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Introduction

In *Nostromo*, Joseph Conrad describes tortures suffered by Dr. Monygham in a mythical New World Nation, concluding, "And these conditions seemed to bind him indissolubly to the land of Costaguana like an awful procedure of naturalization, involving him deep in the national life, far deeper than any amount of success and honour could have done" (319).

How does one become American? Peruvian author Alejandro Sakuda's story begins with his father, Yintaro, who emigrated from Japan at the age of nineteen. Although he encountered discrimination and underhanded tactics in Peru, Yintaro became known as don José to his friends, who went to great lengths to help him as he struggled through an era of sackings, riots and deportations during World War II. Afterwards, however, Yintaro would not accept the defeat of Japan, an attitude that made his family's recovery more difficult. Finally realizing that he had been duped by fanatics, Yintaro changed his views and began to accept the land of his children, even becoming adept at cooking *comida criolla*. When he returned to visit his original homeland in 1978, Yintaro felt like a foreigner, having spent fifty-four years in his adopted country.

Moving in a different direction, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, having once enjoyed success and honor achieved in the land of his birth, fled in November 2000 to the land of his forefathers. In Tokyo, the *dekasegi*, descendants of Japanese immigrants to Peru who have in turn emigrated, are considered *peruanos*. Denying this designation, Fujimori, the most famous *dekasegi*, now claims Japanese citizenship in a bid to avoid trial under the government of his successor, Alejandro Toledo.

In spite of the *dekasegi* phenomenon, over 55,000 current Peruvians of Japanese descent continue to share in the abruptly changing fortunes of their country. Even if Fujimori has lost interest in them, the government of Junichiro Koizumi has not; a multi-lingual pamphlet distributed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency observes, "At present, in the regions of Central and South America, emigrants from Japan and their descendants are greatly contributing to the enhancement of a friendly and cooperative relationship between Japan and the countries where they live" (7). The agency teaches Japanese language skills to Nikkei and promotes opportunities for them to study and find work in Japan. A brochure advertising the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum proclaims its dedication "to Those Japanese Who Have Taken Part in Molding New Civilizations in the Americas."[1]

On the American side of the Pacific Ocean, much recent interest in Japanese and Japanese-Americans has centered on their tortures, suffered during World War II. The number of Peruvian publications from the 1990s dealing with Japanese immigrants and their Andean descendants reveal a surge of interest similar to that which occurred in the United States during the 1970s and in Canada in the 1980s. Reading the Peruvian works as part of an American discourse that includes John Okada's *No-No Boy* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* allows readers "to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities" that Homi Bhabha seeks to surpass, "and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (1-2). These works also lead to new considerations of Bhabha's "condition of hybridity" in the context of a socio-cultural America that is Latin space observed by Néstor García Canclini, where many

identities and cultures co-exist (139). Exploring the differing experiences and deferring of constructed nationalities among American authors of Japanese descent as they report on the varied processes of uncovering identity in three American countries during the twentieth century illuminates the socio-cultural space of the Western Hemisphere, sometimes called America.

Peruvian Texts in an American Context

Postwar texts on the treatment of Japanese-Americans, written by the children of Japanese immigrants to the United States, can be divided into three periods. Works from the 1950s either came quickly to terms with the existing power structure, as does Monica Sone in *Nisei Daughter*, or remained buried, the case with John Okada's *No-No Boy*. This should by no means cause today's readers to discard these works; Sone's book, in spite of its inconsistent denouement, contains powerful messages. Following the flowering of civil rights movements in the late 1960s and 1970s, writers overtly considered the lasting effects of the Japanese-American incarceration in new works such as Yoshiko Uchida's *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family* along with new editions of works from the previous era. This second phase was connected with successful demands for government reparations to concentration camp survivors and, more importantly, a formal acknowledgement and apology from the President of the United Sates. A third stage, begun in the late 1990s and early years of the twenty-first century, needs to blossom further before it can receive all of the critical attention it deserves; so far, it shows signs of bringing the Japanese-American experience into a wider theoretical discourse probing theories actually practiced as opposed to theories enunciated on all sides by ideological State apparatuses of the United States. Essays such as Lisa Lowe's "Canon, Institutionalization, Identity: Asian American Studies" and Janet Cooper's "A Two-Headed Freak and a Bad Wife Search for Home: Border Crossing in *Nisei Daughter* and *The*

Mixquiahuala Letters" provide substantial indications of the critical possibilities readers can expect as this third era continues to develop. New histories, such as *What Did the Internment of Japanese Americans Mean?*, edited by Alice Yang Murray, help contextualize these scholarly essays. Although the contemporary situation of Japanese-Americans in the United States compares well with that of the 1940s, the Supreme Court decisions that led to incarceration without trial of over a hundred thousand people have never been reversed, leaving the world's most highly-fortified nation with immigration policies that invite further abuses.

Although published in 1984, Canadian writer Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* should be regarded as a close relative of this third stage of Japanese-American writing in the United States. Like the works from the second stage, it changed attitudes and policies in the author's country, but its powerful voice—foreshadowing Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in its manner of compelling readers to keep turning pages even as it delves into a complex realm of history, psychology, politics and emotions—may have helped create even more change in current Canadian immigration policy. Eric Scott, who recalled ethnic hate campaigns of the 1930s and 1940s in his film, *Je me souviens*, points to a cosmopolitan sense of coexistence that validates the inclusion of all groups as Canada actively encourages immigration from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Americas.

Works by Peruvian *Nikkei*[2] fall into the second and third stages of their North American counterparts, along with an emphasis on extensive historical research and international context that sometimes threatens to overwhelm the personal stories. Amelia Morimoto, a specialist in Japanese immigration to Peru, produces varied publications dealing with the history of Japanese immigrants and their descendants. In *Los inmigrantes japoneses en el Perú*, published in 1979, she provides a chronological history supported by charts, tables, statistics and old black and white photographs. In a 1999 text, *Los japoneses y sus descendientes en el Perú*, she provides a

reflective consideration that also speculates on reverse migration by the *Nikkei* and its possible effects on Peruvian society. Another book from 1999, *La memoria del ojo: cien años de presencia japonesa en el Perú*, assembled by Morimoto in collaboration with poet and screenwriter José Watanabe and photographer Oscar Chambi, features beautifully reproduced photographs accompanying a poetic text that brings these efforts closer to the third period. The title of my talk today comes from a suicide note recorded in that book: "Perdonen que manche esta sagrada tierra con mi sangre" (76).

Peruvian *Nisei* Mary Fukumoto Sato employs a style of ethnography that moves from general observation to empathetic investigation. Luis Millones, in the Prologue to Fukumoto's[3] *Hacia un nuevo sol: japoneses y sus descendientes en el Perú: historia, cultura e identidad*, points out, "From the beginning of chapter eleven (Migrants, Their Descendants and Peruvian *Nikkei* Culture), the book takes an intimate turn. The subjects are her own family members, and the voice of her mother, aged matriarch of a large family that I have come to know, gives this tale a moving tone"[4] (20).

Lima born journalist Alejandro M. Sakuda, whose parents emigrated from Okinawa, brings this material firmly into the third stage with his 1999 publication, *El futuro era el Perú: cien años o más de inmigración japonesa*. Sakuda's work at the Peruvian periodicals *El Diario*, *La Crónica*, and *Correo*, and directorships at *La República* and *El Sol* have trained him in the creation of widely-accessible prose on a variety of events and issues, allowing his history of Japanese-Peruvians to move seamlessly between the personal and grandly historical, relating bits of folklore and international frameworks while keeping readers engaged.

The War Years

In *Los japoneses y sus descendientes en el Perú* Amelia Morimoto describes an anti-Japanese campaign in the Peruvian newspaper, *La Prensa*, called "La Infiltración Japonesa." PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) leader Manuel Seoane, declared, "three thousand young men and women learn in their native language, and each morning swear loyalty to [Japanese emperor] Hirohito"[5] (104). Alejandro Sakuda entertainingly demonstrates how *El Cancionero de Lima* took part in this, as well. The *Cancionero*, adds Sakuda, was anti-Japanese well before Pearl Harbor, at one time alerting Peruvians to the danger of being poisoned in Japanese-owned restaurants (259). A source of faddish waltzes, polkas, topical songs and sea chanteys, the *Cancionero* published a lyric related to the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor in issue number 1,388. This was sung to the tune of *La Cucaracha*:

> Los japoneses, los japoneses
> con su taimada agresión,
> se han igualado a los alemanes
> atacando así traición.(249-250)

One Nikkei witness remembers, "When the attackers arrived at Uncle Nobuchan's market, his Peruvian neighbors came and defended it. They stopped them at the door with sticks and rocks, and the crowd that came to destroy gave it a wide berth"[6] (102). Another recalls, "At San Agustín there was a police stand. We were obliged to pass there when we came from school. This was '40, '41. The guard called us, he grouped all of us kids together and: 'March for half an hour and then salute the flag.' Why? Well, in order to say that we were Peruvians. We were Peruvians, weren't we?"[7] (174).

Ironically, the fascist party, *Unión Revolucionaria*, as well as the more mainstream *Apristas* took part in this campaign. Meanwhile, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, leader of the more centrist PRI, advised the US embassy in Lima, that the large Japanese population was working closely with the smaller German community in Peru to create plans for a takeover of much of Latin America in case of a German victory in Europe, writes Sakuda, adding that Dr. Haya de la Torre was supposedly looking possible Japanese plans in case of war between Japan and the United States. These plans included burning all of their own stores and retreating to the Japanese-Peruvian center of Chancay, where they would be able to survive the duration.

Such appeals to the colossus of the north found a sympathetic hearing. Years before World War II, the United States had begun sending FBI agents to all of the countries of the Americas in order to assemble lists of suspicious Japanese, German and Italian residents. Washington officials expressed particular concern about retaining control of the Panama Canal in case of war. This provided a rationale for many initiatives, including the building of a United States military base in the petroleum region of Talara. "For this reason," writes Sakuda, "it was not strange that just forty-eight hours after the brutal attack on Pearl Harbor, the North American and Peruvian authorities had prepared 'blacklists' related to 'potentially dangerous enemy aliens.' On December 9, 1941, 159 Japanese had already been selected without knowing how they had come to be in this situation"[8]

"Who was captured and sent to concentration camps in Texas and Montana in order to be exchanged for North American prisoners?" asks *La memoria del ojo*.

> There had been blacklists with names of diplomats, leaders, professors and very successful merchants. But artisans, farmers, tailors, hairdressers were also sent because of unfounded suspicions or for not having paid quotas demanded by

> corrupt civil servants. . . Between 1941 and 1945 3,000 citizens from Japan, Germany and Italy from Latin America arrived at the concentration camps. The great majority—2,300—were Japanese, and more than 80% had been sent from Peru.[9] (102)

Unlike the Japanese-Americans living in the states of California, Oregon and Washington, these prisoners were sent to a foreign country with totally unfamiliar language and customs.

Sakuda provides information about the role of United States embassy Third Secretary John K. Emmerson in the deportation of Peruvian-Japanese. "For twenty months, between 1942 and 1943, he was an indispensable player in the deportations. Thirty-five years later, however, this same Emmerson would say: during my time of service at the embassy we came across no verifiable evidence of sabotage, subversion or espionage among the Japanese in Peru"[10] (267). This lack of knowledge, Sakuda writes, did nothing to deter the embassy official's mission.

> Emmerson insisted on the continued expulsion of Japanese community leaders, counting on the active participation of George Tsung-yuan Woo, of the Chinese legation, with whom he investigated the activities of the Nipponese migrants in Peru, even though the Chinese later admitted that they knew nothing about said activities, as they had not had any relationship with the Japanese since their country's invasion of China in 1931.[11] (270)

Outside of diplomatic circles, "Chinese businessmen raised the flag of their country with the aim of not being confused with the Japanese and avoiding being looted. Some of them hung banners that said, 'Yo soy chinito, no soy japonés'"[12] (230).

The reasons for Peruvian cooperation in these US-directed efforts differed little from those motives uncovered in the United States. Some Peruvian businessmen were able remove

competitors, even stealing their property and other assets. Most deportees never returned, and those that did often found recovery of their homes and businesses impossible. Other Peruvians took part in the harassment and expulsion of their neighbors and fellow citizens because they simply hated anyone who looked or sounded different. Having rounded up people deemed suspicious, Manuel Prado's government found sending them to the United States cheaper than maintaining them under Peruvian custody.

Most of those deported to the United States considered themselves Peruvians. "On average, they had been living in Peru for more than forty years, and none had a police record,"[13] writes Sakuda. By December 1945, however, eight hundred "Peruvian-Japanese voluntarily departed for Japan and in 1946, one hundred thirty more even though many of them wished to return to Peru. The Peruvian government, for its part, initially accepted the return of Germans but not Japanese; later, it accepted only Peruvian citizens and those Japanese with Peruvian family members. In the end, only one hundred returned to Peru in October 1946."[14] Even in the early months of 1947, there were still three hundred Peruvian-Japanese in the US, most with family still in Peru, waiting for permission to return. Deportations to Japan were suspended in 1953. The majority of Peruvian-Japanese remaining applied for US residency. Some kept trying to go back to Peru. In the end, *La memoria del ojo* notes, "Some went back to see their families, others didn't"[15] (111).

Thoughts for Further Exploration

Watanabe, Morimoto and Chambi describe—as the other texts suggest—the Peruvian *Nikkei* in terms of a contemporary *mestizaje* that commentator Janet Cooper finds lacking in works from the United States, where "border crossings" lead to the rejection of old unwanted identities rather than a fusion of two or more cultures (160). Possibly, differences in Peru,

including a longer history of inter-marriage initiated during Spanish conquest, allows the descendants of Japanese immigrants more space in which to experiment with cultural balances. If so, this could help Peru develop into one of Cooper's "sites in which the negotiation of competing influences through a *mestiza*-like consciousness can take place" (173).

Alternately caged like vermin and envied neighbor, impoverished migrant and over-achieving entrepreneur, feared outsider and model of the perfectly-conceived insider, individual Nikkei do not fit neatly into accustomed discourse on minority populations. Tales of American experiences during World War II, related by American descendants of Japanese immigrants, sharpen these contradictions, nurturing prospects of a conversion from the criminalization and recrimination of ethnic identity within hegemonic systems into socially useful hybridities arising from multi-faceted contemplations of multi-culturality.

In *La memoria del ojo*, José Watanabe recalls a piece of haiku written in Spanish by his grandmother, Harumi Watanabe:

> No me inquieta el silencio
> del campo: mañana
> todos los gorjeos" (230).

I leave you with my attempt at a translation:

> The country silence disturbs me
> not: tomorrow all
> will be a-twittering.

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[1] I am very grateful to Andrew Bushaw for providing copies of material from the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and for explaining differences in outlook between some Nisei and recent Japanese immigrants to the United States.

[2] "The nickname 'Nikkei' [from the Japanese *nikkeijn*] is employed in English, Portuguese and Spanish" for overseas Japanese or those in non-Japanese territory. Today Nikkei "supposedly identifies their American nationalities and differentiates them from those with Japanese citizenship. ("El apócope 'nikkei' [del *nikkeijn* en japonés] es empleado en los idiomas inglés, portugués y español" and "supuestamente para remarcar sus nacionalidades americanas y diferenciarse de los japonés o de la nacionalidad japonesa" from *Los japoneses y sus descendientes en el Perú* 25) I am responsible for this and all subsequent translations from Spanish into English in this paper.

[3] Like their fellow citizens, Peruvian-Japanese have adopted the Spanish custom of using the surnames of both parents. Those not familiar with Spanish may sometimes be confused when the father's family name is the only one employed, as is the case here with Fukumoto for Fukumoto Sato. Although common, this rule has no hard and fast application, as readers can see from the usual identifications of Márquez (Gabriel García) Lorca (Federico García) and Canclini (Néstor García), writers whose mother's names were more interesting than their father's.

[4] "A partir del capítulo XI (Los migrantes, sus descendientes y la cultura *nikkei* peruana) el libro toma un giro intimista. Su propia familia se suma a los informantes, y la voz de su madre, anciana matriarca de una larga familia que alcancé a conocer, confiere al relato un tono con movedor."

[5] "...tres mil hombres y mujeres jóvenes realizan sus estudios en su lengua nativa y cada mañana juran lealtad a Hirohito."

[6] "Cuando los asaltantes estaban llegando al bazar de tío Nobuchan, sus amigos peruanos vinieron y lo defendieron. Se pararon en la puerta con palos y piedras, y el gentío que venía rompiendo todo mejor se pasó de largo."

[7] "En San Agustín había un puesto policial. Cuando veníamos del colegio, obligado pasar por allí. Era el '40, '41. El guardia nos llamaba, nos agrupaba a todos los muchachos y: 'Marchen media hora y después saluden a la bandera.' ¿Por qué? Para decir que éramos peruanos, pues. Éramos peruanos, ¿no?"

[8] "Por eso no extrañó que a tan sólo 48 horas del brutal ataque a Pearl Harbor, las autoridades norteamericanos y peruanos tuvieran preparadas 'listas negras' con la relación de los 'enemigos extranjeros potencialmente peligrosos.' El 9 de diciembre de 1941 había ya 159 japoneses seleccionados en el Perú que no sabían cómo ni por qué se encontraban en esa situación."

[9] "¿A quienes capturar y enviar a los campos de concentración de Texas y Montana donde esperarían su canje con norteamericanos prisioneros? Había listas negras con nombres de diplomáticos, líderes, profesores, comerciantes de mayor éxito. Pero también fueron deportados artesanos, agricultores, sastres, peluqueros, por sospechas infundadas o por no pagar el cupo que exigían los funcionarios corruptos. [...] Entre 1941 y 1945 llegaron a los campos de concentración 3 000 ciudadanos japoneses, alemanes e italianos procedentes de la América Latina. La gran mayoría, 2 300, eran japoneses y más del 80% había sido enviado desde el Perú."

[10] "Durante 20 meses, entre 1942 y 1943, jugó un papel fundamental en la deportación. Sin embargo, 35 años más tarde, el propio Emmerson diría: durante mi período al servido de la embajada no encontramos ninguna evidencia confiable de actos de sabotaje, subversión o espionaje entre los japoneses en el Perú" (quoted by Sakuda, from John K. Emmerson, *The Japanese Thread: A Life in the U.S. Foreign Service*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978, p. 148.)

[11] "Emmerson insistía en su proyecto de expulsar a los líderes de la colonia japonesa y para ello contaba con la activa participación de George Tsung-yuan Woo, de la legación china, con quien investigaba las actividades de los in migrantes nipones en el Perú, aunque los chinos admitieron después que no conocían dichas actividades, pues no habían tenido ninguna relación con los japoneses desde que se produjo la invasión de este país a China en 1931."

[12] "Los comerciantes chinos izaban la bandera de su país a fin de no ser confundidos con los japoneses y así evitar ser saqueados. Algunos colocaban carteles que decían: 'Yo soy chinito, no soy japonés.'" (I am a [little, implying cute or at least harmless] Chinese, I am not Japanese.)

[13] "En promedio, se encontraban residiendo en el Perú más de 40 años y ninguno tenía antecedentes policiales."

[14] "peruano-japoneses partieron voluntariamente al Japón y en 1946, ciento treinta más, a pesar de que muchos de ellos deseaban regresar al Perú. El gobierno peruano, por su lado, aceptaba el retorno de los alemanes, pero no de los japoneses en un inicio; posteriormente, aceptó sólo el retorno de los ciudadanos peruanos y de aquellos japoneses emparentados con peruanos. Finalmente, sólo cien regresaron al Perú en octubre de 1946."

[15] "algunos volvieron a ver sus familias, otros no."