-jacket demanded by the outcome, we find that some are at various transition stages, changing their situation from sojourner to settler or from settler to sojourner. However, these processes do not always lead to the (sojourner) outcome and while the processes continue, we can expect to see cases of multiple migrations. Some settlers re-migrate to their ex-host society after returning to their homeland. Probably, some re-migrate and return and again re-migrate and return. Moreover, in some multiple-migration, a third country may be involved as a transition or a destination.

It is problematic to ascertain the outcome. Even among reluctant-returnees, who involuntarily go back to their homeland against their wish of remaining in the host community, after returning to Japan they may again migrate to Australia in the future. Or they may in fact come to forget their previous wish to stay elsewhere. This process is correlated to the outcome of their residency. Yet when we think of the outcome, the processes of residency must be re-examined. On the one hand, when we analyse the process, the outcomes are considered to illustrate the foreign people who are at transition stages. To start with the outcome, instead of analysing the process it is simple to evaluate migration movements as if all can be neatly classified in one or other place. Since it is so often difficult to draw a demarcation line between sojourners and settlers, and there are some common characteristics between them, we might get further if we simply re-considered the process of our theorising.

In a previous and outstanding study of the sojourner, Siu (1952, 1987) focused on permanent residents in the United States, rather