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The Reality of a Caribbean Paradise: A Historical Overview of Japanese Immigration to the Dominican Republic

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The Reality of a Caribbean Paradise:
A Historical Overview of Japanese Immigration to the Dominican Republic

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
Amy Yanet Mariano

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2016
For those who have sacrificed for our generation
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This project to me represents the combination of two of my biggest interests, Asia and Latin America. Thankfully I have had significant individuals who have helped in molding the project to where it is today. I would like to start by thanking my family and especially my mother, who has made countless sacrifices to get me to where I am right now. I would also like to thank my father, whom even though he left this world while I was still a child, taught me to always give my best in everything I do. I hope that through this project and the choices I make I will be able to show my family that all their sacrifices were worth it.

This project tells the story of a particular community that still to this day, have not received all the recognition they deserve. I would like to thank the Nikkei community in the Dominican Republic, thanks to their granito de arroz, my country is where it is today. I would like to thank particular those whom I was able to work and have fun with during COPANI 2015. Thanks to you guys I was able to learn more about this topic and come to the realization that there are people like me in the Dominican Republic, that identify themselves as being from two different cultures. I also want to thank Valentina Peguero, with you I would have never been able to meet those of COPANI 2015.

I would like to thank the various professors whom I have had the pleasure of meeting here at Bard College. Thanks to you guys I have become a student who is passionate, creative, and more confident in what she does. In writing on this less well-known topic I would like to thank: Nathan Shockey, Nicole Caso, Mika Endo, Kristin Schieble, Ken Haig, and Jane Smith.

Lastly I would like to thank everyone who has helped me emotionally in times of stress. I would like to thank all the faculty whom have showed me a path, when there was none. The friends I have met at Bard are truly extraordinary people, whom have won a place in my heart and whom I will never forget.
Introduction: A Hidden Story

When presented with the topic of the Japanese diaspora, many people think of the large communities of Nikkei (meaning a Japanese descendant) Japanese in countries like the United States, Brazil, and Peru. Scholars like Brian Niiya and Diane Yancey, have written on the experiences of Japanese immigrants and their descendants in the United States.¹ There have also been various monuments and structures established to record and commemorate some of these more well known cases of Japanese immigration to the western hemisphere, such as the Museums of Japanese Immigration in Sao Paulo (Brazil) and in Lima (Peru), at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California. Comparatively little is known, though, about the history and experiences of Japanese immigrants to other countries like the Dominican Republic and Bolivia.

Broadly speaking, immigration of thousands of Japanese to Latin America has been explored academically, such as in Exporting Japan by Toake Endoh and The Japanese in Latin America by Daniel M. Masterson with Sayaka Funada-Classen.² Both of these books give extensive analyses on the larger Japanese diaspora communities of Peru and Brazil, while briefly touching on the smaller communities like the Dominican Republic. Although not numerous, there has been scholarly work done that sheds light on these smaller communities. Only a limited number of secondary sources on these Nikkei communities are in English, and primary sources are usually restricted to the Japanese language or the language of the place to which the Japanese

immigrants immigrated, often Spanish. This holds true for the case of the Dominican Republic, where little is written in English, and most of the primary sources in Japanese or Spanish. Scholars who have conducted research on the immigration of Japanese to the Dominican Republic in English have been Hiroko Ishikawa, in an article entitled “Evolution of Labor in Japan: A Comparative Study of Labor Exportation to the Dominican Republic in the 1950s and Remigration of of Nikkeijin from Latin American in the 1990s”, and Oscar H. Horst and Katsuhiro Asagiri in their article “The Odyssey of Japanese Colonists in the Dominican Republic.” In Spanish, Dominican scholarship such as: Valentina Peguero’s Colonización y política: los japoneses y otros inmigrantes en la República Dominicana, and Alberto Despradel’s La migración japonesa hacia la República Dominicana are significant. Besides these historical overviews, scholars have also explored questions of identity and gastronomy, such as Ryoko Endo’s “The Japanese Immigrants who Enriched Dominican Tables: The Dominican Republic-50 years after Japanese agricultural immigration,” and Stephanie Marie López’s “El Dominicano-Japonés: Expresiones culturales de la identidad Japonesa en la República Dominicana desde mediados de los años 50.”

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4 Valentina Peguero, Colonización y política: los japoneses y otros inmigrantes en la República Dominicana (Santo Domingo, DO: BanReservas, 2005); Valentina Peguero, Immigration and Politics in the Caribbean: Japanese and Other Immigrants in the Dominican Republic (Coconut Creek, Fla.: Caribbean Studies Press, 2008).

Although there are sources that explore the topic of Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic, they do so by exploring it through narrowly focused perspectives. This essay aims at giving an extensive overview of the history of Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic by examining its history, the decision making processes of different parties, and questions of identity and assimilation. This thesis also discusses the connections between existing Haitian-Dominican relations and the immigration of the Japanese, a connection little addressed in other sources. This project aims to compile information from both English and Spanish sources to tell the story of the Dominican Nikkei community to a larger audience.

**Why Japanese Immigration to the Dominican Republic?**

Through the different courses I have taken at Bard College, an opportunity to visit Vietnam, and through the exploration of anime from Japan and dramas from Korea, Asia has been a continent in which I have developed an interest in and love for. It was due to this interest that I came to major in Asian Studies; in a class on human rights in Asia I learned about the relationship between Asian and Latin American. Even as a Latina myself, the existence and history of Japanese immigration into Latin American countries had been unknown to me. As I sat in class, I learned about the current situation of Japanese-Brazilians living in Japan, and briefly discussed the history of the Brazilian Nikkei community. Afterwards, I began wondering if any Japanese had immigrated to my country, the Dominican Republic.

Both of my parents were born in the Dominican Republic, and although I was born here in the United States, I have always felt that the Dominican Republic was home. My parents took my three-year old self and my newborn sister to the Dominican Republic, where I spent most of my childhood until the age of eight; after my father’s death, my mom moved back to the United
States to find a way to raise us as a single mother. After moving here to the United States, I was not able to go back to the Dominican Republic until twelve years later, after my first year in college. Since this trip, I have developed a strong desire to reconnect with my native culture and country. The reason for exploring the history of Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic was based in part on my desire to learn more about the place I call home and its link to my interest in Japan.

I began to look into sources that explored the immigration of Japanese to the Dominican Republic. Soon, I learned that there were few sources in English that discussed the experiences of the Japanese. As I shared my interest in the topic with other classmates and professors, most of them admitted to hearing about it for the first time. Even in the Dominican Republic, there is not much knowledge on the history of the Japanese immigrants. Although there are attempts made by the Japanese Nikkei themselves, remains a great deal of work that still needs to be done. Through this project I pursue a comprehensive qualitative review of the history of Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic. I hope that through this project I am able to inform more people on the Japanese community in the Dominican Republic, and help in bringing the stories of this community to light.

A Brief Historical Overview of Japanese Immigration to Latin America

Immigration from Japan to Western countries began on a significant scale in the late 19th century, to places like the United States and Europe. In the early 20th century, increasing numbers Japanese began to immigrate into Latin America, most notably thousands of contract workers moving to Peru and Brazil. The following chart illustrate the first wave of mass immigration of Japanese prior to the Second World War (Figure 1).
Immigration to Peru began in 1899 with the immigration of seven hundred and ninety adult males, the gender imbalance was due to Peru’s interest in strong and efficient labor for sugar plantations. The next country to open its doors to Japanese immigrants was Brazil at the beginning of the twentieth century; Brazil is known today as one of or the largest Nikkei communities with a population of millions of Japanese descendants. Later waves of immigration was motivated by the interest in Brazil’s coffee cultivation. Immigration to Brazil continued after the Second World War.

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Otherwise, immigration to Latin America has reinitiated in December of 1952, after the end of the postwar US occupation of Japan; during this second wave a total of 79,534 Japanese immigrated to Latin American countries like Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and Paraguay. The second wave of Japanese immigration to Latin America lasted from 1952 through the 1970s:

### ORIGINS, HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT, AND PATTERNS

**Table 2.1** The Second Wave of Japanese Migration (1952–70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>1952–60</th>
<th>1961–70</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latin America:</td>
<td>58,353</td>
<td>21,190</td>
<td>79,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>2,377</td>
<td>1,708</td>
<td>4,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>3,043</td>
<td>2,215</td>
<td>5,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>44,520</td>
<td>14,938</td>
<td>59,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Rep.</td>
<td>1,319</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>6,168</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>7,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>1,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>50,502</td>
<td>36,115</td>
<td>86,617</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Note 1:* The number of immigrants is defined as the number of passports issued for the purpose of permanent migration by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

*Note 2:* The number of immigrants in this table does not include Okinawans.

*Note 3:* Other major Latin American destinations of Japanese immigrants are Mexico and Peru.

*Note 4:* Other major destinations of Japanese immigrants are Canada and Australia.

**Figure 2.** *Source:* Toake Endoh, *The Second Wave of Japanese Migration (1952-70)*, table (n.p.: University of Illinois Press, 2006.)

Immigration to these Latin American countries was conceived as permanent immigration, as special Japanese passports were made to be one used only; the passports themselves stated
“permanent migration.” During this second wave, most of the immigrants were partial or whole families. Another common characteristic in these different groups who immigrated to Latin America was that most families were farmers or had some agricultural experience. As will be seen in the case of the Dominican Republic, settlement into Latin American countries was often difficult due to the bad condition of the lands set aside for farming.

Due to previous immigration, Brazil was a top choice for prospective immigrants after the Second World War. However, after the Second World War, the relationship between Japan and Brazil became shaky. In an attempt to avoid disrupting this relationship, Japan agreed to send immigrants to less developed regions of Brazil. There were many hardships that Japanese immigrants experienced in Brazil, although there were at times cases of success. Like in Brazil, Japanese immigrants in the Dominican Republic also came to experience many hardships and were expected to aid in the improvement of agriculture in the assigned areas. The attitude of the Japanese government towards the various complaints and obstacles faced by Japanese migrants was largely indifferent, instead advising the immigrants to endure their situation and wait. The Dominican government expected a great deal from the Japanese immigrants, and constantly advertised the accomplishments of those immigrants in the media; due to these advertisements some Dominicans felt that Japanese immigrants were unfairly favored by the Dominican government (more specifically by the dictator Trujillo). Similar fates were faced by Japanese immigrants in both Bolivia and Paraguay. Conditions worsened in Bolivia’s case; during the Second World War a small number of Japanese immigrants who had emigrated from Peru, were sent to concentration camps in the Unites States, due to Bolivia’s alliance to the United States.

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7 Endoh, Exporting Japan, 37.
8 Ibid, 42.
9 Ibid, 51.
A few of these individuals returned to Bolivia after the war, and immigration to Bolivia reinitiated in 1955. Immigration to Bolivia continued due to Japan’s interest in broadening Japanese immigration to more countries, and Bolivia’s interest in the development of substantially deserted regions to the west. As in the Dominican Republic, Japanese immigrants were sold a dream of free land in Bolivia by the Japanese government. Like in the case of other Latin American countries, the Japanese government financed all aspects of migration by Japanese into Paraguay. After immigrating, this support from the Japanese government stopped and the Japanese immigrants had to rely on their own strength to get by. A total of 7,754 Japanese immigrated to Paraguay. Contrary to the believe of many Japanese who immigrated to Latin America, life in their prospective new homes were filled with various obstacles and hardships. This thesis explores the hardships experienced by particularly Japanese who immigrated to the Dominican Republic.

**What to Look Forward to?**

The story of Japanese immigrants in Latin America is an extensive tale, so this project focuses on one particular group of stories, that of migrants in the Dominican Republic. In exploring the story of Japanese migrants in the Dominican Republic, this thesis begins by looking at what happened prior to the immigration process itself in an attempt to understand the genesis of the immigration policy. The paper begins by looking at what motivated both the Japanese government and the Dominican Government in having an interest in the immigration. The project continues by looking at the actual process of creating the immigration policy, then

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11 Ibid, 54.
explores the experience of the Japanese immigrants after setting foot into the Dominican Republic. Did the process of planning the immigration policy affect the experiences of the Japanese immigrants once in the Dominican Republic? How did the Japanese immigrants overcome the obstacles they faced? How well did the immigrants settle themselves into Dominican society? I then move on to look into the Japanese community today, exploring issues of identity and the relations between the Dominican Nikkei community to Japan, Nikkei communities from other nations, and to their fellow Dominican natives. I conclude by exploring the relation between Japan and the Dominican Republic and how the immigration of Japanese has contributed?

Chapter 1 aims at understanding what led to the immigration of Japanese to the Dominican Republic. It begins by making a connection between the acceptance of Japanese immigrants by the Dominican government and the existing relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. During the mid-20th century, the Dominican Republic was governed by a totalitarian regime that had been publicly damaged by the maltreatment the former had executed against their fellow Haitian neighbors, including the death of 37,000 Haitians in the Haitian Massacre.\textsuperscript{12} As with other countries, most of the motivation behind the acceptance of Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic was due to the lack of resources in Japan after the Second World War. For this reason, the Japanese government looked towards emigration to Latin America as a way to ameliorate the problem. An immigration policy to the Dominican Republic was first introduced by the Dominican government, and there were various exchanges between the Dominican Republic and Japan during the planning phase, but the Japanese government was

unable to secure the proper conditions for the prospective migrants. The absence of adequate conditions for the Japanese immigrants resulted in challenging experiences after arrival in the Dominican Republic.

Chapter II explores the various experiences of the Japanese immigrants once in the Dominican Republic. The chapter discusses the issues that the Japanese immigrants experienced, related to the environment, soft or hard infrastructure, and the problems that arose after the death of Trujillo in May of 1961. Upon their arrival, the Japanese immigrants were exposed to cultural differences, including social hierarchy based on the difference in skin tone. One of the more common problems that the Japanese immigrants faced was related to the poor conditions of the lands and the low quality of the crops that resulted. The Japanese immigrants also faced obstacles related to the limited markets available in the Dominican Republic, as well as the lack of infrastructure related to education, health, electricity, and water. The language difference also hindered both the ability of the Japanese immigrants to develop relations with the Dominican locals, and their ability to access the resources offered by the Dominican government. The difficulties faced by the Japanese immigrants intensified after the death of Trujillo, leading many of the Japanese immigrants to request repatriation to Japan. After much resistance from the Japanese government, the migrants were able to choose between three different paths: to stay in the Dominican Republic, to immigrate back to Japan, or to immigrate to another Latin American country. In the year 2000, a group of the migrants, who felt betrayed by the false promises, decided to sue the Japanese government.

Chapter III goes on to explore the Nikkei community in the Dominican Republic today. This part of the project looks at how the Nikkei community identify themselves. Do they consider themselves Dominican, Japanese, both, or Nikkei? How does the Nikkei community maintain a
Japanese identity in a foreign country like the Dominican Republic? What obstacles do they face? If a Dominican identity is adopted, how is a Dominican identity maintained? What generation do Nikkei claim a Dominican identity? I move on to the relationship of the Dominican Nikkei community’s relationship to Japan, and how opportunities to travel to Japan enhanced their connection to their Japanese identity. Then, I turn to the relationship between the Dominican Nikkei community and Nikkei communities in other countries. There are organizations that foster relationships between these Nikkei communities: these being COPANI (Convenciones Panamericanas Nikkei, or Nikkei Pan-American Conferences) and Discover Nikkei. At the national level, events sponsored by Japanese organizations and Dominican Nikkei organizations create closer bonds within the Dominican Nikkei community. Events like Undokai (a sports festival practiced in Japan) only help strengthen the relationship of the Nikkei community nationally, but aid in exposing the Dominican community to Japanese culture and as a result help in strengthening the relationship between the Dominican Nikkei community and native Dominican locals. The relationship between Japan and the Dominican Republic has improved as a result of the Japanese migration and the Nikkei community living there today. My aim in this project is to illustrate how the Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic, regardless of the many downfalls and errors, could be consider to have been successful on the basis of the many contributions that immigration has made in the Dominican Republic agriculturally, economically, and politically.

As a primary source, I mainly use letters written by government officials and Nikkei from the Dominican Republic, as published in El Paraíso Del Caribe: Medio Siglo De Alegría Y
These letters give accounts of the Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic and testify on the personal experiences of the Dominican *Nikkei* living in the Dominican Republic. Further information was obtained through my participation in COPANI 2015, where I was able to meet a few Dominican *Nikkei* as well as *Nikkei* from other countries. I also utilize information obtained from interviews I conducted in the winter of 2016, either in-person or via the internet. Unless otherwise stated, I do most of the translation in this project. Unfortunate linguistic limitations mean I was not able to access Japanese sources on the topic. I hope that regardless of the limitation of the language barrier, I am able to use my understanding English and Spanish sources can broaden the knowledge of the Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic for English readers.
Chapter I: The Answers Lie in the Past

In order to understand the history of the immigration of Japanese families to the small country of the Dominican Republic, it is important to look first into the history preceding the start of migration in 1956. This chapter will explore the economic and political situations in Japan and the Dominican Republic that led both countries to instigate joint immigration policy in October 1954. I will also investigate how the Dominican Republic’s relationship with Haiti as well as Japan’s economic and population difficulties influenced the immigration process itself, and how this process impacted the experiences of Japanese immigrants living in the Dominican Republic.

After the Second World War, Japan experienced many economic problems that forced families to live in poverty, especially in rural Japan. Although the economic situation rapidly improved in Japan across the 1950s, problems persisted, especially in rural and remote regions like Kagoshima, Fukushima, Kochi, and Yamaguchi. The high unemployment rate, the weak economy, and the scarcity of food made emigrating abroad an attractive option for many Japanese families. The attraction of these Japanese families to emigration was influenced both by domestic problems, and other factors such as the precedent of successful immigration of an earlier generation of Japanese families to Latin America before the war, as well as the Japanese government’s portrayal of the Dominican Republic as a “Caribbean Paradise” with all the necessities to live comfortably, and the negative effects of the Japanese familial system. Starting in 1952, the Japanese government began crafting a fantasy to attract emigrants and increase Japanese migration to Latin America, including the Dominican Republic. I follow Hiroko Ishikawa’s analysis that the involvement of the Japanese government in enlarging immigration

14 El Paraiso Del Caribe.
was alluded to a desire to relieve economic setbacks that occurred after the war.\textsuperscript{15} To what degree was the migration of Japanese citizens to the Dominican Republic a strategic move on the part of the Japanese government? Once one begins to understand the weak economy and the rise in population in postwar Japan, one starts to wonder whether relieving those pressures was the only reason for the Japanese migration policy to the Dominican Republic? If so, why use Japanese emigration to Latin America as a solution to Japan’s post-war economic setbacks? The question is, what goals did the Japanese government intend to achieve? This chapter attempts to answer the question of how and why Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic took place in the 1950s. I examine both the individual reasons that Japanese immigrants had for migrating to the Dominican Republic, as well as the motives of the Japanese government in regards to the immigration policy.

It is also worth considering the Dominican Republic’s motives for encouraging immigration. Why accept immigrants from such a far away place and with a completely different language? What was the benefit to the Dominican government? There are multiple factors that drove the Dominican government, but a key reason was racialized population engineering. The Dominican Republic’s relation with neighboring Haiti is a subject that cannot be avoided. Bernardo Antonio Cáceres and Bernardo Vega have described the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti as one filled with blackmail, murders, assassination attempts, and racist propaganda, mainly directed towards the Haitian community.\textsuperscript{16} This racism reached its


peak with the Massacre of 1937, in which of thousands of Haitians were killed, in “genocidal” acts.\(^\text{17}\) The violent acts committed by the Dominican Republic against Haiti, like that of the Massacre of 1937, had a destructive impact not only on its relationship with other countries (like the United States) but on its good public image.

Finally, we will delve into the political exchanges that occurred between the Japanese and Dominican governments in planning migration policy, and the conclusion of this exchange. Through these negotiations, the Japanese government aimed at securing preventive measures that would aid in the smooth transition of the chosen Japanese families that would immigrate to the Dominican Republic. The first group of Japanese immigrants was made up of 28 families. In learning about the Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic, the existing relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti is what explains the Dominican government’s interest in the immigration; If the hatred against Haitians by the Dominican government never existed, the possibility of immigration during the 20\(^{th}\) century would have been considered by the Dominican government.

**The Haitian Massacre of 1937 and the Dominican Republic’s Government for Immigration**

Perhaps surprisingly, pre-existing tensions between the Dominican Republic and Haiti explain in part the presence of Japanese immigrants on Dominican soil today. Although the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic was characterized by discrimination from the Dominican Republic, there also seemed to be a sense of tactical gameplay exercised by

the dictator of the Dominican Republic during that time, the Generalissimo Rafael Trujillo (October 1891-May 1961). Trujillo was also nicknamed *El Jefe* (“The Boss”), to reflect his great power over the Dominican Republic; contradicting him meant death.

From the beginning of Generalissimo Trujillo’s reign in May 1942 until his death, his actions were invariably executed tactically, carefully considering the benefits to himself. For this reason, from the 1930s onwards Trujillo initially portrayed himself as a friend to Haiti in the international public eye. Trujillo’s purpose in doing so was both maintain control over neighboring Haiti and to further improve his relations with the United States. The United States had played a major role in keeping the peace between both countries, and Trujillo’s desire for good terms with the United States was manifested in various workforce laws that he executed during his reign.\(^{18}\) At the same time, Trujillo attempted to lower the Haitian population of the Dominican Republic, forcing engineers and company owners to use the native Dominican workforce through laws that required a higher percentage of workers to be Dominican citizens. Eventually, however, these laws were overturned by Trujillo himself as a result of pressure placed on him by American engineers.\(^{19}\) Such laws, implemented during the 1930s, illustrate the importance of the United States as an ally for Trujillo, even driving him to publicly turn over his own orders and suppress his desire to eliminate the Haitian population from the Dominican Republic.

One of Trujillo’s mains goal was also to extend his power over the Haitian border. This power was obtained through monetary favors and internal allies. Generalissimo Trujillo tried many ways to win the favor of Haiti during the early 1930s, including allying with the Haitian

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\(^{19}\) Ibid, 28-30.
Minister of the Interior Elie Lescot, who would eventually hold a position as a Minister in Ciudad Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. Trujillo and Lescot’s relationship was close, Trujillo being Lescot’s supporter both economically and politically in his attempts to rise to power. Trujillo supported Lescot, while in return Lescot acted to benefit Trujillo. Trujillo strived to attain hierarchical power over both Lescot and Haiti’s President Stenio Vincent (ruled November 1930 -May 1941). A copy of a letter written by President Vincent to Lescot describes Trujillo’s economic promises, and asks Lescot to “Solicit in the name of the President of Haiti, a loan of $25,000.00 dollars.” What was the purpose of Trujillo’s close relationship with Vincent and Lescot?

The answer to this question lies in Trujillo’s efforts of convince Haiti to agree with his petition of prohibiting the migration of Dominican exiles onto Haitian soil. During Trujillo’s reign, any opposition could result in death, so anyone perceived as a threat resorted to. Trujillo wanted to send a clear message, that anyone who dared challenge him would not escape and later tried to convince President Vincent to cease accepting Dominican exiles in Haiti. It took many encounters to reach a consensus, but finally a resolution that contained a secret deal was made. In this resolution, Vincent secretly agreed to Trujillo’s terms of ceasing the flow of Dominican exiles in exchange for the submission of “666,000 tareas (approximately 500,166,000 square

20 Trujillo’s City, the capital of the Dominican Republic during Trujillo’s name. Now known as Santo Domingo.
21 Trujillo’s support reaching the point of aiding Lescot, in his dreams of over throwing Vincent and becoming president.
22 President from November 1930 to May 1941, then Elie Lescot rose to power from May 1941-January 1946. Vega, La Agresión Contra Lescot, 22.
24 In the Tratado Fronterizo de 1929, where in 1933 Trujillo left the country and visited Vincent to discuss a revision to the treaty; a border treaty between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, that came to be revised in 1936.
yards) of land in the zone of La Miel.” 25 Every action Trujillo took was motivated by his egoistic desire for power, and his attempts to achieve a ranked relationship with Haiti, were another aspect of this goal of ultimate power.

Trujillo’s quest for power was also the reason for his admiration of the United States and his desires to become a United State’s ally. Trujillo’s admiration of the United States was also based on his belief in the superiority of the “white race.” Bernardo Antonio Cáceres points out the white supremacist ideology present with not only Trujillo but across the Dominican Republic as a whole. Cáceres mentions how this “pigmentocracy” had existed since the 1800s, long before Trujillo’s rise. White supremacy as a long held ideology was not an idea that had been recently introduced. This ideology came to later be reinforced by the United States during their occupation of the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1924.26 Cáceres writes how “Just as the United States sided with the fairer-skinned Dominicans in their conflicts with Haiti for independence, the whiter Dominicans were given preferential treatment during this time of occupation on the island.”27 Belief in the superiority of the white race, and hatred of the dark-skinned Haitian population, was present since long before Trujillo, but the ideology was further implemented and intensified by him.

Trujillo’s idealization of the white race had also been driven by the rejection of his own African Heritage and Haitian descent. Trujillo was the descendant of a high-class Haitian family,

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27 Ibid, 29.
through his grandmother Luisa Ercíná Cheviallier. Trujillo’s rejection of his Haitian heritage can be seen through his use of skin-whitening creams. It was the rejection of such ancestry that could have also compelled Trujillo’s antihaitianismo and the execution of the 1937 Massacre.

As Amanda Tess Whitney points out, “Trujillo’s hatred for his ancestry and his penchant for skin bleach and face powder, which masks ‘the dark tinge of the Haitian blacks who were his maternal ancestors, something he [has] always despised on other people’s skin and on his own.’” Trujillo’s self-hatred further complicated the white supremacist ideology, by highlighting the internal conflict most likely experienced by the dictator. Understanding, Trujillo’s idealization of the white race also explains his interest in Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic, as Trujillo considered Japanese as the whites of Asia.

**The Massacre and Its Effects:**

Trujillo’s desire to eliminate “inferior” dark pigmentation from the Dominican population was a driving factor in many of his actions, including the Haitian massacre of 1937. The massacre occurred on September 28, 1937, and was fueled after a speech given by Trujillo on October 2 in Dajabón. The massacre ended on October 8; in these few days it is believed that

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29 Antihaitianismo is a term used to describe prejudice, hatred, or discrimination against Haitians.


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more than 37,000 Haitians were killed on Dominican soil.\textsuperscript{31} After previous attempts to limit the Haitian population through workforce laws, the mistake was his final attempt to do so. Cáceres explains, “Whether the massacre was spontaneous or premeditated, the dictator stated his intention to eradicate the Haitian presence once and for all at a gathering in the border of Dajabón on the night of 2 October 1937.”\textsuperscript{32} But was Trujillo not afraid of the effects on the public image he worked so vigorously to maintain?

Although the massacre had been largely motivated and led by Trujillo, the dictator tried to eliminate this linkage by portraying the massacre as a spontaneous outburst by the Dominican population. Vega explains how the massacre had been perpetuated by Dominican military, but civilians had been integrated in the attacks with the aim of turning attention away from the military’s role.\textsuperscript{33} The image of the massacre as a civilian act was further illustrated by the use of common weapons like machetes, sticks, and knives: “…they used imprisoned good-behaving civilians, and so that it would not be said that the Haitians were killed by the military, and to give the impression that it was a civilian conflict, they only used machetes, knives, and sticks.”\textsuperscript{34} Trujillo’s way of eliminating the chance of being publically blamed for the massacre, was “by telling Dominicans that this was what Dominicans wanted.”\textsuperscript{35} Trujillo continued his plan to place the blame on Dominican civilians by justifying their acts in his book “Thoughts of a Statesman,”

\textsuperscript{31} This number continues to change everyday, since no actual records were kept of the number of deaths. This number was obtained from an external press. Vega, \textit{La Agresión Contra Lescot}, 34-36.
\textsuperscript{33} During this time the military was separated (The Department of the North and The Department of the South). The north being the sec. in charge of La Cumbre, where most of the killings occurred.
\textsuperscript{34} “…utilizaron a civiles presos de confianza y para que no se dijera que los haitianos fueron muertos por los militares y para dar la impresión de que trataba de un conflicto entre civiles, tan sólo se utilizaron machetes, cuchillos y palos.” Vega, \textit{La Agresión Contra Lescot}, 34.
where he states that the “voluntary” acts of the “Dominican citizen” had stemmed from the “12,000 crimes committed by Haitians from 1910-1937.” It became clear to Trujillo that the massacre would have a deep negative effect on his public image, and he had used the Dominican public as a scapegoat.

By exploring the relationship between the United States and Haiti, we have discovered two very important aspects of Trujillo’s persona and beliefs: First, Trujillo’s belief in the supremacy of the white race explained not only his hatred towards the Haitian community, but also explained his admiration of the United States. Second, his search for absolute power influenced the various tactical movements he took to improve his public image in the international. These two factors also drove Trujillo’s decision to accept Japanese immigration into the Dominican Republic. Even before the Haitian Massacre of 1937, Trujillo had thought about the possibility of accepting immigrants to the Dominican Republic and conducted a study on the “country’s capacity to absorb foreign immigration, referring, of course, to the immigration of whites.” This sudden interest for foreign white immigration on Trujillo’s part, stemming from his desire to improve the agricultural system of the Dominican Republic, can be seen in a 1936 law he passed accepting the immigration of agriculturalists. Trujillo began to recognize problems with the Dominican Republic’s agricultural system, and felt that by searching outside of the country he would be able to find innovative ideas and techniques that would offer solutions to these very problems. Trujillo’s belief in the superiority of the white race made him

37 “Un mes antes de la matanza funcionarios del gobierno dominicano entregaron a Trujillo un estudio que éste había ordenado sobre la capacidad del país de absorber migración extranjera, refiriéndose, por supuesto, a la migración de blancos.” Vega, La Agresión Contra Lescot, 32.
38 Ibid, 32.
look to the possibility of European immigration, including Spaniards, Jews, and Hungarians. Trujillo’s eyes then shifted towards Asia after hearing a comment made by Franklin D. Roosevelt, in which he admired the hard working nature of the Japanese. Even though the Japanese would not have been considered part of the superior white race by many other countries, for Trujillo the Japanese offered him the two things he was looking for: white skin and hard workers.

Although the idea of the immigration by white agriculturalists previously had been explored by Trujillo, immigration by the Japanese did not occur until after the massacre. The cause of this had to do both with the timing of the proposal of the idea by the Japanese government, and the effects of the massacre on Trujillo’s public image. Although thoughts on the possibility of Japanese immigration had already been contemplated by Trujillo, serious consideration only took place after the massacre. In October 1954, Trujillo officially met with the Japanese government to introduce a migration policy. It was through this official meeting between the Japanese and the Dominican Republic that the possibility of Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic went from being a simple thought to a political collaboration between both parties. The effects of the massacre were another driving motive in Trujillo’s inclination towards migration. As previously discussed, the massacre had a negative affect on Trujillo’s public image in the international world. Trujillo went from being the president who was known to have restored the Dominican Republic’s economic and political stability to being the inhumane dictator who had caused the deaths of more than 37,000 Haitians. After the massacre, Trujillo’s efforts were aimed at the goal of changing his public image of a mass murdering, power hungry president to a humane political leader that offered an “open door” policy a welcoming new home and life to immigrants who were fleeing from the economic and political
hardships of their country. To accomplish this, he began taking in Spaniards, Jewish refugees, and eventually Japanese families who had fallen victim to the results of the Second World War.

Other reasons for Trujillo’s interest in Japanese migration were to improve the Dominican Republic’s agriculture and the whitening of the Dominican race. Bernardo Vega arrives at the same conclusion, as he declares that what influenced Trujillo the most was his desire “of ‘whitening’ the Dominican state, diminishing the Haitian presence and bringing white immigrants from Europe.”39 This same idea also explains the migration of the Japanese. Ishikawa explains how Trujillo’s belief of the superior white race was also present in his attitude towards Japanese migration since to him the Japanese where “the ‘whites of Asia’ who were hard-working, docile, highly skilled, and able to contribute to the prosperity of Dominican farmland” and thus the Japanese became part of “the Dominican re-construction of both land and race.”40 Now that the causes for Trujillo’s initiation and consideration of the Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic are explored, a new question arises. What ignited the Japanese into considering migration from Japan? Why did Japanese families themselves choose to immigrate to a foreign country in Latin America?

The Economic Situation in Japan and Japanese Reasons for Immigration:

Japan’s postwar economic hardships forced the country to make many drastic decisions, one of which was the policy of Japanese migration to Latin America. Two of the main problems faced by the Japanese government were overpopulation and a weak economy. After the war, Japanese soldiers that had been stationed in Japan’s former colonias began migrating back in

39 “de ‘blanquear’ al pueblo dominicano reduciendo la presencia de haitianos y trayendo inmigrantes blancos desde Europa.” Vega, La Agresión Contra Lescot, 35.
40 Ishikawa, Evolution of Labor in Japan, 34.
large numbers. Soon the Japanese government was pressured by the growing population, finding it almost impossible to sustain the wrecked economy that Japan was left with. Immediate postwar Japan is often portrayed in literature and film as an animalistic era, with people scrambling to get by each day. Ishikawa highlights the horrible conditions faced by the Japanese and argues that it was not until the mid-1950s that hope took hold for Japan’s postwar growth. Ishikawa also highlights the intense overpopulation, as the “population grew from 72.1 million in 1945 to 83.2 million in 1950. This represents a 3 percent annual rate of increase, with half of the total increase was from net migration.” Unlike prior to end of war, Japan no longer had a strong economy to sustain such a large population; the economy had been reduced to one-third of its prewar level. These harsh conditions of overpopulation and a struggling economy compelled the Japanese government to look to immigration to Latin America as a solution: to countries like Peru, Brazil, and Mexico among others. To sum up, Japan decided to offer foreign employment to fix their inability to produce full domestic employment. But why did immigration to Latin America emerge as a solution? From where did this idea originate?

Japanese migration to Latin America had existed since long before the Second World War and had been previously used to fix similar problems of overpopulation and a lack of employment opportunities. Japanese migration to Latin America existed as early as 1868, largely through private corporations which proved to be successful and economically beneficial to the Japanese government. It is thus unsurprising that the postwar Japanese government would

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42 See for example, Battles without Honor & Humanity, directed by Kinji Fukasaku (n.p.: Eureka Video, 1973), DVD.
43 Ishikawa, Evolution of Labor in Japan, 22.
44 Endoh, Exporting Japan, 17.
become involved with Japanese immigration to Latin American countries. Official government involvement dates back as early as 1914, when immigration to South America was promoted by the Japanese government after World War I; the initiate gained momentum after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923.45 The Japanese government created the Overseas Development Company (Kaigai Kogyo Kabushiki Kaisha) in 1918, which offered emigrants informational public lectures regarding safety and benefits, as well as transportation expenses.46 Japanese migration to South America briefly stopped after the Second World War, due to prohibitions made by the Allied powers. This prohibition lasted until 1951 when the San Francisco Peace Treaty allowed Japanese to regain the freedom to travel abroad.47 This is why Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic began only after 1956, as immigration to Latin America had only recently been legally resumed. Japanese migration to Latin America was used as a solution to alleviate economic setbacks following the Second World War since it had proven to be a successful solution for Japan after previous wars and disasters.

Further motivation for the Japanese government lay in improving the relationship between the two countries, as apparent in a letter written by Mamoru Shigematsu of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to President Trujillo, in which Mamoru Shigematsu articulates that “he [Mamoru Shigematsu] was glad to send his people to the Dominican Republic and hoped that the relationship between Japan and the Dominican Republic would grow closer through the emigrants who just arrived, even though the distance between these two countries was great.”48 Was this desire to improve the relationship between both countries as simple as stated or were

46 Ibid, 15.
48 Ibid, 19.
there other motives embedded? Although the Japanese state might have been aiming to simply improve relationships with the Dominican Republic, another incentive could have been related to their “loss of overseas food supplies and natural resources” that resulted from the Second World War. Japan could have been looking to acquire a new overseas food and natural resource supplier, and it was no secret that one of the Dominican Republic’s main economic sectors was the exportation of goods.

The question of the Japanese government’s interest in Latin American immigration now drifts towards why individual Japanese families resorted to immigration as a solution to personal problems. To understand the factors that contributed to Japanese families’ interest of immigration to the Dominican Republic, we will use the migration theory of “push-pull”, which Ishikawa explains as “circumstances in the home country [that] repel or push people to new places that exert a positive attraction or pull.” Most Japanese families were “pushed” by hardships experienced as a result of the poor economy and overpopulation, but other social factors centered on the family also played a role. The loss of income and low employment experienced by many Japanese families were “push” factors, includes “poverty, widespread unemployment, famine, or war at home.” A collection of testimonies, El Paraíso Del Caribe: Medio Siglo De Alegria Y Tristeza: Hoy Dia Todavia Nos Encontramos Vivos Aqui (The Caribbean Paradise: A Half Century of Happiness and Sadness, up to This Day We Are Still Found Alive Here), printed in the Dominican Republic in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic, compiles personal letters on Japanese immigrant’s personal take on the immigration written many by Japanese emigrants.

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50 Ibid, 5.
51 Ibid, 5.
These personal accounts of the experiences of immigrants from Japan to the Dominican Republic reference the effects of the economic setbacks that postwar Japan experienced. Mrs. Matsue Murata, who emigrated from Kagoshima, mentions the difficult situation in Japan at that time: “Back then, Japan was filled with people, mainly due to the return to the homeland of soldiers and their families from the external colonies. There was not enough work in rural areas, and finding work was a really difficult chore even when moving to the big cities.” Another emigrant, Seiji Kasahara who emigrated from Fukushima, comments on a lack of good memories while in living in Japan, and how after the war “Japan suffered a tremendous shortage of food.”

The accounts given by these two Japanese immigrants who migrated to the Dominican Republic support the idea that some of the push factors responsible for the interest of Japanese citizens in migrating to the Dominican Republic indeed mirrored the interests of the Japanese’s government in mitigating the economic hardships resulting from the Second World War.

Another push factor was closely tied with disagreements and hardships faced by Japanese individuals under Japan’s family system. Even in post war Japan, traditional patriarchal family structures were often still upheld. Women generally moved in with their husbands’ families; for many women it was during this time that they experienced many hardships at the mercy of their in-laws. Nakaya Yasuko depicts the typical life of a wife in the mid-20th century through her mother’s experience: “She was what everyone thinks of as an admirable woman. She believed wives were meant to serve the households they married into. What she [Nakaya’s step-mother’s

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52 *El Paraíso Del Caribe*, 85.
53 “El Japón de aquel entonces estaba lleno de gente, principalmente por el regreso a la patria de los militares y sus familiares desde el extranjero. No había suficiente trabajo en los campos, y aun mudándose a las grandes ciudades, conseguir trabajo era una faena muy difícil.” Ibid, 85.
54 “el Japón padecía gran escasez de alimentos.” Ibid, 76.
mother] didn’t say was that it killed my mother.”55 The accounts given by Japanese women who immigrated to the Dominican Republic echo how this patriarchal family system served as another push factor. Ayako Higo, who immigrated from Kagoshima, hints at how her relationship with her mother-in-law influenced her decision: “When I heard about the immigration project I was not opposed, maybe since before and during the war I got used to living the calm life in Manchuria, and because my relationship with my mother-in-law was not very good.”56 As seen here, another possible factor was that previous experiences of living in the colonies due to relocation during the war could have influenced Japanese families in the decision of immigrating to the Dominican Republic.

These push factors caused many Japanese to leave Japan, but it was the pull factors that attracted some of these individuals to the Dominican Republic in particular. The Dominican government had a lot to offer compared to the Japanese government. Unlike Japan, the Dominican Republic had a “strong economic presence and relative political unity.”57 Under the absolute political control of Generalissimo Trujillo, the country’s economy was promoted through the establishments of state enterprises monopolies and the strong exports. Ishikawa demonstrates how the stability offered by the Dominican Republic was a pull factor for Japanese immigrants who had experienced the unstable transition of the Japanese government from the war time to a democratic system. High exports from the Dominican Republic aroused interest in many Japanese farmers who had been pushed into city jobs but still wanted to pursue an agricultural career. In Japan, changes in the landholding system by the US-led SCAP (Supreme

56 “Cuando escuché sobre el proyecto de emigración no puse ninguna oposición, tal vez porque antes y durante la Guerra vivía en Manchuria y estaba acostumbrada a la vida tranquila de allí y porque la relación con mi suegra no era muy buena.” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 87.
Commander of the Allied Powers) in 1945 had caused many farming families who could not afford to buy land to move to the cities in search of a new source of income. For families like these, the offer of free land in the Dominican Republic allowed them to pursue a career path denied to them in Japan and permitted them the possibility of learning new agricultural techniques in another country. Japanese emigrants were able to pursue futures as agriculturalists, and the Dominican Republic offered an incentive to help them. The pull factors associated with the Dominican Republic specifically were centered more on its economic and political stability, as well as the opportunities to pursue agricultural careers.

Although the situation in Japan had been deeply affected by the war, the economic hardships faced by the Japanese population had eased by the mid-1950s; the rising economy gave some hope for a better future. Immigration to the Dominican Republic was viewed as a faster path to relieve present hardships, a view largely influenced by official government advertisements. The Dominican Republic became known as “A Paradise in the Caribbean,” an image introduced by the Japanese government. This kind of imagery can be seen, for example, in an advertisement in the Nihon Keizai Shinbun newspaper of December 11, 1954:

Eighteen hectares of farmland in the Dominican Republic will be yours. The land is suitable for farming. The Dominican Republic is a Caribbean paradise and an island of dreams. The Dominican Republic is willing to accept 4,000 or 5,000 Japanese families. In the future, 20,000 or 25,000 Japanese emigrants will be able to settle down in the Dominican Republic. These emigrants will have equal rights to the Dominicans. Housing is available…The Dominican Republic is a wealthy country: export is twice as much as import; public roads have been developed; and there will be industrial cities.\(^{58}\)

The Dominican Republic was portrayed as a place where dreams came true, where Japanese were welcomed with the offer of free land in a wealthy country. It is not surprising that such a

good offer attracted 249 families. The image of a “Caribbean paradise” was further portrayed by the *Kaikyoren*, in other advertisements, as seen in *Mainichi Shinbun* on August 30, 1956:

In the Dominican Republic, the Japanese emigrants live in affluence, and women do not need to engage in working at the farm… Children have gained weight. Stabilization of livelihood… [and] development of rice field… enable the Japanese farmers to work for only eight hours a day… Livelihood in the Dominican Republic is the best life that the farmers can ever have. We [the Japanese emigrants] do not want to go back to Japan because the Dominican Republic is much better than Japan. ⁵⁹

It is evident how much impact fancifully portrayed by the Japanese government was in the decision making process of many Japanese families. Japanese families were drawn to these pull factors centered around benefits they would find in the Dominican Republic, but their only information was based on exaggerations offered by the Japanese government.

Pull factors related to the involvement of the Japanese government also included additional aid to families immigrating. The Japanese government not only offered basic Spanish language training programs, but also informational programs on Dominican culture and agriculture to help immigrants with a smoother transition to a foreign culture. In addition to such programs, the Japanese government also agreed to provide immigrants with financial benefits, such as a monthly subsidy of 6,480-yen per month to help the migrants settle into the Dominican Republic. To many Japanese migrants, the former amount was was fairly decent, since the “Average monthly income for a first year teacher in 1955 was approximately 8,000 yen in Japan.”⁶⁰ With the promise of an income from both the Japanese government and the Dominican government, immigration to the Dominican Republic not only offered a better lifestyle than in Japan, but also offered immigrants a sense of security. This sense of security stemmed from the

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idea that if things did not work out and families experienced instability upon arrival, they would not have to worry about hardships like starvation thanks to the subsidy. With the promise of an income while settling in the Dominican Republic, Japanese immigrants felt secure and attracted to the government’s immigration policy.

There were various push and pull factors that influenced the choice of many Japanese families in accepting to emigrate to the Dominican Republic. Push factors were usually related to the economic hardships (poverty) faced by the Japanese population after the war, as well as constraints placed by the patriarchal family system. In the case of the Dominican Republic these pull factors were centered on the political and economic stability that had resulted from the absolute dictatorship of Generalissimo Trujillo, as well as the agricultural benefits it had to offer. For Japanese families with an interest in agriculture, the Dominican Republic was an appealing country because it had not only high exports twice its imports, but offered an incentive for Japanese farming families who made the decision to immigrate. The Japanese government also promised financial benefits to families who immigrated, offering not only an incentive for families but also informational programs on the Dominican language, culture, and agriculture. What influenced most in the decision making of most families was the “Caribbean Paradise” painted by the immigration organization Kaikyoren that portrayed the immigration policy as a once in a lifetime opportunity. Having explored the reasons behind the decision making for most immigrants, we can now question where and how the migration policy of Japan to the Dominican Republic was developed.
The Beginnings of an Immigration Policy: Political Discussions between the Dominican Republic and the Japanese Government

There had been no prior relationship between Japan and the Dominican Republic whether economical, political, or in regards to migration. The notion of Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic had occurred almost accidentally. During his reign, Trujillo’s attention had drifted to the possibility of accepting foreign immigration into Dominican soil as a possible solution to his desire of restricting Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic, as well as improving the agricultural system. Enthusiastic to secure another destination for immigration to Latin America, the Japanese government accepted Trujillo’s offer and began exchanging letters concerning the planned immigration policy in 1954. This conversation between the two governments is documented through letters that both record the drafting of the immigration policy and illustrate the introduction of the idea as such.

To help the Japanese government in drafting an immigration policy, the Dominican Secretary of Agriculture in the Republic, Juan Pablo Duarte M., sent a copy of the immigration policy that the Dominican Republic had drafted with Spain as a guide. With its documented acceptance of the policy, Japan began by communicating to the Dominican Republic’s government desires to send two experts, “with the goal of evaluating characteristics of the land, that like the Note [number 59] well says: ‘the Dominican government have provided for the settlement of the immigrants.’” Initially, the Japanese government was persistent in getting experts from their own government to explore the lands and the benefits offered by the Dominican Republic to the prospective immigrants in order to secure the smooth operation and

61 “…con la finalidad de evaluar sobre el terreno las características de los lugares en los cuales, como bien dice la Nota: ‘el gobierno dominicano tiene a bien proponer el asentamiento de los inmigrantes’.” Despradel, La Migración Japonesa Hacia, 8.
success of the immigration policy, since it was to make a contribution to the solution of the problems that affected postwar Japan. On July 21, 1955, the official in charge of Japan’s delegation in the Dominican Republic informed the Dominican Republic’s Office of Chancellor on the Note 82, that:

the mission of the technicians who would be traveling to the country would be integrated by Mr. Akira Yoshioka, the chief of the Second Section of the Department of Emigration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who also headed the said mission integrated at the same time by the agriculturalist engineer Mr. Akira Kondo, from Japan’s Ministry of Agricultural and Forestry and Mr. Eikichi Hayashia, appointed to the Japanese embassy in Mexico…the period of observation and study of the mission was going to be of approximately four weeks and this mission would arrive Saturday August 20, 1955, the date of arrival, that was subsequently postponed for August 30, of the same year cited.62

The technicians actually arrived on August 30th of that year, the group incorporated by Yoshioka, Kondo and Hayashia a translator. After the trip had concluded and conversations between these technicians and the Dominican government’s authorities had taken place, the technicians determined that the areas they found most adequate for the realization of the first wave of 500 Japanese immigrant families were the areas of Dajabón (La Vigía, Cañongo y los Arroyos), Padre las Casas, and El Valle (between Elias Piña and Hondo Valle).63 The Japanese government appears to have been determined to take specific measures needed to facilitate a smooth transition for the Japanese immigrants in the Dominican Republic.

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62 “la misión de los técnicos que viajarían al país estaría integrada por el señor Akira Yoshioka, jefe de la Segunda Sección del Departamento de Emigración del Ministerio de Negocios Extranjeros, quien además encabezó dicha misión siendo está integrada a su vez por el ingeniero agrónomo Akira Kondo, del Ministerio de Agricultura y Selvicultura del Japón y el señor Eikichi Hayashia, agregado de la Embajada del Japón en México…el periodo de observación y estudio de la misión llegaría al país el sábado 20 de agosto del año 1955, fecha de llegada, que fue posteriormente pospuesta para el día 30 de agosto del citado año.” Despradel, *La Migración Japonesa Hacia*, 11.

63 See Ibid, 11.
Many other requests were made by the Japanese technicians to the Dominican government to facilitate the transition of the prospective Japanese immigrant families, these requests later leading an unstable agreement regarding the first wave of immigrants. Both the Japanese and the Dominican government came to agree that the first wave of immigrants was going to consist of 100 families who would be placed in the areas of Dajabón, be assigned 300 tareas of prepared growing land, and given facilities and treatment equal to that of the previously established Spanish immigrant’s families living in the Dominican Republic. Yoshioka went further to ask the Dominican government to offer a Japanese doctor for every 100 families and a translator for every 50 for the success of the settlement.\textsuperscript{64} There were many other requests made by the Japanese government for the success of the settlement, but a overall bilateral agreement on the benefits and details of the immigration policy was never made between both governments, the plan being that this bilateral agreement was to occur after the first wave of immigrants, according to a letter written by Yoshioka.\textsuperscript{65}

The Japanese government was very present in the process of finalizing the details for first wave of immigration. It is clear that the Japanese officials involved were interested in conveniently organizing the policy. The efforts of the Japanese government continued with the visit of Akira Kondo, Agricultural Engineer of the Governmental Commission in charge of reviewing the immigration details to the Dominican Republic to complete more studies. Kondo’s visit resulted in the document Verbal Note 150, where Japan’s Legation in Trujillo City solicited for the amplification of the canal system to the lands assigned to the prospective emigrants who would be living in Dajabón, as well as for the construction of preventive flood structures. The

\textsuperscript{64} Despradel, \textit{La Migración Japonesa Hacia}, 12-13.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, 13.
harsh and infertile conditions of the assigned territory had been highlighted to the Japanese government by the technicians who they had sent to the Dominican Republic. To these technicians, the conditions of the lands were not ideal but nonetheless manageable for the Japanese emigrants. The Japanese government felt that it was possible for the migrants to alter the infertile conditions of the land, making them fertile enough to grow simple crops like peanuts. However, in order to do so, it was also clear to the Japanese government that access to basic resources and tools was necessary to complete the task. The Japanese government aimed at taking different precautionary measures to ensure a convenient and successful transition for the prospective emigrant families. One of the biggest preventive measures taken by the Japanese government, was refusal to send the chosen families abroad until the Dominican government granted the corresponding permission.

On the side of the Japanese government, the process towards the completion of the migration was well advanced compared to the Dominican Republic. As previously seen, the advertisements disseminated by the Japanese government dated back as early as 1954. Soon after the documentation of the birth of the immigration policy, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Immigration Bureau instructed Kaikyoren to proceed in drafting “Guidelines of Immigration Recruitment” that listed the many attractive incentives we previously had seen in the advertisement of “travel expense subsidies, farming supplies, full preparation of housing and social infrastructure, and even minimum income guarantees…” Applications for immigration to the Dominican Republic became very popular; families from throughout Japan who met the qualifications flooded in to apply to migrate, but only 1,319 people (249 families) were chosen.

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for the “Caribbean paradise.” The Japanese government had begun recruiting families for migration to the Dominican Republic prior to the establishment of any bilateral agreement. It was obvious that the Japanese were interested in initiating the immigration as soon as possible to the point of threatening the security of the smooth and successful transition of Japanese families to the Dominican Republic. This rush continued to be seen in the various attempts the Japanese government made in hurrying a corresponding agreement from the Dominican government.

Unlike the Japanese government, the Dominican Republic delayed the process of finalizing the details on the immigration. At the delayed agreement from the Dominican government Japan took action and sent Gensaburo Motsubori a member of the Japanese Assembly to obtain a faster response from the Dominican government on the corresponding agreement. However, Motsubori encountered the same evasive responses from the Dominican government; the Dominican government indicated the need for the consultation of President Trujillo prior to the existence of any decisive agreement. According to a letter from the highest Japanese official to the Dominican chancellery, Japan had planned to send 30 families to the Dominican Republic on the month of March of 1956. Even though the Japanese had planned the date of the emigration of the first group of families, they still awaited an agreement from the Dominican government. José María Tronscoso, President of Commissions for the Promotion of the Massive Immigration, responded in the following manner to Japan’s plan of immigration: “The undersigned perceive that, in view of the commitments that the Dominican government has at the time in regards to the plan of the colonization of the emigrants, for now any project of

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68 Despradel, La Migración Japonesa Hacia, 4-38.
69 Ibid, 24.
emigration of Japanese nationals should be postponed.”\textsuperscript{70} Although Generalissimo Trujillo illustrated a high interest in the immigration of Japanese nationals, it was clear that many Dominican technicians were not as sympathetic in regards to the immigration.

The disapproval of Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic by Dominican technicians did not halt the various attempts of the Japanese government in the rush of the immigration. On February 25, Takechijo Matsuda, ex Minister of Economy and Delegate of the Japanese government, attended the Fiestas Patrias and the International Fair of Peace and Fellowship, attempting to speak with Generalissimo Trujillo on the immigration of Japanese agriculturalists. The Japanese government, in response to resistance by Dominican authorities, had reached out to Trujillo himself to finally bring the immigration policy to its conclusion. This meeting with Trujillo and the various attempts made by the Japanese Minister in Trujillo City to get the permission of the Dominican government led to the modification of the position of the Dominican government. The various attempts executed by the Japanese were successful in influencing the position of the Dominican authorities in regards to the policy but, they were unable to secure the preventive measures previously requested: “…the Dominican government have modified their position in regards to not accepting the Japanese emigrants…the government is not in the disposition to perform the projects on infrastructure that were understood to be essential to put in good condition the production in the regions where the Japanese immigrants were considered to be installed.”\textsuperscript{71} The security of a comfortable transition and the fulfillment of

\textsuperscript{70} “El infrascrito considera que en vista de los compromisos que tiene actualmente el Gobierno Dominicano en relación con el plan de colonización de emigrantes…” Despradel, \textit{La Migración Japonesa Hacia}, 28.

\textsuperscript{71} “…el gobierno dominicano había modificado su posición en lo referente a no aceptar los emigrantes japoneses…el gobierno no estaba en disposición de realizar las obras de infraestructura que se entendían indispensables para poner en Buena situación de producción las zonas en donde se pensaban instalar los emigrantes Japoneses.” Ibid, 33.
preventive measures for the Japanese migrants was thus nonexistent. Deprived of the secure access to benefits as basic as water for the Japanese immigrants, was the Japanese government pressed into the cancellation of the immigration? Or did the Japanese government continue to push until a resolution was made between both parties?

A Bilateral Agreement? The Nonexistent Resolution between the Dominican Republic and Japan Prior to the Immigration of Japanese Families:

The Japanese government had expected a fast and smooth process in the creation of the immigration policy towards the Dominican Republic. It is for this reason that Japanese authorities portrayed migration in the press as if it was a realized fact, and the bilateral agreement had already existed. The Japanese government had reached the point of already selecting and notifying the Japanese families who would emigrate in the first wave. For this reason, a cancelation of the immigration policy at the denial of the projects by the Dominican government seemed almost impossible to the Japanese government. It was for the following reasons that the Dominican authorities finally allowed the immigration of the Japanese immigrants into the Dominican Republic.72 Many legal regulations were made by the Japanese and the Dominican government along with this agreement that was officially settled on March 12, 1956.

Most of these regulations were made in accordance to details on the lands chosen for the settlement of Japanese immigrant families. The Japanese government was unable to previously secure preventive measures for Japanese migrants, but in April 24, 1956, the Japanese government was finally able to gain an agreement from the Dominican Republic on the

72 “…las autoridades dominicanas a que aceptaran el ingreso a la Republica Dominicana de los emigrantes japoneses.” Despradel, La Migración Japonesa Hacia, 39.
numerous conditions placed regarding the land chosen. The Japanese government was first able to secure a preset number for the amount of land being distributed to each family, this being 300 tareas with the possibility of augmentation if families showed their capacity to cultivate more, avoiding the capacity of future maneuvering. Secondly, these lands had to be “properly prepared and on the brink of seeding”; in other words, these lands had to be set up with the proper infrastructures to permit production and cultivation. Thirdly, the houses where Japanese immigrants were to live had to be provided by the Dominican government. This amount of the houses built were supposed to be sizeable (in accordance with the number of Japanese emigrating), and the quality of the houses equal to those perceived in the various trips conducted by the Japanese technicians. This agreement made by both governments “served as a frame of reference for the dispatch of the Japanese emigrants to the Dominican Republic.”

Although an agreement did exist between Japan and the Dominican Republic, it was an agreement that only supported the first wave of immigration, but not future migration as a whole. A general bilateral agreement on the immigration to the Dominican Republic was not existent.

With this agreement, the Japanese government proceeded on sending its first group of immigrants, and even begin planning and recruiting the second wave of Japanese immigrants. In the Formal Note number 110 (July 20, 1956), Minister Kenikichi Yoshida informed the State Secretary of Foreign Affairs Porfirio Herrera Baéz of Japan’s plan of sending the first group of emigrants on August second of that same year, arriving in the Dominican Republic August 27, 1956. On July 29, 1956 the Dominican dictator happily welcomed 28 families (186 emigrants) to Dominican land. The first step in exploring the subject of Japanese immigration to the

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73 “sirvió de marco de referencia para el envío de los emigrantes japoneses a la República Dominicana.” Despradel, *La Migración Japonesa Hacia*, 44.
Dominican Republic is understanding the different factors and events that led to its initiation. Understanding how immigration to the Dominican Republic became an idea helps in understanding the process of the immigration as a whole. It is crucial to understand the factors and events responsible for the initiation of the immigration in order to understand the reasons tied to problems and issues that will be explored in the second chapter. In order to understand the experiences the Japanese emigrants had while living in the Dominican Republic, it is crucial to explore the planning process between the Dominican Republic and Japan came to have an impact. Furthermore, investigating how the previous relation between the Dominican Republic and Haiti sets up the ground for the acceptance of Japanese immigration in the Dominican Republic.

I began this chapter by exploring the difficult relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, illustrating how Generalissimo Trujillo’s implementation of the white supremacy ideology not only led to the Massacre of 1937, where more than 37,000 Haitians were killed, but also to the acceptance of Japanese immigrants as a way to repair his narcissistic and megalomaniac public image that had resulted from his violent actions. Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic also offered Generalissimo Trujillo a way to diminish the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic and whiten the Dominican race. After exploring the reasons for the interest of the Dominican Republic, this chapter proceeded in exploring the reasons for why Japan came to accept the immigration. The economic hardships faced in post war Japan, overpopulation and a weak economy, led the government to rely on immigration to Latin America as a solution, previously proven to be successful after World War I and the the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. Driven by the push factors of the poor conditions faced in Japan and problems related to the traditional patriarchal family system, many Japanese looked at the
immigration towards the “Caribbean Paradise” with hopes for a better lifestyle. Both the push factors the Japanese government offered of orientation programs and subsidies and the pull factors related to incentives and stability led Japanese families to feel secure in choosing to immigrate to the Dominican Republic.

After exploring the interests in the immigration to the Dominican Republic, this chapter went on to explore the political discussions that led to the immigration of the first group of Japanese emigrants. Immigration to the Dominican Republic was first suggested in 1954 by Generalissimo Trujillo and immediately explored by the Japanese government with the visits of three Japanese technicians to the Dominican Republic. These technicians studied the lands and benefits offered by the DR, with the goal of securing preventive measures that would aid in the successful settlement of the Japanese emigrants. The Japanese government was quick in planning and finalizing the details of the immigration, something that was not seen in the case of the Dominican Republic. It became clear to the Japanese government that many of the Dominican officials involved in the planning of the immigration were not as sympathetic as Trujillo towards Japanese immigration. This obstacle did not stop the efforts of the Japanese government, and instead pushed the government to reach out to Trujillo himself and continue to convince the Dominican government in accepting the immigration. The various attempts resulted in the modification of the Dominican government’s position on the immigration, and later in the agreement of the Dominican government in regards to conditions placed by the Japanese government on the details of the immigration of Japanese immigrants to the Dominican Republic. This agreement between the Dominican Republic and Japan led not only to the immigration of the first group of Japanese immigrants that arrived on July 29, 1956, but also affected the planning and selection of the second group of Japanese emigrants immigrating to the
Dominican Republic. The topics explored in this first chapter become crucial in understanding the questions that will be explored in the second chapter, namely: What were the experiences of the Japanese immigrants once settled in the Dominican Republic and what contributed to these experiences?
Chapter II: A Caribbean Paradise’s Reality

While the first chapter explored the question of how the Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic was planned, this second chapter goes on to discuss the journey and experiences in the Dominican Republic of the Japanese immigrants who were chosen by the Kaikyoren organization. After the first group of Japanese migrants, arrived on July 29, 1956, various small groups of Japanese immigrants continued to immigrate to the Dominican Republic until around September of 1959. These Japanese families arrived in the Dominican Republic in one of the ships who continuously sailed to and from Japan, The Africa Maru and the Brazil Maru. Some families also arrived on the America Maru or the Argentina Maru, ships that had only briefly stopped but were sailing elsewhere. A total of 249 families immigrated to the Dominican Republic in different waves (Figure 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1956</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1956</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1956</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1957</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1957</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1957</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1958</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1958</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1958</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1959</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1959</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,320</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1957</th>
<th>1958</th>
<th>1959</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>415</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although many of the immigrants were not knowledgeable of the political conditions of the Dominican Republic, from the time the Japanese immigrants set foot in the Dominican Republic it became clear to them that Dominicans had subjected to 25 years of rule under the dictatorship of Generalissimo Trujillo. As new residents of the Dominican Republic, the immigrants were also called into this political subjugation, through various banners and speeches that detailed the adoration of the Japanese immigrants towards Trujillo. The hopes and dreams of the Japanese immigrants were not dimmed by these subtle signs of the dictatorship, but were instead buoyed by the speech that welcomed them into a country that promised that true democracy and opportunities existed and discrimination had ceased.

After arriving in the Dominican Republic, the Japanese families were transported to their assigned colonias. Interestingly, the Japanese colonias were distributed mainly along the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The Japanese colonias were placed along the prefectures of Dajabón, Constanza, Manzanillo, Neiba, Duvergé, Jarabacoa, and Aguas Negras y La Altagracia. Most of the Dominican population welcomed the Japanese immigrants with enthusiasm and curiosity. Soon, however, misconceptions arose between both the Dominican and the Japanese due to the contrast between both cultures that aided in their slow communication and integration. Small events like the daily use of Bacinillas pots by the Japanese immigrants to obtain milk made them seem strange to the Dominican natives, since these were commonly used for urine. 

However, the Dominican natives thinking them peculiar was the smallest of the migrant’s problems. As portrayed by many scholars like Valentina Peguero and illustrated through

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74 Bacinillas is a receptacle (sometimes beautifully painted with floral decorations) used in Dominican homes to collect bodily excrements and urine.
personal accounts of Japanese immigrants themselves, one of the biggest issues faced by Japanese immigrants was the poor conditions of the assigned land for cultivation and the limited or nonexistent irrigation system present in the colonias.\textsuperscript{75} Most of the assigned land has been described by many Japanese immigrants as dry and unfertile, and some contained high levels of salt. Added to the conditions of the land was the repudiation of the agreed 300 tareas – the amount was not delivered in its totality- and the limited access to markets where cultivated crops could be sold. For later waves of Japanese immigrants, the unsustainable fishing population in the Dominican Republic was another complication. Japanese immigrants found it difficult to cope with not only the issues related to agricultural work, but also with the scarce access to other services such as a good educational system, adequate medical services, developed infrastructure, a good supply of water and electricity.

Life in the Dominican Republic worsened for the Japanese immigrants after the death of Generalissimo Trujillo. Many of the lands given to the Japanese migrants had been unfairly taken away by the dictatorship from Dominican families. This fact, along with the constant adoration and glorification of the Japanese immigrant’s work ethic in the media, led many Dominicans to see the Japanese immigrants as recipients of the dictatorship’s favoritism and hence caused many to attack the Japanese immigrants after Trujillo’s death May 1961. Due to the fear that arose after the death of Trujillo and the previous harsh conditions faced by the Japanese families in the Dominican Republic, many families made the choice to repatriate to Japan or to migrate to other Latin American countries to retry their luck. These factors and the change in Japan’s immigration policy allowed many of the Japanese to have this option, when

\textsuperscript{75} These personal accounts appear in El Paraiso Del Caribe.
before it was nonexistent. A total of 130 families emigrated with the help of the Japanese government, while approximately 50 families decided to stay in the Dominican Republic.

Chapter II will help us understand the experiences many of the Japanese immigrants faced while living in the Dominican Republic. It will help answer the question of what led many of these Japanese immigrant families living in the Dominican Republic to resort to repatriation and remigration. What caused the Japanese immigration to be seen as unsuccessful by many scholars in the case of the Dominican Republic? Having explored these questions, Chapter III will look into the present community of Japanese-Dominicans (Issei, Nisei, Sansei), the contributions of the immigrants, and the relations between the Nikkei community, Japan, and the Dominican Republic.76

Welcome: Introductions to Trujillo’s Dictatorship and the Placement of Japanese Colonias

The first thing Japanese immigrants saw after stepping into Dominican soil was a huge banner that said, “The Japanese immigrants, stepping into Dominican soil, exclaim joyfully: Long Live Generalissimo Trujillo.”77 With these few words the Japanese immigrants were not only welcomed into the long anticipated paradise they had been dreaming about, but also welcomed as subjugates of the dictatorship of Trujillo. The banner illustrated to them the behavior that was now expected of them as residents of the Dominican Republic.

After the various exchanges of gratitude between the Japanese immigrants and the dictator and his functionaries at the welcoming ceremony, the Japanese were taken to Dajabón where they were again welcomed with a celebration and a tour of the city where they were to

76 Issei meaning first generation, Nisei meaning second generation, Sansei meaning third, and so forth. Nikkei referring to Japanese descendants.
77 Peguero, Colonización y política: los japoneses, 90.
settle themselves. This became a pattern for groups of Japanese immigrants that later arrived. Oscar H. Horst and Katsuhiro Asagiri make an interesting point in regards to the placement of the Japanese *colonias*, pointing out how they illustrate the influence of racialized and geopolitical ideas. Horst and Asagiri highlight how many of these *colonias* were placed mainly along the Haitian border, illustrating the use of the Japanese immigrants as a sort of human border (clearly seen in Figure 4) It could be argued that from early on in the planning of the Japanese migration policy, the Dominican government had already chosen the land that was to be assigned to the prospective Japanese immigrants.

Although Horst Asagiri’s argument can be clearly seen when looking at the placements of the *colonias*, one must not dismiss the Dominican government’s high interest in the improvement of the national agriculture in regards to the immigration of Japanese, seen in the requirements for the selection of the prospective Japanese families. Within *El Paraíso Del Caribe: Medio Siglo De Alegria Y Tristeza: Hoy Dia Todavia Nos Encontramos Vivos Aqui* - *El Paraíso Del Caribe, Medio Siglo De Alegria Y Tristeza* there exists a section illustrating various the Dominican Republic. One of these documents illustrates the Dominican government’s interest in the improvement of the national agriculture: “1) Be a farmer with experience in the cultivation of vegetable, flowers, fruits…3) The family constitution will be, foremost, a family of 5 to 6 people headed by a matrimonial couple with the labor force of more than three people who are older than 15 years of age and younger than 50 years of age.”

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78 “1) Ser agricultor con experiencia en el cultivo de hortalizas, flores y frutas…3) La constitución familiar será, en principio, una familia de 5 a 6 personas encabezado por una pareja matrimonial con una fuerza laboral de más de tres personas que tengan más de 15 años y menos de 50 años…” *El Paraíso Del Caribe*, 42.
Figure 4. Map of the Dominican Republic and the different cities, as well as the assigned Japanese colonias. Source: "Mapa de la República Dominicana, con sus principales ciudades y las colonias agrícolas donde se establecieron los inmigrantes japoneses," map, in from El Paraíso Del Caribe: Medio Siglo De Alegria Y Tristeza: Hoy Dia Todavia Nos Encontramos Vivos Aqui - El Paraíso Del Caribe. Medio Siglo De Alegria Y Tristeza (Santo Domingo. DO: Dominican Republic Immigration 50 Anniversary Executive
the advances that the Dominican government perceived the Japanese immigration would bring to the nation’s agriculture. Another possible desire of the Dominican Republic in the immigration could have rested in improving the cultivation and consumption of vegetables in the nation, seen in the requirement of prior knowledge of vegetable cultivation from the prospective Japanese families. These two goals of the Dominican government, whether due to racial ideologies or an improvement of the agriculture, were linked to one another; much of the land assigned to the Japanese immigrants had been previously worked by Haitian immigrants who had illegally crossed the border.

Problems Faced by Japanese Immigrants: Cultural Differences

The first Japanese *colonia* in the Dominican Republic was established in La Vigía. Here 28 families lived in cement houses constructed by the government, as agreed upon in the first agreement between the Japanese and Dominican government. The homes were furnished with the basic and common pieces of furniture found in a local Dominican home. Some of these basic furnishings were new to the Japanese families, and without the knowledge or language skills to find their use, many began to invent their own uses for them. It was due to some of these instances and other cultural differences between the Dominicans and the Japanese immigrants that taboo images of one another were created.

One of the most noticeable cultural differences between the Dominicans and the Japanese immigrants existed in the color of their skin. Upon arriving in the Dominican Republic and stepping off of the *Brazil Maru*, Japanese immigrants were exposed to and astonished at the

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79 *Colonia* here meaning community or settlement.
The image of the port workers: “dark-skinned, tall, muscular, semi naked.”\(^{80}\) The cultural differences extended past the color of the skin of the Dominican natives, but also included their loud and gesticulate forms of communication. The Japanese immigrants were used to the reserved, controlled and quiet behavior performed in Japan. This difference in the way the Japanese and Dominicans expressed themselves was also raised by a *Nisei* who described an episode from her childhood, where she watched her fellow Dominican classmates receive hugs and kisses by their mothers for their good school notes, while her Japanese mother simply smiled:\(^{81}\)

Here[the DR] things are a little different, yes you respect your parents obviously, but there is a little more of showing affection, of…um it bothered me for example when I would see– Now after I understood, now today I do not feel bad about it, for example as a child I would feel a little bad because if I won an award at school the other moms would start to shout, and would hug their child, and would squeeze them, and my mom would only smile, and I knew she was happy and content but she would not manifest it.\(^{82}\)

When communicating, Dominicans tend to be more expressive, while for Japanese the widely upheld values of respect and good behavior could have been seen by many as non-expressive and at times cold. Through Tania Mukai’s experience it is clear how some cultural differences and values between the Japanese and the Dominicans could have aided in the slow assimilation of the Japanese immigrants in the Dominican Republic.

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80 Interview with Sinyi Yamamoto, obtained from Peguero, *Colonización y política: los japoneses*, 96.
81 *Nisei* meaning second generation Japanese immigrant, daughter/son of those who immigrated.
82 “Aquí lo cosa es un poquito diferente, si tu respectas a tu padre obviamente, pero hay un poco mas de demuestra de cariño, de…he a mi me chocaba por ejemplo cuando yo veía– ya después yo lo entendí, ya hoy no me siento mal por eso, por ejemplo de niña yo me sentía un poco mal porque si me ganaba algún premio en la escuela las demás mamas comenzaban a vociferar y abrazaban a sus niños y los apretujaban y mami solamente sonreía, y yo sabía que estaba feliz y que estaba muy contenta pero no lo manifestaba.” Tania Mukai, interview by the author, Acropolis Tower, Santo Domingo, DO, January 26, 2016.
Added to these cultural differences in values and behavior was the obvious barrier of language difference. Tatsuhiko Seto, who immigrated to the *colonia* of La Altagracia in 1959 but later was moved to other *colonias*, illustrates the effect that language played in his family’s successful integration into Dominican society. During his stay in the Dominican Republic, Tatsuhiko Seto recounts the various difficulties he encounters, one of these being an unsuccessful attempt to have a business: “My wife and I moved to the capital, opening there a small business. But, because I did not dominate well the Spanish language, and due to my impatience that caused me to fight with clients, this business did not prosper; therefore we closed it down.”

This was one of the many instances where the language barrier complicated Tatsuhiko Seto’s experience while in the Dominican Republic. Tatsuhiko Seto references in his testimonies various instances where he was forced to bring his daughters along with him in order to properly communicate with document officials and in order to buy property. The language difference played an important role in the success of Japanese immigrants in Dominican society, making it harder for them to not only integrate themselves in their corresponding neighborhoods but also to set up businesses in search of other means to sustain themselves.

Another instance further illustrates the effects of the language barrier for Japanese immigrants in accessing public services. Here a family brought their pregnant daughter to the hospital and was unable to communicate well with the staff. Valentina Peguero mentions this instance in her work as she describes an experience Ritsuko Uda de Takegama told her about in an interview. In 1960 an immigrant was taken to hospital, in the city of Dajabón to give birth.

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83 “…y mi esposa y yo nos mudamos a la capital, abriendo allí un pequeño negocio. Pero, por yo no dominar bien el idioma español y por mi impaciencia que me hacía pelear con los clientes, este negocio no prospero; así que lo cerramos …” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 59.

84 Peguero, *Colonización y política: los japoneses*, 104.
but died during childbirth and the family proceeded to claim and retrieve the body. While lamenting their loss and exiting the hospital, a nurse rushed to them with a newborn in her hands and handed her to the family. The family, surprised to learn that they had a new addition to their family was split apart by their feelings of joy for the new born and grief for the loss of their family member. It seems, the family was either unable to understand the staff when informing them that although the mother had died, she had given birth to a daughter, or they had not been notified. The language barrier definitely played a huge role in the Japanese immigrant’s smooth establishment into Dominican society, by complicating their ability to communicate with the Dominican locals and local medical professionals.

Problems Faced by Japanese Immigrants: Land, Markets, Water, and Fishing

One of the major difficulties experienced by almost all of the Japanese immigrants was related to the assigned land for cultivation. Most of the testimonies included in the commemorative book of the 50th anniversary speak of either the infertile conditions of the land assigned to them by the Dominican government to cultivate assigned crops, the distance of the Japanese colonias away from the assigned land, changes to the amount of land assigned. Some give accounts of the infertile conditions of the lands upon their arrival. Mitsu Sasaki, who immigrated to colonia of Neiba in 1957, briefly mentions the horrible conditions of the lands that were assigned to her and her diseased husband when she says that her and her husband had lived “three years at their first destination, the [Japanese] colonia of Neiba, that was filled with rocks.” Tatsuhiko Seto also mentions having experienced the same land conditions

85 Peguero, Colonización y política: los japoneses, 104.
86 “tres años en nuestro primer destino, la Colonia Neiba, que estaba llena de piedras…” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 83.
in the same *colonia*; he goes on to describe how “the first immigrants planted *guineos* (bananas) in lands filled with rocks, in which due to the land not being fertile their produce lost value as harvest was repeated.” Tatsuhiko Seto goes on to explain how the Dominican Republic mountain ranges and mountainous land reduced the available fertile land. Other immigrants experienced different land conditions with the land being dry and sandy or containing high levels of salt. Zenemon Yamaki, who immigrated to the *colonia* of Dajabón in 1957, comments on how his *conuco* “was so sandy that it would not retain sufficient moisture.” In a video on the Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic, it is clearly visible how terrible the conditions were in some of these lands. The video illustrates the rocky conditions of the *colonia* of Neiba, where one can clearly see sizeable rocks throughout the land and in piles created by the Japanese immigrants in the attempts of clearing the land. In the *colonia* of Duvergé one can see the dryness of the land, where the land looked cracked and almost like a desert. Valentina Peguero mentions how in 1919 various geologists estimated that the thickness of the salt stratum was 700 meters deep. The conditions of these lands caused many immigrants to become discouraged at the possibility of a better life in the Dominican Republic and instead caused them to experience many hardships due to their inability to meet the expectations set in place by the Dominican government.

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87 “los primeros inmigrantes sembraron *guineos* (bananas) en terrenos llenos de piedras, en los que al no ser tierras fértiles sus productos perdían calidad a medida que se repetía la cosecha.” Ibid, 57.

88 *Conuco* is the way Dominicans refer to a plot or parcel of land. “era tan arenosa que no retenía suficiente humedad.” Ibid, 71.


90 Peguero, *Colonización y política: los japoneses*, 137.
Besides the problems with the conditions of the land, some immigrants mention an issue with how far away from where they were living the lands were sometimes assigned. This was the case for Zenemon Yamaki, who immigrated to the colonia of Dajabón in 1957. Yamaki comments on how “from my house to the land in Cañongo that they assigned to me there was about 5 kilometers.”  

That would be about an hour-long walk to the assigned land and back. Transportation was not easily accessible for many of these immigrants since they did not have enough money and the little they obtained from selling the crops they cultivate was not enough to live. Therefore, having their assigned land being so far away could have made it difficult for them to transport goods, equipment, and other necessities to work the land. Other immigrants never obtained the amount of land promised to them; some received only a portion of the land, while others had to wait to receive any. This had been the case of Tatsuhiko Seto, who in his letter testified that after “three months since our [Mr./Mrs. Seto] arrival at the colonia, we had not yet received the land to cultivate.”

Many Japanese immigrants were met with the cultivation of dry or uneatable crops, while others were met by the cultivation of low quality goods that could not be sold or only be sold at extremely low prices. Another major problem experienced by Japanese immigrants while living in the colonias was the limited access to markets where they could sell the crops they were able to cultivate. Choko Waki, who immigrated to the colonia of Constanza in 1956, testifies on this issue in one of the letters in the commemorative book of the 50th anniversary. Here Waki

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91 “De mi casa a la tierra en Cañongo que me asignaron había unos 5 kilómetros.” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 71.
92 “tres meses desde nuestra llegada a la colonia, todavía no habíamos recibido las tierras para cultivar…” Ibid, 57.
comments on how difficult it was for her and her husband to find way to sell the flowers they had cultivated:

“When the harvesting period arrived, we did not have the storage boxes or the mode of transportation to take them [the flowers] to the city [the capital] to sale. We packed the flowers in clothing baskets made of bamboo that we had brought from Japan and my husband took them in a truck of transportation to take them to the city to sell them. My husband returned at dawn really tired and said: ‘I walked all day with the basket on my shoulders trying to sell the flowers, but since not even one flower was sold, I became angrily bothered and I threw all of them in the ocean.’”

As illustrated through Choko Waki’s testimony, local markets to sell products were almost nonexistent, and the Japanese colonias were a far distance from the markets in the capital. Even in the capital, there were no markets for certain products cultivated and introduced by the Japanese immigrants to Dominican society. As also pointed out by Waki’s experience, it was difficult for immigrants to find a mode of transportation, to transfer the harvest goods. Some migrants looked into local transportation or the use of personal connections to travel to the city, while others decided to sell the goods to governmental offices for lower prices. This became the case for some Japanese immigrants who later decided to immigrate out of the Dominican Republic and resorted to selling their land at low prices. Another problem faced by Japanese migrants, also seen in Waki’s experience, was the nonexistence of markets for certain products introduced by the Japanese immigrants, like the flowers in Waki’s case and vegetables that were not common in Dominican cuisine.

93 “Cuando llegó el tiempo de la cosecha, no teníamos las cajas de empaque ni el medio de transporte para llevarlas hacia la ciudad para la venta. Empacamos las flores en el canasto de ropa hecho de bambú que habíamos traído del Japón y mi marido las llevó en un camión de transporte para llevarlas hacia la ciudad para la venta. Mi esposo regresó al anochecer bien cansado y dijo: ‘Caminé durante todo el día con el canasto al hombre tratando de vender las flores, pero como no se vendió ni siquiera una sola flor, me incomodé airadamente y las boté todas al mar.’ El Paraíso Del Caribe, 97.
Added to the land problems was the scarcity of water to cultivate and fertilize the land assigned to the Japanese immigrants. The testimony of Miyuki Yokota attests to the huge burden the scarcity of water and the bad irrigation system became for the Japanese immigrants. Miyuki Yokota, who immigrated in 1957 to the colonia of Dajabón, indicates that “In Dajabón, the headache was the lack of water. Even if we were to work hard, the harvest would not grow without this indispensable liquid.”\(^{94}\) The conditions of the land were dry and infertile, but without a good irrigation system the Japanese immigrants were unable to re-fertilize the land; hence after every harvest the quality of the product deteriorated. At times, the water that the Japanese immigrants were able to obtain from this weak irrigation system contained high levels of salt, to reducing the quality of the harvest.\(^{95}\) Valentina Peguero also makes a reference to the immensity of the problem this was not only to the Japanese immigrants, but to Dominican officials in their non-fulfillment of the agreed-upon distribution of land. According to the Secretary of Agriculture, the amount of land assigned to the Japanese immigrants had to be restricted “up to the maximum limit that the available water [allowed] for the execution of an effective irrigation system.”\(^{96}\) Although there could have been measures taken to improve the accessibility of water in the colonias and build a better irrigation system, the source of the problem lay rather in the topography of the land. The sources of water in the area, whether rivers or canals were also limited; they were insufficient to moisten all the harvest regularly. The lack of accessibility to water had been so extreme the colonias that confrontations between the

\(^{94}\) “En Dajabón, el dolor de cabeza fue falta de agua. Aunque trabajásemos duro, los cultivos no crecían si no había este indispensable liquido.” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 89.

\(^{95}\) Peguero, Colonización y política: los japoneses, 140.

\(^{96}\) “hasta el límite máximo en que las aguas disponibles [permitieran] realizar un efectivo Sistema de irrigación.” Ibid, 126.
Japanese immigrants erupted. Some Japanese immigrants resorted to their own means; in Jarabacoa immigrants constructed their own canal.

The climate conditions of the Dominican Republic did not aid the Japanese immigrants with the former issue. Not only were the conditions of the land infertile and the installed irrigation system weak, but the levels of rainfall in the area where most of the Japanese *colonias* were stationed did not exceed forty inches of rain (Figure 5). The high temperature of the Dominican Republic from 1930 to 1960, compared to the low levels of rain, further complicated the accessibility to water for the Japanese immigrants (Figure 6). The hot temperatures of the Dominican Republic and the low levels of rainfall highlight just how difficult it was to harvest high quality goods. It is therefore no surprise that one of the biggest issues faced by the Japanese immigrants was the unsuccessful production of the goods they planted.

Among the many Japanese immigrants recruited for the improvement of the Dominican Republic’s agriculture, there was also a group of immigrants who had been recruited for the expansion of a fishing industry that could contribute to the Dominican Republic’s economy. This group of immigrants had been sent to the *colonia* of Manzanillo and, with the aid of the Federation of Associations Pro Japanese Emigration, both governments hoped for the success of the project. The project proved to be successful from the first months, but with time the Japanese immigrants began to experience different issues. Like the immigrant agriculturalist, the lack of a fish market in the Manzanillo population became one major issue, since the supply was much larger than the demand. Although the amount of fish had been massive at the
Figure 5. Map of the rainfall levels of the Dominican Republic, measurements to the right of the image beginning with less than 20". Source: Valentina Peguero, Mapa 2: Precipitación pluvial de la República Dominicana, map (Santo Domingo, DO: BanReservas, 2005.)
beginning, the Japanese immigrants noticed that the fish diversity in Manzanillo could not support an intensive fishery. Valentina Peguero comments on this issue, indicating that after an intensive study executed by the Japanese government, “conditions for the success of the project did not exist because the fishing was not renewable. You could catch enough fish in one place, but only once.” Some Japanese immigrants continued to search other fishing areas despite previous unsuccessful experience, but were usually with disappointment. Others decided to try

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98 “El estudio indicó que no existían las condiciones para el éxito del proyecto porque la pesca no era renovable. Se podía pescar bastante en un lugar, pero solamente una vez.” Peguero, Colonización y política: los japoneses, 132.
their luck as farmers in the other Japanese colonias, but were met with the same infertile conditions of the land as many of the other Japanese immigrants.

**Problems Faced by Japanese Immigrants: Incomplete Infrastructure and Patterns of Assimilation**

When looking at the presence of economic and social infrastructure in the case of the Japanese immigrants in the Dominican Republic, one must ask the following questions: How much access did the Japanese immigrants have to infrastructure? How much did they have as newly integrated Dominican citizens? In exploring the issue of infrastructure in the following way, we can understand the position of the Japanese immigrants as understood by the government.

We can begin by surveying the different forms of economic and social infrastructure offered to the Japanese immigrants that helped in the maintenance of the Japanese identity. Although schools did exist in the towns in which the Japanese colonias resided, many Japanese noted the fact that there was no school where they could take their children to learn the Japanese language. Children were instead taken to Spanish-speaking schools, while the Japanese language was only taught at the basic level at home. Matsue Murata, who immigrated to the colonia of Constanza in 1956, laments on not having the opportunity to allow his son to continue his Japanese language studies after arriving to the Dominican Republic: “In the time that we immigrated there was no Japanese language school, therefore, there was no opportunity to study our mother tongue.”

Although it is true that schools teaching the Japanese language were not set in place, Japanese immigrants had access to the local and national schools just as any other

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99 “En la época que inmigramos no había escuela de idioma japonés, por ende, no había oportunidad de estudiar nuestra lengua maternal.” *El Paraíso Del Caribe*, 85.
Dominican national did. This was the case of Miyuki Yokota’s son who studied at a Dominican university, while working at the same time to pay for his studies. The access to national and local schools allowed Nisei and Sansei the opportunity to integrate themselves into Dominican society and seek better futures, as members of the new society.

Access to medical services was another form of social infrastructure limited in the Dominican Republic, as seen in the previously discussed case of Ritsuko Uda de Takegama. The former case illustrates the difficulty Japanese immigrants faced in regards to their access to medical services, namely their inability to communicate in the Japanese language and receive proper treatment. The limited access to medical services can also be seen in Mitsu Sasaki’s account. After immigrating to the Dominican Republic, her husband became sick and had to be taken to the hospital: “We proceeded to transfer him to a big hospital in the region, but once there they told us they could not treat him at that hospital. Therefore, we decided to transfer him to a clinic in the capital. It seems that traveling 150 kilometers greatly affected his health, for a few minutes after arriving at the clinic my husband expired forever (my ‘papa’).”

Although medical services accessible to Dominicans were also accessible to Japanese immigrants, these medical services were not as greatly developed as needed. The inaccessibility to some of the medical services was more of a problem of the national social infrastructure. The Japanese government “periodically [sent] doctors to observe the health conditions of the immigrants,” but

100 “Procedimos a trasladarlo a un hospital grande de la región, pero una vez allí nos dijeron que no podían tratarlo en ese hospital. Así que decidimos trasladarlo a una clínica de la capital. Parece que el recorrido de más de 150 kilómetros afectó mucho su estado de salud, pues unos minutos de haber llegado a la clínica expiró para siempre mi esposo (mi ‘papa’).” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 83.
this aid was not offered frequently and did not offer long-term treatment for immigrants with more serious conditions.  

Access to electricity was another department in which the Dominican’s infrastructure needed improvement. The electric system of the Dominican Republic was unreliable or even nonexistent in other areas. This posed a huge problem for many of the Japanese immigrants. In the case of Japanese fishermen in the Dominican Republic, this worsened their misfortune since it was difficult to preserve the large quantities of fish taken from the sea. As Valentina Peguero describes, it was for this reason that the Dominicans would only purchase the amount of food they were going to consume that day, contributing to the problem of low demand and high supply experienced by the Japanese fishermen. In other cases, branches of the Japanese government aided in providing better forms of infrastructure to the Japanese immigrants, as seen in the case of the colonia in Aguas Negras. Mr. and Mrs. Tabata, who immigrated to the colonia of Aguas Negras in 1958, comment on the need to purchase a power plant due to the lack of public electricity nationally. “Because electric energy did not come through the national network, when the fuel finished the service was suspended for some days… If I remember correctly the electric[ity] and the water were installed with the help with the [Japanese] embassy and Kaikyouren.” Besides the issue of electricity there were other forms “hard” infrastructure that were not as well developed in the Dominican Republic, some of these being railways and road systems. Although we can see that Japanese immigrants were able to obtain access to more

101 “periódicamente médicos para observar las condiciones de salud de los inmigrantes.” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 71.
102 Peguero, Colonización y política: los japoneses, 132.
103 “Como la energía eléctrica no venía a través de la red nacional, cuando se terminaba el combustible se suspendía el servicio unos días…Si mal no recuerdo la energía eléctrica y el agua fueron instaladas con la ayuda de la Embajada y KAIKYOUREN.” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 70.
infrastructure from the Japanese government, the aid offered by the Japanese government was to help the Japanese immigrants better assimilate into Dominican society.

For the migrants, immigrating to the Dominican Republic meant accepting the fact that they had to become Dominican citizens. The Japanese government expected this assimilation; Japanese immigrants needed to leave behind their Japanese identity and adopt that of the place they had immigrated to. This attitude can be seen in the negative responses from the Japanese authorities to the complaints of the immigrants. This can be observed in a letter written by Japanese immigrants to the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs. In this letter, migrants state that:

> the treatment we received by the corresponding authorities [at the Japanese embassy in the Dominican Republic] were extremely cold, functionaries from the Japanese embassy would tell us calmly ‘You are immigrants that came to this country because you did not have to eat in our country [Japan].’ Other voices would clamor saying: ‘Leave immediately because the embassy is not a place you guys can come to.’ Due to the intolerant attitude of these functionaries, many of the immigrants came to affirm that they would never return to the Embassy because they were [not] treated like human beings, causing many of the descendants to be born without being registered like Japanese citizens in the Embassy…

Although the Japanese authorities in the Dominican Republic did offer aid, this was limited. When the Japanese authorities were met with complaints from the Japanese citizens they ignored their cries instead of securing good conditions for their Japanese citizens. After the death of President Trujillo these cries for help from the Japanese immigrants increased, demanding

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104 “El tratamiento que recibimos por parte de las autoridades correspondientes fueron extremadamente frías, funcionarios de la Embajada del Japón nos decían tranquilamente: ‘Ustedes son inmigrantes que vinieron a este país porque no tenían qué comer en la patria.’ Otras veces nos vociferaron diciendo: ‘Salgan rápido de aquí porque la Embajada no es un lugar donde ustedes pueden venir.’ Por la actitud de intolerancia de estos funcionarios, muchos de los inmigrantes llegaron a a firmar que no volverían más a la Embajada porque eran tratados como seres humanos, ocasionando que muchos de los descendientes nacidos no fueron registrados como ciudadanos japoneses en la Embajada.” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 48-49.
repatriation, but the Japanese government’s first reaction to this request was denial. The choice for repatriation was not available for the Japanese citizens until after Trujillo’s death, Japanese citizens were rejected by the Japanese government, and the immigrants were inherently stripped of their Japanese citizenship.

The Death of the Dictator, Repatriation and Remigration, and A Cry for Justice

The problems of the Japanese immigrants worsened with the assassination of the dictator Rafael Trujillo in May 1961. Due to the public adoration of the Japanese by local Dominican papers and the dictator himself, many Dominicans were resentful of the Japanese. This resentment made the experience of the Japanese immigrants almost unbearable, and many began complaining to the Japanese government, asking for the opportunity to repatriate. Although the government did not at first accept the request of the Japanese immigrants for fear of news reaching back to Japan, eventually they capitulated due to the immigrants’ efforts. Japanese immigrants began repatriating in 1961. In 2000, a group of the Japanese migrants who immigrated to the Dominican Republic decided to sue the Japanese government for the injustices they experienced.

By the time Trujillo was assassinated, the Japanese immigrants had still not fully settled into Dominican society, and the death of the dictator further complicated this process. Toake Endoh discusses the negative experiences of the immigrants after the death of the dictator, some of these revolving around the assigned lands given to the immigrants. As Endoh articulates, after

105 Endoh, Exporting Japan, 50.
the death of the dictator, many Dominicans began “claiming that lands the former government provided the immigrants had originally been confiscated from Dominican farmers, the Dominicans looted or took over by force the immigrants’ lands. Anti-Japanese activists took to the streets in urban cities, shouting xenophobic slogans and racist slurs.”\(^{107}\) The Japanese immigrants were targeted and threatened, due to the publicly portrayed ‘favoritism’ of the dictator who had terrorized the Dominican nation during previous years. The land that they had relied on to produce crops and make a living was also being taken away. Hearing the constant threats and claims from some of the local Dominicans must have been horrible for the Japanese immigrants, as they feared what unfortunate events tomorrow might bring. Masuhiro Naito, who immigrated to the colonia of Aguas Negras in 1958, wrote a testimonial letter that illustrates Endoh’s point,

> Some previous property owners of the lands that had been confiscated by Trujillo, invaded the lands cultivated by the Japanese immigrants, manifesting that those belonged to them and demanding the immediate return of these… The issue of the land affected the destiny of the [Japanese] immigrants that had to divide themselves in the following three groups: those who returned to Japan, those who re-immigrated to south America, and those that remained in the Dominican Republic.\(^{108}\)

The conditions faced by the Japanese immigrants had become so harsh, that the Japanese government eventually allowed the Japanese immigrants to leave the Dominican Republic if they wished.

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\(^{107}\) Endoh, *Exporting Japan*, 50.
\(^{108}\) “Algunos antiguos propietarios de tierras que habían sido confiscadas por Trujillo, invadieron las tierras cultivadas por los inmigrantes japoneses, manifestando que éstas les pertenecían y exigiendo la devolución inmediata de las misma…Los problemas de las tierras afectaron el destino de los inmigrantes que tuvieron que dividirse en los siguientes tres grupos: los que regresaron al Japón, los que re-emigraron hacia Suramérica y los que se quedaron en la República Dominicana.” *El Paraíso Del Caribe*, 48-49.
Seeing no future in the Dominican Republic, the majority of the immigrants now placed their hopes and efforts on repatriation. When making the decision to allow repatriation or not, the Japanese government conducted research and studies to assess whether repatriation was necessary. Masuhiro Naito comments on the evaluations executed by the Japanese government after the death of Trujillo:

After, the Japanese government authorities performed a study/survey on the future of the immigrants in this country [the Dominican Republic], visiting all the colonias. As a result of such study and taking into account the wishes of the immigrants, the execution of a plan of assistance was executed, in which every family one of the following three choices [were taken]: the first group decided return to Japan, the second group decided to re-emigrate to south America, and a third group chose to stay in the country [the Dominican Republic].

From the 249 families who made the decision to immigrate to the Dominican Republic, 133 made the decision to immigrate back to Japan, 70 of the families re-migrated to other parts of Latin America, and the remaining 40 or more families stayed in the Dominican Republic. Some of the families who decided to remain still had hope, for the new promise made by the Japanese authorities: for those who decided to stay, the land and finances previously promised would be granted. These Japanese families also felt they had nothing to return to in Japan; when making the choice to immigrate to the Dominican Republic many had sold all of their belongings and properties. Most of the Japanese families who made the decision to stay in the Dominican Republic, decided to migrate out of the colonias and into other cities of the Dominican Republic, looking for other more lucrative forms of income. Some Japanese immigrants moved to other

109 “Luego, las autoridades del gobierno japonés realizaron un estudio/encuesta sobre el futuro de los inmigrantes en este país, visitando a todas las colonias. Como resultado de dicho estudio y tomando en cuenta el deseo de los inmigrantes, se decidió la ejecución de un plan de asistencia, en el cual cada familia uno de los tres siguientes caminos: un primer grupo que decidió regresar al Japón, un Segundo grupo que decidió re-emigrar hacia Sudamérica y un tercer grupo que escogió quedarse en el país.” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 99-100.
110 Ibid, 48.
rural cities looking for fertile land to cultivate, while others tried their luck in the capital, now known as Santo Domingo. The Japanese families who decided to stay placed all their strength assimilating into Dominican society and building a better future for themselves in their new home.

After waiting 40 years for the promises made by the Japanese government regarding the delivery of the accorded land, the Dominican government proceeded with “The Luisa Project” in 1998. The Luisa Project consisted of the distribution of land in the town of La Luisa as executed by the political decision of the president of the Dominican Republic, Dr. Leonel Fernández (served August 16, 1996 – August 16, 2000). Not all the Japanese immigrants felt that the distribution of the lands in La Luisa justified the horrible experiences they faced while in the Dominican Republic, 27 families decided to receive the lands, while the other families decided to sue the Japanese government for redress. The Dominican government attempted to include the participation of the Japanese immigrants by offering information sessions on the project and conducting a trip to the chosen lands in La Luisa, taking the immigrants to see the land in two buses.¹¹¹ To the Dominican government the project was a symbol of the friendship that existed between them and the Japanese government. The Dominican government had succeeded in constructing roads that enabled access to the area, a water well for potable water, the sowing of acacia as a forestry experiment, and a “Center of Technical Orientation for the Promotion of Agriculture.” Like in the Japanese colonias, problems also arose with the “La Luisa Project,” including the absence of an electric system, and an inadequate sanitary system.¹¹² Nevertheless,

¹¹¹ *El Paraíso Del Caribe*, 33.
¹¹² Ibid, 33.
some Japanese immigrants viewed the La Luisa project with hope and as a mark of their presence in the Dominican Republic.

The cries of the Japanese did not end with the request for repatriation, but continued in 2000 when 126 immigrants sued the Japanese government. Many Japanese immigrants felt abused by the false advertisements of the Japanese government, and felt that the Japanese government had deceived them into choosing to immigrate to the Dominican Republic by portraying it as a Caribbean paradise. Not all the immigrants felt this way, and there was a separation between immigrants as to their thoughts on whether or not to sue the Japanese government. The “Association of Japanese Residents in the Dominican Republic Inc.” was the association of Japanese immigrants responsible for the initial petition for redress, in which they asked the government for a mount of approximately 2,500 million yens. It was not until the year 2001 that a group of the Japanese immigrants who had returned to Japan joined in the lawsuit, now there were 177 immigrants involved in the case, and the amount had risen to 3,200 million yen. The “Association of Dominico-Japanese Fraternity” did not partake in the court case, which illustrates the division between the factions of Japanese migrants.

The case was executed through the Tokyo District court using the Japanese national redress law. In the Japanese Immigrants to Dominican Republic video, we can see scenes of the court hearings; some of the Japanese immigrants testified to the harsh experiences they went through in the Dominican Republic and their feeling of betrayal towards the Japanese government after arriving in the Dominican Republic and not finding the “paradise” promised.

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114 El Paraíso Del Caribe, 32.
The court acknowledged the Japanese government’s responsibility in “not discussing in detail the conditions of reception with the Dominican government” and of not securing lands adequate for agriculture.\(^{115}\) Compensation was denied on the basis of not meeting the time requirement placed by Japan’s civil code, since more than 20 years had passed since the launch of the immigration initiative. On June 13, 2006, the Japanese immigrants decided to accept the proposal of the Japanese government and withdraw from appealing to a higher court. The Japanese immigrants were later able to receive an official apology “in the name of the prime minister” and a settlement that “offered livelihood assistance of 220,000 yen a year ($2,100) to each household, or 550,000 yen for households in extreme poverty. They were also allowed to join the national health insurance program with financial aid from the government.”\(^{116}\) With the assistance obtained from the settlement, many former Japanese migrants finally felt like they could recover from the harsh experiences that resulted from migration to the Dominican Republic. This was the case with Kurato Kimura, one of the more involved immigrants in the case, who expressed the benefit of having the health insurance program, and how without the livelihood assistance he “cannot make a living.”\(^{117}\)

In this chapter, we were able to explore the experiences of the Japanese immigrants after landing in the Dominican Republic. In this chapter, we saw how the lack of a total bilateral agreement between both the Japanese and Dominican government, contributed to the negative experiences of the Japanese immigrants in the Dominican Republic. Most of the problems faced

\(^{115}\) El Paraíso Del Caribe, 32.
\(^{117}\) Ibid.
by the Japanese immigrants revolved around issues that had been previously noticed by the Japanese technicians and the Japanese government; therefore, many of these hardships could have been prevented if the Japanese government had come up with schemes to solve them in the planning phase of the migration. This chapter also maps out the different issues surrounding the Japanese immigrants in the Dominican Republic, related to the environment or infrastructure. It allowed us to also understand how the Japanese immigrants were settling into their new homes. In exploring the former, some questions arise, specifically on the Japanese immigrant community who decided to stay in the Dominican Republic. What were the levels of assimilation within the Japanese immigrants? Did the Japanese immigrants come to identify themselves as Japanese, or did they continue to identify themselves only as Japanese immigrants? How did the descendants of these Japanese immigrants came to identify themselves? Were Japanese immigrants able to sustain Japanese traditions in the Dominican Republic? Do these Japanese families still sustain a relationship with Japan and the other Nikkei community? Chapter III explores these questions and focuses on the Nikkei community living in the Dominican Republic today.

Let us mow recall the hardships faced by the Japanese migrants. Although some of the migrants were probably unaware of the political situation of the Dominican Republic, as soon as they entered the country and the colonias, they were welcomed into dictatorship of Trujillo. Most of the colonias where the Japanese immigrants were settled were near the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. For scholars like Oscar H. Horst and Katsuhiro Asagiri, this fact sheds light on the usage of the Japanese immigrants as a sort of human border that prohibited the further migration and settlement of Haitians on Dominican soil. It is also important to consider the Dominican government’s high interest in Japanese immigration to improve its agriculture. We also learned how these two ideas correlated with each other since most of the land assigned
to the Japanese immigrants had been previously worked by Haitians who had illegally crossed the border.

The cultural differences experienced by the Japanese immigrants, included: differences in skin color, differences in behavioral customs, and the language barrier that prohibited Japanese immigrants from communicating with the Dominican locals and from having full access to certain infrastructures. Another issue faced by the Japanese immigrants was related to the lands assigned to the immigrants, which was dry, infertile, and rocky, and containing high levels of salt. Added to this issue of the land was how far these lands were from the colonias for some Japanese families, and how the conditions of the land came to negatively affect the quality of the crops harvested. The scarcity of water definitely did not help the problem of the land. Water was hard to obtain due to the limited or nonexistent irrigation system and the low levels of rainfall in that area. The absence or nonexistence of markets for the products the Japanese cultivated was another of the issues that migrants had to face. This was also the case for the group of Japanese immigrants in charge of the fishing project, who not only had an issue with the insufficient fishing culture of the Dominican Republic, but also did not find a sustainable market to sell the fish.

Likewise, infrastructure in the Dominican Republic was limited. Although there were not many services for the Japanese immigrants specifically, the infrastructure accessible to Dominicans was also accessible to Japanese immigrants. However, Japanese immigrants did not have access to services like Japanese language schools for their kids, and a lacked of Spanish ability made it difficult to fully access certain services. Japanese immigrants did, however, have access to local and national schools in the Dominican Republic as well as hospitals, but sometimes local hospitals were. In general, the electrical system of the Dominican Republic was
not dependable, which had an effect on fisherman, who were only able to sell what Dominicans would eat that same day. Through the exploration of the infrastructure in the Dominican Republic, we were also able to explore the Japanese government’s expectation of the assimilation of the Japanese immigrants. This expectation was visible through the rude and harsh treatment many Japanese immigrants received from Japanese authorities in the embassy when complaining about the hardships they faced.

Lastly, we explored the effects that arose from Trujillo’s death. One of the first problems, illustrated in Japanese immigrant testimonies was the reclaiming of the land assigned to Japanese immigrants by Dominican locals since most of the land previously owned by Dominicans had been confiscated by Trujillo. Some Dominican locals also began protesting against the Japanese immigrants with racist slogans and slurs. Due to the conditions faced by the Japanese immigrants, the Japanese government allowed the option of repatriation after repeated requests from the immigrants. The Japanese immigrants chose between three different options: to return to Japan, to re-migrate to South America, or to stay in the Dominican Republic. Some decided to stay in the Dominican Republic based on the Japanese government’s promise that the previous promises made at the beginning of the immigration were going to be fulfilled for those who decided to stay. The “La Luisa Project” initiated by the Dominican government, was a project in which land in La Luisa was distributed to Japanese immigrants to fulfill the land promised forehand. Only 26 families accepted the “La Luisa Project”; other immigrant families decided to take things to a different level and sued the Japanese government in the year 2000. Although the Japanese court admitted the fault of the Japanese government, the compensation was denied based on a violation of Japan’s civil code. In 2006, Japanese immigrants withdrew the court case but, nevertheless, the prime minister of Japan formally apologized to the Japanese and assistance
was given to the Japanese immigrants by the Japanese government. The Japanese immigrants experienced many hardships while living in the Dominican Republic, but they never gave up and looked towards tomorrow as a chance for improvement, an attitude passed down to the later generations who came to be born in Dominican soil.
Chapter III:
The Perseverance of the Nikkei Community Despite Obstacles

Learning about the difficulties experienced by the Japanese immigrants illustrates their perseverance. Although they came to experienced times where giving up was a better choice, hope for a better tomorrow continued to persist within the Japanese immigrants who immigrated to the Dominican Republic. Many fought to build a future and a home in the new land. According to the Japanese embassy in the Dominican Republic, there were 874 Japanese residents in the Dominican Republic as of October 2013.\textsuperscript{118} Although there had been expectations of assimilation from both the Japanese and the Dominican governments, what levels of assimilation did the Japanese immigrants and their descendants actually achieve? Did the Issei (first generation) ever come to identify themselves as Dominican? Did the Nisei (second generation) and Sansei (third generation) communities identify as Japanese, Dominicans, or both?

This chapter will attempt to answer the former questions by exploring the differing generational experiences of the Japanese living in the Dominican Republic. As previously discussed, the Nikkei community consists of multiple different generations: Issei meaning first generation, Nisei meaning second generation, Sansei meaning third, as so on. Although many Issei immigrants had difficulties integrating into Dominican society, several of the testimonial letters illustrate the acceptance of a Dominican identity to a certain extent. For Nisei immigrants, integration into Dominican society was easier, since many had begun to learn the Spanish language while playing with Dominican locals or attending public primary schools in the Dominican Republic. Other Nisei immigrants came to identify themselves as Dominicans while

still acknowledging and upholding their Japanese heritage. The Japanese language is not only difficult to learn for the Nisei, but also for the Sansei, since Japanese language schools have been either nonexistent or rudimentary education initiated by the Japanese immigrant families themselves. Although fewer Sansei are fluent in Japanese, cultural traditions and values are still maintained within this generation. As seen in many cases, many Sansei still consider themselves Japanese to some degree, identifying themselves as “mixed.” Is there any aspect that influenced the formation of Nikkei identity? To what degree was it influenced by events they experience in their new country? As a way to better understand the identity of the Dominican Nikkei, this chapter will also briefly explore the differences and similarities between the Dominican Nikkei and the Nikkei community in Brazil, where, as like in the Dominican Republic, many Brazilian Nikkei identify themselves as possessing a dual identity.

The relationship of the Japanese immigrants in the Dominican Republic to Japan has been maintained both through the continuation of Japanese cultural practices, and through travel exchange between the two countries. Trips to Japan by Dominican Nikkei are organized with the help of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as well as through employment companies in the Dominican Republic, for business purposes. There are also trips made by Japanese citizens to the Dominican Republic, usually as volunteers with JICA. How did these trips and encounters affect both the Dominican Nikkei and Japanese citizens? Did these interactions alter the concept of identity for the Nikkei community in the Dominican Republic?

Besides exploring the relationship of the Dominican Nikkei community with Japan, this chapter will continue looking at how Dominican Nikkei reflect to one another, as well as with Nikkei from other Latin American countries. On the national level, there are various ways in which the Nikkei in the Dominican Republic interact with each other, including official
organizations (as in the law suit case explored in Chapter II) that allow Nikkei to meet. There are also planned events where the Nikkei community join to celebrate Japanese culture, such as the “Nikkei Market 2015” sponsored by The Dominican Association of Ex-fellows Nikkei of JICA. Interaction with their fellow Nikkei surpasses national borders, and Dominican Nikkei also met Nikkei from other countries in events like COPANI (Convenciones Panamericanas Nikkei, or Nikkei Pan-American Conferences).

The relationship between the Dominican Republic, Japan, and the Dominican Nikkei community have improved over the years. Politically, the relationship between both governments improved through both monetary aid and commercial relations. Although there are still common misconceptions of the Nikkei community among Dominican nationals, an interest and curiosity in Japanese culture has slowly developed in the Dominican Republic. However, although Japanese language classes have been integrated into Dominican universities, public schools lack proper education on the Dominican Republic’s immigration history. In exploring the current Dominican Nikkei community, it is also important to discuss ways in which the present situation can be improved.

**Identity Across the Different Generations of Japanese in the Dominican Republic**

In the Japanese colonias in the Dominican Republic, immigrants began to marry and have children. Not only were there marriages between different Japanese immigrants living in the same or different colonias, but there were also interracial marriages between Japanese immigrants and Dominican locals. How were Japanese customs and practices able to be maintained throughout the years? Were these customs and practices complicated by interracial
marriages? In answering these questions, we will explore the stated identities of different Japanese immigrants—their level of assimilation, proficiency of language, and cultural practices.

Immigrating to a new place where one does not know the language or culture guarantees that one will feel like an outsider, but having no hope for a better future in one’s home pushes one to make the choice to migrate. After arriving in the new land, one begins to wonder whether one day the feeling of belonging will arrive. Questions like these were probably on the minds of the first generation of migrants (Issei) in the Dominican Republic. Seiji Kasahara, who immigrated to the colonia of Dajabón in June 1958, contemplated such questions while remembering his experience as a Japanese immigrant in the Dominican Republic. Recalling his experience in Japan through the experience of war, Kasahara’s letter considers the Dominican Republic as a land that has given him various gifts. It is a place where, despite his lack of proficiency in the Spanish language, he was able to raise a family, which has since grown to 20 grandchildren and 9 great-grandsons. To Kasahara, the Dominican Republic has become “his land,” and he himself now feels Dominican: “Although I still am a Japanese immigrant in the Dominican Republic, in reality I feel as if I am Dominican.”

A high level of assimilation was not needed for the Japanese immigrants to recognize themselves as Dominicans; rather, what was needed was a feeling of settling in, which was obtained in Kasahara’s case through the formation of a family on Dominican soil. The Japanese identity remained with Kasahara and was kept alive through his proficiency in the language, his practice and teaching the martial art of Kendo, as well as his continual production of food like tofu and natto while living in the Dominican Republic. In Kasahara’s case, although he

119 “Aunque sigo siendo un inmigrante japonés en la Republica Dominicana, en realidad me siento como si fuera dominicano.” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 75.
acknowledges both a Japanese and Dominican identity, the identity he ultimately claims is the Dominican. Assimilation commonly entails the adoption of the language and cultural norms of the native group, but although Kasahara had not fully adopted the language and culture of the Dominican Republic, he still identified himself as part of it. This acceptance of a Dominican identity was also seen in other Issei, as in the case of Kaneko Hodai, who immigrated to the colonia of La Altagracia 1959. In her letter Hodai ends by recalling the story of Shimazu de Satsuma, who when visiting Edo (Tokyo) pointed towards Satsuma (Kagoshima) with his finger saying “the direction where my finger points to is the place where my spirit will reside.”¹²⁰ Making a connection to Shimazu de Satsuma’s story, Hodai states how if she was to point to the place where her heart belonged, she would point to the Dominican Republic without hesitation.¹²¹

Interestingly enough, some Issei came to actually partake in both Japanese and Dominican cultural practices. This was the case for Chiyo Kawashiro’ who immigrated to the colonia of Dajabón in 1956, and adopted both Japanese and Dominican natural medicine practices. Kawashiro immigrated to the Dominican Republic ready to accept and adapt herself to Dominican customs. In a testimonial letter, she states how “when one goes to a foreign land, since that land has its own peculiarities, one has to adapt to the local customs that existed long ago, even if these are strange to us Japanese.”¹²² She goes on to list different natural medicinal recipes that are good for different illnesses and that can help with various ailments. Kawashiro not only uses the wild plants of the Dominican Republic, like aloe vera, to stay healthy, but she also drinks green tea and nori tea. Kawashiro affirms that due to both the Dominican medical

¹²⁰ El Paraíso Del Caribe, 92.
¹²¹ Ibid, 92.
¹²² Ibid, 93.
recipes she learned from an old Dominican woman and Japanese recipes, she has been able to live healthily for so long in a country with an entirely different climate than that of her native Hokkaido.

Other Issei recognized both Japanese and Dominican identities, as evidenced in the testimonial letters. This is illustrated in Kii Yamaki’s poetic pieces in Spanish titled “Unforgettable Homeland” and “Now, the Country I Love.” In “Unforgettable Homeland,” Yamaki seems to make reference to her childhood memories:

Rocky mountains we ran, days of infancy
Cut the flower, gather the chestnuts
In the small country road, infant song
From the distant sea, I yearn for my homeland.123

In this poem, Yamaki makes reference to her infancy and hence to her homeland Japan. When talking about the rocky mountains, Yamaki was most likely making reference to Mount Shinobu in Yamaki’s hometown of Fukushima. In “Now, the Country I Love,” Yamaki makes further references to the Dominican Republic through words like “tropical” and “Caribbean”:

Cheerful girls from the tropical country, like to [dance

Unfamiliar with the cold, are jovial
Are good people, characterized
The white herons interfly, prairie
[of the Caribbean

The sombrita of the coconut palm, refreshing.124

123 “Montañas de piedra corrimos, días de infancia
Cortar la flor, recoger las castañas
En el caminito del campo, canción infantil
Desde lejano mar, añoro mi tierra natal” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 73.
124 Sombrita is a Dominican term, with a distinctive cultural connotation, affectionately describing a soft shade.
“Alegres muchachas del país tropical, les gusta [bailar

No conocen el frío, son joviales
Son buenas personas, se caracterizan
Las garzas blancas se entrevuelan, pradera
It is interesting to see how even though the *Issei* generation experienced many hardships and had not yet accomplished a high level of assimilation, since many at that time had still not learned the language, the testimonial letters in the commemorative book illustrate a recognition of a Dominican identity among many of the immigrants.

Did this double identity continue through the *Nisei* generation? Was Japanese identity difficult to uphold in the new circumstances that the *Nisei* faced? Being born into Dominican society could have made it easier for *Nisei* to acknowledge themselves as Dominicans since some level of assimilation had been achieved. Not only were most *Nisei* able to learn the Spanish language by attending national schools, but they also had greater opportunities to obtain degrees and positions in the Dominican Republic’s workforce. Eiko Kokubun, a *Nisei* whose parents had immigrated to the *colonia* of Dajabón and Duvergé, identifies herself as being half Dominican and half Japanese.¹²⁵ She was able to attend school in the Dominican Republic and learn the Spanish language, and later. also had the opportunity to obtain a degree from one of Dominican Republic’s best universities (Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra, or PUCMM).

Working today as a real estate broker, Ms. Kokubun has been able to settle and establish herself into Dominican society. However, even though Ms. Kokubun was able to follow the same path as many Dominican locals, there were times when she felt foreign, and not solely Dominican. This was largely due to the cultural differences between Ms. Kokubun, her family, and her fellow Dominicans. Although Eiko Kokubun had been unable to learn the Japanese language fluently, her family had passed down to her important Japanese values. She had been taught the

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¹²⁵ Eiko Kokubun, e-mail interview by the author, March 16, 2016.

[del Caribe
La sombrita de la palma de coco, refrescante.” *El Paraíso Del Caribe*, 73.]
importance of respecting elders, as well as being responsible, punctual, serious, professional, and organized. Ms. Kokubun also continued to consume and appreciate Japanese food and to take part in Japanese celebrations. Being able to travel to Japan allowed her to connect more deeply with her Japanese roots, and identify herself with Japanese culture. But even in Japan, she felt like she did not completely fit in. Although feeling slightly alienated from both the Dominican Republic and Japan, Eiko Kokubun understands that she forms part of a hybrid identity, one which combines the best of both cultures. Although the circumstances for Eiko Kokubun and other Nisei were definitely different than those faced by many Issei, it is interesting to see how both generations claimed this double identity.

Some Nisei have come to identify themselves as Dominican, as in the case of Hiroshi Waki. In the Nisei group described above, Japanese heritage is not lost or forgotten, but rather upheld and recognized. Hiroshi Waki is also a Nisei born of an immigrant in the Japanese colonia of Constanza as a boy. Unlike Eiko Kokubun, Hiroshi Waki states that he never felt different from his fellow Dominicans. Waki expresses never having felt distinct or even marginalized by others, but instead receiving universally good treatment by his peers. In Waki’s case, his exposure to both Dominican and Japanese cultures was directly influenced by his parents, since he was the child of an interracial marriage between a Japanese and Dominican. Marriages between Dominicans and Japanese were few, but not altogether uncommon in the Issei generation. Interracial marriages were greatly celebrated by Trujillo’s government, which gave the couples a monetary wedding gift. By the Nisei generation, interracial marriages

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126 Kokubun, e-mail interview by the author.
127 Hiroshi Waki, e-mail interview by the author, February 24, 2016.
128 Constancio Cassa, "Inmigración japonesa en la comunidad de Constanza" (lecture, COPANI 2015, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Santo Domingo, DO, August 7, 2015.)
increased. Hiroshi’s father’s young age at the time of arrival meant he had learned the Spanish language, which might have further contributed to Hiroshi Waki’s Dominican identity. The language spoken at his home was Spanish; Hiroshi Waki’s interaction with the Japanese language was only by listening to his grandmother, while he responded in Spanish. It was not until Hiroshi Waki was 17 years old that he was further exposed to the Japanese language, as he taught himself a little while living in Japan for four years. Hiroshi Waki definitely relates to and upholds his Japanese identity, not only through his exposure to the Japanese language, but also through his appropriation of handed-down Japanese values, consumption of Japanese food, and participation in Japanese celebrations. Through these practices, he demonstrates his pride and respect towards his Japanese heritage. Waki constantly strives to honor both countries by keeping up his Japanese name, while also working for a better Dominican Republic.

After seeing the language problem faced by the Nisei, one begins to question how this Japanese identity continued through later generations like the Sansei? Even in the third generation Sansei community of the Dominican Republic, some acknowledge a double identity like that seen in previous generations. The dual identity continues to be seen in Kaori Sone, a Sansei whose family originally belonged to the Japanese colonia of Constanza but later immigrated to different places until finally settling in Nigua, San Cristobal. Like Eiko Kokubun, Kaori Sone does not totally feel at home in either the Dominican Republic or Japan. She does not completely blend into Dominican society, due to Japanese physical attributes like her black

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130 Waki, e-mail interview by the author.
straight hair and almond-shaped eyes, which prompt most Dominicans to refer to her as “La Chinita” instead of by her name. In addition, she sometimes eats traditional Japanese homemade dishes and is knowledgeable about Japanese culture, locations, and language. Having the opportunity to go to Japan to study Japanese art also allowed Sone to better understand Japanese attitudes to the world and cultural emphasis on respect, organization, professionalism, dedication, presentation, and punctuality. Like the other Nisei, Sone’s proficiency in the Japanese language may not be fluent, but she is able to write her name in Japanese and read hiragana. Being born and raised in the Dominican Republic, Sone knows how to speak in Dominican Spanish (and its extensive dialects) and regularly eats Dominican food. Although Sone’s case illustrates adaptation to both the Dominican and Japanese culture, she identifies herself as Nikkei instead of simply a “mix.” She articulates that she is “neither Dominican nor Japanese but rather a mix of both, creating a new culture that is not entirely Japanese or Dominican, but a Nikkei culture that is different for every country where there are Japanese immigrants.” Sone here not only illustrates the creation of a new identity but also recognizes a relationship to the Nikkei community as a whole; Sone feels she is part of a larger community of Japanese immigrants and descendants.

As seen in all the previous Nikkei cases, the newly attained Japanese Dominican identity is described by many in positive terms. What most strongly illustrates the Nikkei community’s acceptance of a Dominican identity is their transition from the Japanese naming convention to that of the Dominican Republic as apparent in the way in which the names of the Dominican

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131 Kaori Sone, e-mail interview by the author, March 24, 2016.
132 “ni Japonesa ni dominicana sino mas bien una mezcla de ambas creando una cultura que no esenteramente japonesa o dominicana sino una cultura Nikkei, que es distinta para cada pais donde hay inmigrantes japoneses.” Ibid.
Nikkei were written down in the commemorative book. Obtaining a sense of stability in Dominican society was not easy for the Dominican Nikkei, specifically for the Issei who due to the initial harsh conditions did not have time to educate themselves and learn the Spanish language. Due to the lack of Japanese language schools, later generations had difficulty learning and maintaining the Japanese language. Japanese immigrants fought to pass on the Japanese language to their descendants by setting up community weekend language schools led by Nikkei. Today, there are Japanese Language Schools in Santo Domingo, Bonao, La Vega, Jarabacoa, Constanza, Santiago, and Dajabón. There are also Japanese language classes offered at national universities that can aid some Nikkei in learning the Japanese language, as was the case for Yuri Hodai, a Sansei who acknowledges having truly learned the language after accompanying her Dominican husband to these classes.

The lack of access to ingredients essential for Japanese cooking also made it difficult to continue the preparation and consumption of Japanese traditional dishes, so for this reason many immigrants either grew food locally or prepared certain ingredients themselves. Seiji Kasahara, and Giichi Tanioka describe growing Japanese Tanioka rice, and the Sansei (Emiko Hidaka) still makes the soy sauce recipe passed down from her grandmother.

The acceptance of a double identity is not only seen within the Dominican Nikkei, but also in the case of the Brazilian Nikkei. Japanese immigration to Brazil was initiated prior to the

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133 In Japanese the surname (family name) comes before the given name, while in the Dominican Republic the given name comes before the surname.
134 El Paraíso Del Caribe, 123-125.
Second World War, the Japanese community in Brazil being much larger than that of the Dominican Republic. The first Japanese group immigrated to Brazil on June 18, 1908, when the *Kasato-Maru* arrived with 168 Japanese families. Many had immigrated with the hope of making money and returning to Japan, but living in Brazil turned out to be more difficult than expected, and many were never really able to escape poverty. Due to the tragic situation resulting from the Second World War, immigration back to Japan was not an option for the Japanese in Brazil. During the Second World War, life in Brazil worsened as the Japanese immigrants were prohibited by the Brazilian government from speaking, teaching, and reading the Japanese language. Japanese immigration to Brazil, which was banned during the Second World War, was reinitiated in 1952, and slowly over time Japanese immigrants began building better futures for themselves and for Brazil.\(^{137}\) The experiences of the *Nikkei* community in Brazil and the Dominican Republic were different from each other but also shared some similarities.

Unlike in the Dominican Republic, repatriation did not occur until after the Japanese community had long established themselves in Brazil. Similar to the Dominican *Nikkei*, the Brazilian *Nikkei* were exposed to difficult conditions: in the fields they were treated like slaves, with armed field overseers, this comes as no surprise since the Japanese immigrants had been chosen to replace slaves who had previously worked the land. Soon, Japanese immigrants began building *colonias* themselves with the help of incentives from the Japanese government. Upon seeing the difficulty of integration into Brazilian society from closed *colonias*, many immigrants began to disperse, some moving to the city of Sao Palo. As Kokei Uehara affirms, due to the poor conditions in which the *Issei* lived, many began raising their children as Brazilians with

Japanese morals and values. The Nikkei community has since become so well established that its culture is now one of the focal points of Sao Palo tourist interest. As you walk down the streets, it is possible to admire the merging of the Japanese and Brazilian cultures; you can see Japanese traditional decorations and food as you walk past Nikkei speaking in Portuguese. Yugo Mabe acknowledges both cultures, but shows a larger identification with Brazil. He says, “I am a Nikkei, but most importantly, I am Brazilian.” This was also the case for Patricia, the daughter of a Japanese man, who acknowledges that she recalls the practices of both cultures in funerary rituals, such as the incense and bean cakes from Japan, and the candles and coffee from Brazil. Although the situation in Brazil is somewhat different from the Dominican Republic’s, the general tendency among Brazilian Nikkei is to recognize both cultures, rather than select a singular identity, whether Brazilian or Japanese.

The various lives of the Nikkei explored in this chapter illustrate how immigrants successful integrated and formed a double identity. As seen with the later generations of Dominican Nikkei, some had the opportunity to travel back to Japan to either study or live for a few months or years. Why did some Nikkei return to Japan? What programs were set in place to facilitate this? Were there Japanese citizens traveling to the Dominican Republic as well? What is the relationship between the Nikkei community and Japan today?

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139 Ibid.

Relations between the Nikkei Community and Japan

There have been increased connections between the Nikkei and Japan during recent years. As seen in some of the Nisei and Sansei mentioned above, trips for the later generations have become more common. Although there are some who travel to Japan due to business, others do so for personal pleasure. There have also been programs introduced by different organizations that facilitate these interactions through study abroad scholarships or volunteer programs.

Some Dominican Nikkei have the opportunity to now explore the option of studying abroad to Japan. This was the case for Ms. Matsue Murata’s son Chiaki who, as we previously learned, did not have the chance to continue his Japanese language studies after immigrating to the Dominican Republic. Fortunately, at the age of twenty-two, Chiaki had the opportunity to return to Japan through a scholarship he had obtained from JICA. Chiaki wondered whether the stories of a greatly developed Japan he had seen in newspapers and television were true; he wanted to confirm with his very own eyes that Japan had changed so much while things in the Dominican Republic had mostly remained the same. Upon arriving in Japan, Chiaki joined the Agricultural Center of Investigation in Kagoshima as an advanced student. The new school presented its own difficulties, including harsh hierarchy among the students, but Chiaki was able to integrate himself better due to his Kagoshima dialect. While living in Japan, Chiaki was able to see for himself the great advancements that had resulted from the Tokyo Olympics of 1964 and the gigantic Buddha statue in Nara. He was awed by the huge Buddha statue, the beauty and tranquility of Kyoto, and the modern advancements of Japan. Having the opportunity to travel back to the place he had known as home until the age of eight allowed Chiaki to reconnect.

\[141\] El Paraíso Del Caribe, 85.
\[142\] Ibid, 86.
with Japan and see for himself both the advancements and the great obstacles that Japan was able to overcome in a short period. Chiaki is one amongst many Dominican *Nikkei* who have had the opportunity to go to Japan and continue to do so mainly through scholarships offered by the Japanese government and JICA.

Relations between Japan and the *Nikkei* community have also been upheld by the journey of Japanese citizens to the Dominican Republic. Besides tourism, most of these journeys have been made by Japanese volunteers. For example, in 1985 the Japanese embassy agreed to send Japanese volunteers to the Dominican Republic.\(^{143}\) Yoshimitsu Yanai, who immigrated to the *colonia* of Dajabón in 1956, in a testimonial letter, references the effect these volunteers had. Yanai laments the case of a JICA volunteer, Yasutoshi Sasagawa, who emigrated from Japan in 2002 and spent two years in the Dominican Republic offering social assistance to the elderly immigrants throughout the country. Yanai admired the great efforts of the volunteer who had saved up money to visit more immigrants and offer health services. Mr. Sasagawa experienced many obstacles including three traffic accidents, a police arrest (after being confused with an illegal immigrant), and the lack of acceptance by some *Nikkei* who confused him with a spy from the Japanese government, since his stay coincided with the lawsuit. Nevertheless, many elderly Japanese immigrants loved and valued Mr. Yanai who made them feel valued and remembered.

For one Japanese volunteer from JICA, her time volunteering in the Dominican Republic aided in her decision to move there. Having fallen in love with the country while volunteering, Mitsuko Sawada decided to marry a man she had met and move to Constanza in 1997.\(^{144}\) Although living in a foreign country brought its own difficulties,

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\(^{143}\) "Embajada del Japón en República."

\(^{144}\) *El Paraíso Del Caribe*, 110.
Sawada was able to overcome these through the help of the *Nikkei* community and the JICA corporation. Sawada appreciates the perks that the Dominican Republic offers compared to the developed country of Japan from which she came. For Sawada, the Dominican Republic allows one “to live with more human warmth, a greater relation to people and with a comfortable timeframe…in this era, people’s happiness is not dependent of neither materialistic objects or money.” The lifestyle in the Dominican Republic, according to Sawada, is preferable to Japan because human relations and strong familial ties based on love and affection are valued. Sawada saw the Dominican Republic as a place in which she wanted to raise her children, since it not only offered above mentioned advantages, and was a place where she and her children were cared for attentively. Through these volunteer programs, Japanese citizens like Mitsuko Sawada are given the opportunity to expose themselves to different lifestyles and come to appreciate the beauty of foreign countries. These programs have not only strengthened the relations between the Dominican Republic and Japan, but, as seen with Sawada, also improved the bond between Japanese and the *Nikkei* community in other countries.

Another Japanese who made the same decision as Sawada, was Tomohiro Takahashi. Takahashi also cherishes the care and warmth found in the Dominican Republic. For Takahashi, the Dominican Republic was the ideal place to raise his children: “In this place we enjoy of an excellent climate, we can have interpersonal relations, relations with affectionate Dominicans, and the children can play to their heart’s desire, and I believe that with this we have fully achieved one of our objectives in

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145 “vivir con más calor humano, con mayor relación con las personas y con un tiempo bien holgado…porque la felicidad de las personas no depende ni de los objetos materiales ni del dinero.” Ibid, 111.
coming here: raise our children happy, free, and without worries.”¹⁴⁶ The Dominican Republic was a place where Takahashi was able to reconnect with some of the values that he thought had been lost in Japanese society today; it allowed him the opportunity to reconnect with such values and pass them on to his children.

These exchanges not only develop a stronger relationship between both the Dominican Nikkei and the Japanese, but also allow each to learn from and understand the other. Through the excursions made by many Dominican Nikkei to Japan, many were able to reconnect with Japanese culture, understand its values and morals, and learn some of the Japanese language. After looking at the relationship between Japan and the Nikkei community, one begins to wonder: What is the relationship of the Nikkei community in the Dominican Republic to other Nikkei communities in other countries? Does the Dominican Nikkei community identify itself with the larger Nikkei community?

Striving Towards a Unified Nikkei Community: The Relationship between Nikkei in the Dominican Republic and Other Countries

Many Nikkei in the Dominican Republic, like Kaori Sone, have come to identify themselves as being part of a larger Nikkei community in Latin America. How is the presence of this larger community established and how is it maintained? Having settled in different countries, many Japanese immigrants were faced with different borders that separated them. Although many Japanese still identified themselves with friends and family living in other countries, what united the larger Japanese community, regardless of country where they lived, was the usage of

¹⁴⁶ “En este lugar gozamos de un excelente clima, podemos tener relaciones humanas y familiares con dominicanos afectuosos y los niños pueden jugar a sus anchas, y creo que con esto hemos logrado cabalmente uno de nuestros objetivos de haber venido aquí: criar a nuestros hijos alegres, libres, y sin preocupaciones.” El Paraíso Del Caribe, 147.
The word *Nikkei* helps unify the Japanese diaspora into a single group and identity. It was through the various efforts made by different communities in the Japanese diaspora that a social relationship and union was established.

Relations between Dominican *Nikkei* and other communities were established as early on as the first generation. Shikayo Seto, who immigrated to the *colonia* of La Altagracia in 1959, writes about an exchange program between the geriatrics club of the Dominican Republic and Mexico. The trip lasted from August 1, 1990, to August 10, 1990, and consisted of thirteen members ranging from 13 to 72 years of age. Upon their arrival at the airport, Seto and the other participants were welcomed by the geriatrics club in Mexico and by members of the Mexican-Japanese Association. During their stay in Mexico, the Dominican *Nikkei* were assigned to lodge with Mexican *Nikkei* families that had immigrated from the same prefectures in Japan. Seto and her family members who traveled with her were placed in the home of Saeki, who had emigrated from Hiroshima prefecture. The trip took the Dominican *Nikkei* around different parts of Mexico and exposed them to both Japanese and Mexican traditions. They first explored Mexico City, where they went on a tour and visited the Mexican-Japanese Cultural Institute. Then the trip continued to Xochimilco and Cuernavaca, where the Dominican *Nikkei* enjoyed a Japanese meal and contemplated art pieces created by Japanese monks. The trip allowed Seto to appreciate a distinctive history different from that of the Dominican *Nikkei* community and explore the ways in which Japanese identity was maintained within the Mexican *Nikkei* community. Trips like these allowed different *Nikkei* communities not only to interact

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147 *Nikkei* derived from the Japanese word *nikkeijin*, meaning people of Japanese descent.
148 *El Paraíso Del Caribe*, 116-117.
with each other and build international diaspora relationships, but also to understand and learn about the stories of other *Nikkei* communities.

Other events and programs unifying the different *Nikkei* communities are COPANI (Convenciones Panamericanas *Nikkei*, or *Nikkei* Pan-American Conferences) and Discover *Nikkei*. The Pan-American Association created COPANI with the aim to fraternize and bring together (physically) the different *Nikkei* communities every two years. The event began in 1981 in Mexico and has continued to this day.\(^\text{149}\) The event takes place in different countries each year. The COPANI conferences have occurred in México, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, USA, Paraguay, Canada, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, and recently in the Dominican Republic (in August 2015).\(^\text{150}\) The most recent COPANI 2015 was celebrated from August 7, 2015, to August 9, 2015, in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Santo Domingo. In this event *Nikkei* from the following countries participated (Figure 7). In this conference, there were different events that were aimed at building connections between the different *Nikkei* communities and generations, as well as events aimed at defining and understanding the *Nikkei* identity. Through the COPANI, many *Nikkei* are able to build long-lasting friendships and relationships with one another, in addition to business relationships.

Similar to the COPANI, another organization that aims to bring the *Nikkei* community together and to discuss identity issues is Discover *Nikkei*. Discover *Nikkei* is an online website whose goal is to create relations between different *Nikkei* and discuss identity issues and personal experiences. The mission statement of the website proclaims that “Discover *Nikkei* is an international network that celebrates cultural diversity and explores both global and local


\(^{150}\)Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries Present</th>
<th>Number of Nikkei</th>
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<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>Chile</td>
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<td>Venezuela</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Columbia</td>
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<td>Dominican Republic</td>
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**Figure 7.** For the Dominican Republic, the number of guest were vast. *Source:* Information obtained while attending COPANI 2015.

identities. The project connects generations and communities by sharing stories and prospective of the *Nikkei*, people of Japanese descent who have migrated and settled throughout the world.”¹⁵¹ The website features interviews with different *Nikkei* and chat rooms in which people can join in the discussion of questions such as “what is *Nikkei*?” Through websites like these, *Nikkei* communities are able to interact with one another across distance and geographical barriers.

Attempts to unify the *Nikkei* community are also seen at a national level in the Dominican Republic. Different Japanese-Dominican organizations in the Dominican Republic sponsor events celebrating Japanese culture and bringing the *Nikkei* and Dominican community

together, such as the “Nikkei Market 2015” event mentioned above, sponsored by the Dominican Association of ex-fellows Nikkei of JICA. Another major event is in the inauguration of the monument celebrating the Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic in the capital of Santo Domingo, inaugurated in January 17, 2013.\(^{152}\) As seen with the former events, organizations like JICA and the Japanese embassy also play an integral part in unifying the Nikkei and Dominican communities.

**From the Dominican Perspective: Relationship between the Nikkei Community and the Dominican Republic**

Have Dominicans fully accepted the Nikkei community? How is the Nikkei community viewed by the Dominican community? The presence of the Nikkei community in the Dominican Republic is becoming better known in Dominican society each day. Events celebrating Japanese and Nikkei culture, such as Bon Odori dances and Undokai, as well as monuments celebrating the Japanese immigration into the Dominican Republic are helping to expose more and more Dominicans to Nikkei history.\(^{153}\) However, although various attempts are being made to make the Nikkei community more present in Dominican society, the Nikkei community and its history are rarely discussed in the primary and secondary levels of schools.

Some primary and secondary schools might briefly mention the Nikkei when talking about immigration into the Dominican Republic as a whole, but a more elaborate history of the immigration is not given. Felipe de los Santos, an agricultural major in the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo or UASD, recalls learning about the Japanese immigrants in


\(^{153}\) Sone, e-mail interview by the author.
college through the discussion of agricultural techniques they introduced.\textsuperscript{154} However, Santos was not as knowledgeable about the history of Japanese immigration, not even through educational books. Santos’s exposure to the \textit{Nikkei} community was instead through his \textit{Nikkei} classmate and internet social networks. After learning that one of the groups of immigrants who came to the Dominican Republic was Japanese, he became curious as to their history and searched the web to learn more. To Santos, Japanese immigration and the \textit{Nikkei} community have been very beneficial to the Dominican Republic: “From their [the Japanese immigrants] arrival they have been beneficial, so yes, since this country is eminently agricultural, and they brought in agricultural techniques.”\textsuperscript{155} As seen in Santos’s case, a deeper and more informative overview of the Japanese immigration is needed within educational institutions of the Dominican Republic.

Today Dominican society continues to value and educate themselves on Japanese culture and morals. Japanese gastronomy has become very popular in the Dominican Republic, and today there are various Japanese restaurants in the capital.\textsuperscript{156} Restaurants like Yokomo have even come to integrate both Japanese and Dominican cuisine to create fusion dishes. Martial arts practices like Judo have become quite popular as well. As in many other countries around the world, anime and manga are hugely popular. Not only are anime shows like Dragon Ball Z aired on national television, but Otaku culture, people with obsessive interest in anime or manga, has also come to be practiced by some Dominicans.

What is the relationship between the nations today? One can say that the Japanese immigration has positively affected the relationship between Japan and the Dominican Republic.

\textsuperscript{154} Felipe de los Santos, telephone interview by the author, February 7, 2016.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156} Another Japanese restaurant being The Samurai owned by a Nikkei.
Not only has there been increased economic exchanges between the countries, but there have been cultural exchanges as well. Hiroshi Waki comments on how fruitful the relationship between both countries has become:

there is non-refundable cooperation from Japan to the Dominican Republic in different areas, like agriculture, technology, training for teachers, equipment donations, etc. Also the commercial relations at the private level have been rising, and Japanese companies have also installed in Dominican [Republic]. Although diplomatic cooperation can not benefit the Japanese with direct donations, we do have the support of the embassy, the consulate, and JICA, in aid programs for health, scholarships, etc.\(^{157}\)

As of 2013, there were ten Japanese companies in the Dominican Republic and two exchange programs (The National Program the Exchange and Development of the Youth and The Academic and Educational Exchange between the University of Hiroshima and the UASD).\(^{158}\) Nonetheless, there are still actions that need to be taken to improve not only the relations between the Japanese and Dominican government, but also between Dominicans and the Nikkei community as well.

Chapter III began by discussing the question of identity across the different generations of Dominican Nikkei. Within the first generation, the acceptance of a Dominican identity was already seen. This was seen among Issei, who regardless of their level of assimilation, expressed a sincere love towards the Dominican Republic. Nevertheless, the Issei continued to acknowledge and uphold their Japanese culture. The presence of both a Japanese and Dominican identity continued through the second generation. In the second generation, a higher level of assimilation can be seen. Most Nisei were able to speak fluent Spanish and exercised certain Dominican cultural

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\(^{157}\) Waki, e-mail interview by the author.  
\(^{158}\) "Embajada del Japón en República."
practices like eating and cooking Dominican food. Although maintaining a Japanese identity became more difficult for the second generation, as Japanese language schools were limited and not as well established, the Nisei persisted in maintaining their Japanese identity. The Nisei’s persistence also extended to maintaining their Japanese morals, values, and gastronomy. Some spoke the Japanese language, although fluency in the language was not reached. Eiko Kokubun, who expressed a feeling of not belonging completely to either Japanese or Dominican culture described herself as having a mixed identity. Hiroshi Waki, on the other hand, although acknowledging both cultures, illustrated a stronger identification with the Dominican culture. Many of the same issues experienced by the Nisei generation were experienced by the Sansei generation. The feeling of not belonging to either Dominican or Japanese culture was also seen in Kaori Sone’s case, but Sone identified more with the Nikkei community. The later generations who had the opportunity to travel to Japan used the trip to reconnect with their Japanese identity and better understand some of the Japanese values and morals important in Japan today.

The relationship between the Nikkei community and Japan has been maintained throughout the years through exchanges between both communities. These exchanges began as early as the first generation, as was seen with Chiaki who, through the help of a scholarship from JICA, returned to Japan to study abroad. This experience allowed Chiaki to see Japan’s improvement since the war and reconnect with his Japanese identity once more. Japanese citizens also traveled to the Dominican Republic, mainly through volunteer programs. Through these programs some Japanese volunteers were able to appreciate and understand the lifestyle of the Dominican Republic. This was the case for
Mitsuko Sawada who, based on her volunteer experience, made the decision to actually move to the Dominican Republic. For Sawada, the Dominican Republic’s lifestyle was better than that of modernized countries because it focused on human warmth and familial ties.

There were various attempts made aimed at unifying the Nikkei community. One of the first steps was the creation of the word Nikkei, which tied the different communities of the Japanese diaspora together into one identity. Shikayo Seto shares her experience of visiting the geriatrics club of Mexico. Other attempts to unify the Nikkei community were seen through COPANI (executed by the APN and the different Nikkei organizations from different countries) and Discover Nikkei (an online website). On the national level, different Japanese and Nikkei organizations organized events where both the Nikkei and Dominican communities were able to interact with one another.

Attempts to strengthen the relationship between the Dominican Republic and the Nikkei community were seen through the former events, but nevertheless other actions can be taken to improve these. It is important to better educate the Dominican society on the Nikkei community and its history since within the primary and secondary levels this topic is deficient. However, today the Dominican society is valuing and educating themselves on Japanese culture and morals; examples of this can be seen in the popularization of Japanese gastronomy, Judo, anime, and manga. Presently, the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Japan has also strengthened, as seen through the economy, scholarships, and other aspects. With the recent high exposure of the Dominican society to Japanese culture, one can not help but wonder about the effect this has and can have in the future. Does it have an effect on questions of identity for
Dominicans? How does this exposure or relationship redefine Dominican identities?

Does higher exposure to Japanese culture leads to a higher recognition of Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic? There are many questions that arise from this thesis, but one thing is for sure Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic has been a huge contribution to Dominican society, and this can be seen both in the nation’s agriculture and economy, and even the rising interest of Dominicans for Japanese culture.
Conclusion

Although a small number of scholars have written on the subject, the purpose of this thesis has been to help spread the stories of Japanese immigrants in the Dominican Republic. Although there are various reasons that one might label Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic as unsuccessful, it is important to understand that regardless of the downfalls, the migration of Japanese to the Dominican Republic has ultimately accomplished the initial goals of both the Japanese and Dominican governments. Not only did Japanese immigration to the Dominican Republic aid in alleviating to some degree Japanese population crises and thus aid in the development of postwar Japan, but it also aided in the development of the Dominican Republic through the advancement of agriculture, markets, and the introduction of immigrant cultural practices. It is undeniable that the small-scale migration of Japanese to the Dominican Republic has had a strong influence on the current relationship between the two countries. Understanding the successes as well as failures of the immigration process, highlights the great contributions and efforts that the Dominican Nikkei community has made to both Dominican and Japanese society.

In Chapter I, I explored the motivations of both Japan and the Dominican Republic in encouraging migration of Japanese to the Dominican Republic by examining how the immigration policy was planned. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the desire to erase the atrocities committed against Haitians and the embedded “pigmentocracy” of Dominican society initiated an interest in Japanese immigration by the dictator Trujillo. After determining the country’s capacity to sustain such immigration, Trujillo presented the idea to the Japanese government, who showed an immediate interest due to their desire to Japanese out-migration to alleviate the effects of the Second World War. From the initiation of the planning phase of the
immigration policy, the Japanese government illustrated an interest in securing adequate conditions for the Japanese migrants arriving in the Dominican Republic. Although the Japanese did have an interest in providing adequate conditions for the prospective migrants, when faced with issues with the Dominican government, these efforts subsided. In an effort to quickly initiate the migration of Japanese, the Japanese government secured only a bilateral agreement for the first group of migrants, and a full bilateral agreement on the immigration of Japanese to the Dominican Republic was never made. The Japanese government had recruited Japanese citizens following a proposition from the Dominican government without first securing a general bilateral agreement, since they were afraid of losing the Dominican Republic as a possible site for emigration. The Japanese government thus ultimately settled for the little that the Dominican government promised. Even without an adequate bilateral agreement, the Japanese government continued to falsely advertise the Dominican Republic as a Caribbean Paradise to prospective migrants.

The failure to secure adequate conditions through a full agreement had a major impact on the experiences of the Japanese immigrants once in the Dominican Republic. The first group of Japanese immigrants arrived in July 29, 1956, and many groups of Japanese families continued to migrate to the Dominican Republic through September of 1959. Chapter II begins by discussing the integration of the Japanese immigrants into Trujillo’s dictatorship and exploring the locations of the different Japanese colonias. Some scholars, like Oscar H. Horst and Katsuhiro Asagiri, argue that the placements of these colonias illustrated the Dominican government’s desire of whitening the race, but evidence also shows that the Dominican government hoped to improve the country’s agriculture through the migration of Japanese to the Dominican Republic. The biggest problems faced by the Japanese immigrants were the barren,
dry, and salty conditions of the lands assigned to them by the Dominican government. The lack of proper infrastructure like water and electricity did not help to alleviate the conditions of the land. Markets were not as well developed in the Dominican Republic and places to sell goods were either distant or nonexistent. Soft infrastructure was also poorly developed, and the language difference was a major barrier for the Japanese immigrants’ ability to access what infrastructure did exist. The experiences of the Japanese immigrants worsened after the death of Trujillo, as many lost their land and were mistreated by Dominican locals who saw the Japanese immigrants as unfairly favored by the late dictator. Upon complaining to Japanese officials, the immigrants were faced with ignorance and delay. After the various appeals for help, the Japanese government eventually allowed the immigrants to choose to either re-migrate to another Latin American country, return to Japan, or stay in the Dominican Republic. Only 40 families stayed in the Dominican Republic with the promise of finally receiving what was promised; eventually “The Luisa Project” would attempt to make things right, although this project came with its own problems. A group of Japanese immigrants who felt betrayed by the Japanese government decided to sue in 2000; the court found the Japanese government at fault for not providing adequate conditions, but compensation was denied since 20 years had passed since the immigration policy was initiated. Eventually, the Japanese immigrants accepted the Japanese government’s proposal and withdrew their appeal to a higher court; they were then at last able to obtain an official apology and a settlement.

Finally, Chapter III explored the Dominican Nikkei community today, by looking at the questions of identity and assimilation, both in the Dominican Republic and across the Japanese diaspora in Latin America. Through the use of testimonials letters published in El Paraíso Del Caribe: Medio Siglo De Alegría Y Tristeza: Hoy Día Todavía Nos Encontramos Vivos Aquí (The
Caribbean Paradise: A Half Century of Happiness and Sadness, up to This Day We Are Still Found Alive Here), this project has illustrated how a Dominican identity was claimed even by some of the first generation (Issei) of Japanese immigrants. Although many of these immigrants did not know the language or local cultural practices of the Dominican Republic, there was a sincere adoration towards the Dominican Republic as their new home. Though many Issei claimed a Dominican identity, this did not replace their Japanese identity; instead the two appear to coincide along each other. A recognition of both identities is also seen in both the Nisei and Sansei generations. Although many second and third generation immigrants testify to the difficulty of fluently learning the Japanese language, many report that they practice Japanese traditions and values in their homes and daily lives. Although one Nisei communicated that he had not ever felt different from his Dominican colleagues, most Nisei and Sansei claimed that they maintained a distinct identity vis-a-vis both cultures.

Chapter III then goes on to examine the relationships between the Dominican Nikkei community to Japan, other Nikkei communities, and the Dominican Republic. Some Dominican Nikkei go to Japan for business and educational travel, and some for tourism. Traveling to Japan helped Dominican Nikkei develop the Japanese part of their identity and better understand Japanese culture. Closer relationships with Japan are also fostered by Japanese volunteer programs that bring Japanese volunteers to the Dominican Republic. Programs such as these not only allow Dominican Nikkei to interact with Japanese citizens, but also allow Japanese volunteers to encounter lifestyles and environments different from those in Japan. There are also several programs that foster relationships between the Dominican Nikkei and other Latin American Nikkei communities, including COPANI and Discover Nikkei. Domestically, there are also events sponsored by Dominican Nikkei associations that promote relationships within the
immigrant community. Many of these events celebrate Japanese culture and serve to bring the Dominican *Nikkei* community together with Dominican locals. Although Japanese culture has obtained substantially more attention in Dominican society recently thanks to interest in anime and gastronomy, there is still a general lack of available information on the Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic in the educational system. The relationship between Japan and the Dominican Republic has ultimately improved as a result of the migration, as seen through exchange programs and financial assistance from the Japanese government, and the knowledge of the migrants played a significant role in improving domestic Dominican agriculture.

This project has offered one understanding of the story of Japanese migration to the Dominican Republic, but there are further directions for research. For example, one could look at the stories of those who chose to go back to Japan - what were some of the issues they faced after returning to Japan? Did any feel some attachment to the Dominican Republic? How did they feel about the Japan to which they had returned? One could also explore the stories of those that re-migrated to other Latin American countries, or the stories of Dominican locals who have left their country to emigrate to Japan. The topic remains rich for future scholarship.
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Trujillo stands in the center of a group of Japanese immigrants in this image. 
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Inauguration of electric plant in *colonia* Aguas Negras. Source: *El Paraíso Del Caribe*.

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Choko Waki and her family, soon after arriving to the Dominican Republic. Source: *El Paraíso Del Caribe.* (upper right)

Kii Yamaki and her family. Source: *El Paraíso Del Caribe.* (upper left)

Teaching tea ceremony and how to make Japanese sweets. Source: "Embajada del Japón en República."
