

THE JAPANESE-ARGENTINE POPULATION SEGMENT OF BUENOS AIRES

A Brief People Group Profile Compiled by Students from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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On July 1, 2007, a group of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary students departed on a two week mission trip to Buenos Aires, Argentina. Our ultimate goal was to research the Japanese-Argentine population in Buenos Aires. The basic information we gathered as a result of that brief research is contained within this report and is intended as a brief overview of the Japanese-Argentine population for future missionaries.

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF JAPANESE-ARGENTINES

Introduction

When the Japanese people migrated from their homeland to other lands they brought certain religious beliefs and practices. The Japanese-Argentines of Buenos Aires have been influenced by several religious belief systems. Interviews conducted with specific Japanese background people during the summer of 2007 in Buenos Aires confirmed that most of the Japanese Argentine people have a Buddhist background combined with nominal Catholicism. This reality is noted by The Joshua Project, whose website states that approximately 40% of the Japanese people living in Argentina are Buddhist while another 40% claim to be Christian (only 1.20% of these are evangelical). There are another 20% who the Joshua Project states as adherents to “other small religions.”¹

From the small sampling of interviews conducted with our research team in the summer of 2007 the religious affiliation varies from generation to generation. Many of the first

¹ www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rop3=104189&rog3=AR

generation Japanese living in Argentina are still heavily influenced by Buddhism. The second and third generation Japanese-Argentines who live in the capital city of Buenos Aires are still connected to Buddhism but also practice some form of syncretised Catholicism. Generally speaking, the Japanese-Argentines are a religiously syncretistic group merging their Buddhist and Catholic beliefs and practices.



There are only three known evangelical churches in the Greater Buenos Aires area. With approximately 200 members, the largest is the Iglesia Evangelica Japonesa, located at Lafuente 441 in Capital Federal. The other two evangelical churches are smaller congregations of twenty to forty individuals. One is located in the Nunez barrio and the other is a Free Methodist Church located within the Constitution barrio. These numbers approximate Joshua Project's estimate that 1.2 % of the 30,000, or 360, Japanese-Argentines are evangelical Christians. These figures establish the Japanese people of Argentina as an unreached people group, falling obviously short of the typical 2% requirement for reached status.

Basic Understanding of Buddhism

There were an estimated 350 million adherents to Buddhism worldwide in the year 2000.² Buddhism is based upon the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama of the Sakyas. He was born around the year 563 B.C. in what is now Nepal. A sense of discontentedness began to overcome Siddhartha as a young man. His lack of contentment led him to pursue a break with all that he knew in a pursuit of escape from the world he had come to know. Siddhartha Gautama's journey began as a result of a visit to the local village where he saw four disturbing scenes. He saw a person who was sick and dying, a corpse, a lady in much pain while giving

² Walter Martin. *The Kingdom of the Cults*. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2003), 299.

birth, and an old person. These sights troubled him and he marked the beginning of his attempt to find a way for people to escape all pain and suffering.

The core tenants of Buddhism include the four noble truths, the eight fold path, and the five commandments. The first noble truth claims that life is suffering. Siddhartha was convinced that all life was destined for some level of suffering. The second noble truth is that one must understand the cause for suffering. According to Siddhartha, the primary cause of suffering is selfish greed. When one understands the cause they are able to move on to the third noble truth, to overcome suffering by ridding oneself of craving. The fourth noble truth serves as the prescription to end suffering which is the eight-fold path.³

Buddha identified the eight-fold path as the treatment for the problem of suffering. The eight-fold path consists of eight steps leading up to the Buddha's understanding of enlightenment. He called the first of these steps, "right views". These "right views" represented his assertion that life needed some kind of blueprint that one could trust in order to direct energy in the proper place. The second step is "right intent". This step advises a person to be persistent in following one's desires. Following this step is the call to have "right speech," the third step. The Buddha said that individuals should be aware of their speech to see what it reveals about their character. The fourth step is "right conduct." This step instructs a good Buddhist to follow the Five Precepts. The Five Precepts are very similar to the ethical commands of the Ten Commandments. The Five Precepts of Buddhism are: do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not be unchaste, and do not drink intoxicants.

The fifth step to the eight-fold path is "right livelihood". Right livelihood is manifested by only having occupations that contribute to the goal of escaping suffering. The sixth step is "right effort." This step places emphasis on the person's will, encouraging steady, persevering

³ Houston Smith. *The World's Religions*. (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 99-103.

effort. The seventh step on the eight-fold path is “right mindfulness,” which encourages self examination. The final step to the eight-fold path is the culmination of the pursuit to escape suffering, “right concentration.” It was at this step that the mind would reach the point of escape from all suffering.⁴

Buddhism experienced a split in the years following the Buddha’s death. One faction of Buddhists were the Theravada. They claimed to follow the way of the elders and the way of original Buddhism. The other major faction is the Mahayana, who have a more liberal understanding of Buddhism including a strong belief in universalism. Mahayana Buddhism came to Japan in the early sixth century eventually evolving into various sects throughout the country. One of these sects is called Jodo Shinshu which is the largest form of Buddhism found among the Japanese today.⁵

Research Findings: Religious Identification

At least eight of the Japanese-Argentines interviewed in the summer of 2007 gave some testimony of having Buddhist backgrounds or family members who are practicing Buddhists. Some individuals practice Shintoism mixed with Buddhism. The Pastor of the Iglesia Evangelica Japonesa, the largest evangelical church in Buenos Aires, came from a Buddhist background. His father was a Buddhist priest in Japan and continued serving in that capacity after moving to Argentina. While it was clear that the pastor had converted from Buddhism to Christianity, other interviews revealed that a syncretism is prevalent among many Japanese-Argentines. When asking about the religious backgrounds of the Japanese-Argentines, one of the common answers we received was that many Japanese-Argentines are Catholics with a Buddhist background. For example, some professing Catholics among the Japanese-Argentine community still practice forms of ancestor worship. A lady who was in her forty’s was

⁴ Ibid., 105-112.

⁵ www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahayana_Buddhism

interviewed at the Casa Japonesa located on Avenue Venezuela 2132. She claimed to be a Christian and attends a Catholic church, but we immediately noticed the altar in her home dedicated to the worship of ancestors.

In another interview with a middle-aged couple who owns Shonon Hardware Store (Av. Medrano 1234 in the Capital district), the wife claimed to come from an Evangelical Christian background while the husband claimed to have Buddhist and Catholic roots. The husband still maintains Buddhist practices, especially funeral rites. He said that services for the dead must be conducted on the 7th, 35th, and 49th day following a person's death. Virtually every person we interviewed indicated that religious background consisted of Buddhism and Catholicism. There does seem to be a clear distinction between the first generation and second/third generation Japanese-Argentines. The first generation still self identify as primarily Buddhist while the second/third generation identify with and adhere to Catholicism with some lingering Buddhist practices.

Summary Conclusion Concerning Religious Heritage Among Japanese-Argentines

It is obvious that there is an overwhelming need for concentrated, strategic efforts to be implemented to reach the Japanese-Argentines of Buenos Aires, Argentina. If Christ is going to be shared and God's kingdom advanced among this population group of Buenos Aires it will be essential for the church planter/missionary to have a deep understanding of the Japanese-Argentine worldview and religious heritage. The interviews conducted by our team consistently established that both the Buddhist and Catholic religions have been significantly impacted by syncretism among the Japanese-Argentines of Buenos Aires. A thorough understanding of the teachings of Buddhism and Catholicism--and the way in which they differ from biblical Christianity will be necessary to develop a sound strategy for reaching out to the Japanese-Argentine people.

The issue of religion was raised in every interview conducted. Without exception the role of religion in their lives appeared to be minimal. The majority of Japanese-Argentines view themselves as Catholics, though in some homes ancestor worship is still practice, often with shrines in the home. Yet, the attitude expressed by most of those interviewed was very postmodern and syncretistic. One comment made by an interviewee summed up this attitude perfectly. She said, “there is good in all religions.”⁶ In addition, in one family interviewed, the son who was an only child and raised by first generation immigrants, had responsibilities to carry out the Buddhist funeral rites as practiced in traditional homes, though he himself did not characterized himself as a Buddhist but rather a “Catholic-Buddhist”.⁷

A very small evangelical community does exist among the Japanese-Argentine in Buenos Aires. It will be important for the missionary to work with these churches as much as possible in order to build trust and relationships within the Japanese community. Syncretism will be a huge challenge the missionary will have to overcome in order to plant solid, bible believing churches among this people group. Thankfully, because we serve a Sovereign God who can break through any barrier, a church planting movement is possible among the Japanese-Argentines.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF JAPANESE-ARGENTINES IN BUENOS AIRES

Introduction

Geography is a broad subject that includes everything from topography or landscapes to population patterns and climate zones. This subject attempts to explain natural conditions and how those conditions impact the human experience. One of the more interesting and informative aspects of geography is human geography, or more specifically the examination of people in

⁶ Lydia., Co-Owner of Tentoreria Fuji, 2007. Interviewed by the author, 10 July, Buenos Aires , Argentina. Transcript. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

⁷ Tamahiro, Germán, Shonon Hardware Store, 2007. Interviewed by the author, 11 July, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Transcript. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

relation to their environment. The study of human geography includes economic, cultural, climate and social factors that impact where people live. In an attempt to better understand the Japanese-American people of Buenos Aires, an examination of the geography of the people is very useful. Remarkably, the Japanese-Argentines in Buenos Aires do not follow the cultural norms of human geography. This section will attempt to explain the cultural norms for human geography, how the Japanese-Argentines defy those trends, and possible explanations for this phenomenon.

Presumptions

In examining the human geography of the Japanese-Argentines in Buenos Aires, one would expect to find two geographical norms common among similar people groups and locations. The first norm relates to the population patterns of Latin American countries while the second considers the settlement patterns of immigrants to new countries. Through an examination of these two subjects, two presumptions can be made about Japanese-Argentines in Buenos Aires.

The first normative trend is based on the primal cities often found in Latin American countries. Primal cities are those in which a majority of the country or region's population is concentrated in one specific location. While it is unclear when this trend began, ancient cities such as the capital of the Incan Empire in Cusco and Tenochtitlan, found in the location of the current Mexico City, suggest that this practice is as old as Latin Americans themselves. Cities such as Sao Paolo, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires are premier examples of this norm. These cities are at the center of all that occurs in these regions and often impact life beyond the city.

Buenos Aires is a stereotypical primal city by every imaginable standard. Approximately one fourth of Argentina's total population lives in Buenos Aires. The people within the city,

porteños, are known for their exclusivist attitude and very high opinion of themselves. These *porteños* often look down their noses at those who live in the *campo*, the rural areas of the country. The city of Buenos Aires is the center for the nation's media coverage, resulting in the majority of the nationwide news focused on the city. The density of the city rivals any of the major metropolitan areas in the world. And yet, outside of the city, many people live in very small rural communities. Buenos Aires is a primal city like Sao Paolo, Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City that enjoys flexing its muscle as the largest city in the nation.

The second major geographical trend that must be considered when examining the Japanese- Argentine people of Buenos Aires is the settlement patterns of immigrants in their new countries. Immigrants typically travel in large masses and settle together. Such is the case of the Germans and the Arabs in Argentina. There are three primary explanations for this trend. First, when people move far from their home it is a very natural response to attempt a lifestyle that resembles the lives they had in their home country. Second, people enjoy financial gain if they settle near one another and support cultural businesses. Third, immigrants will also settle near their entry point into a country. For many this means settling into the large urban environment that allowed them the opportunity to move. It is therefore not uncommon to find pockets of culturally similar immigrants living relatively close to one another. This trend is evidenced by neighborhoods such as Chinatown, Little Italy and Jewish Ghettos throughout the world. Buenos Aires is no exception to this trend. It takes very little effort to find Korean, Chinese, German, and Arab neighborhoods that fashion themselves as small communities that keep people connected to home. In Buenos Aires, neighborhoods like *La Boca* and *Recoleta* are ethnically homogenous and preserve the cultures that settled in those areas.

Based on a common understanding of these two geographical trends, it would seem safe to presume that the Japanese-Argentine people in Buenos Aires would follow these patterns.

However, this is not the case. The Japanese-Argentine people of Buenos Aires seem to buck the trend and follow their own distinct geographical patterns.

The Reality of the Japanese-Argentine

When the Japanese-Argentine people of Buenos Aires are closely studied, the trends that seem to be so predictable are quickly dismissed. Upon interviewing several people at the *Iglesia Evangelica Japonesa*, it was discovered that the first Japanese immigrants had actually settled outside the city in the *campo*, or rural farmlands. Among these initial immigrants was the Pastor's father, who had left his position as a priest in the Buddhist religion to become a farmer in Argentina. While a large group of Japanese immigrants settled into the city, there were equal amounts that did not, thus countering the first trend discussed. Further evidence of this was gained in interviews which suggested that there is still a very strong Japanese presence in the rural communities outside of Buenos Aires.

Another sign of this altered pattern is found in the businesses that have Japanese relationships. Our research team approached fourteen businesses in the hopes of conducting interviews with Japanese-Argentines. Of the fourteen only two businesses were within a reasonable distance from one another. The businesses that identified themselves as Japanese were scattered throughout the city. This is a very unusual occurrence but not proof alone that the people themselves are spread out. However, several people interviewed stated that many people live near or even above their businesses. With this information, it became clear that the Japanese-Argentine people of Buenos Aires have not settled into one geographic region of the city. Further evidence of this fact became available during interviews with several people at the *Iglesia Evangelica Japonesa*. Many members of this congregation stated that they lived near their businesses and that they traveled from all over the city to the church. The Pastor commented that some had traveled for over an hour to reach the church. While speaking with a

Japanese-Argentine storeowner, Louis, he lamented that the Japanese people had not stuck together like the Koreans and Chinese indicating that they had all suffered financially as a result. The only conclusion that can be drawn from these interviews and experiences is that unlike countless other immigrant populations, the Japanese of Argentina have not followed geographical trends.

Conclusion

The final analysis of the geographical layouts of both the Japanese-Argentine people and their businesses suggest that the people are spread out throughout the city and country, and have been as long they have been in Argentina. Possible explanations for this are only hypotheses, but are still noteworthy. Perhaps the type of trades that the immigrants were skilled at did not lend themselves to being located close to one another. This certainly explains why the first wave of immigrants, who were farmers, settled into the countryside. It also helps to clarify why the



countless laundry businesses would have been scattered throughout the city. As a result, the people would have lived near their businesses and not near each other.

Another possible explanation for why the people are so spread out is that many of the immigrants identify themselves with their native island of Okinawa. While Japan certainly has its concentration of people in cities like Tokyo, Okinawa is a more rural, agricultural environment. Therefore, it was somewhat logical that the first immigrants to Argentina would not have looked to settle in the city but rather in the country which reminded them most of home.

The last and probably most likely explanation is tied to the history of the city of Buenos Aires. The immigration from Japan took place during the 1940's and 50's which is a relatively

late timeframe in comparison to some of the groups who had come to Argentina previously. It is quite possible that the city was so populated and so full, there simply was not room for the Japanese to settle together and live among each other. In order to survive in their new country, the people adapted and lived where they could.

There is probably not one single geographic location that would lend itself to daily interaction with Japanese-Argentines. A missionary trying to reach the Japanese-Argentines would need to be very intentional about visiting the businesses and cultural centers on a regular basis. It almost seems as though the Japanese-Argentines have simply faded into the cultural mosaic of Buenos Aires, requiring a concentrated effort to find them.

IMMIGRATION AND CULTURE SHOCK

Introduction

There are an estimated 32,00-50,000 Japanese people living in the country of Argentina. This is not a staggering number yet these are souls that will have an eternal destiny. The question is, “Will that destiny be an eternity in separation from God in hell or in the glory of God’s presence in heaven?” This section addresses the areas of immigration and culture shock among the Japanese-Argentines as a means of understanding the broader picture of who they are and how they may be most effectively reached with the gospel.

Research: Publications and Field-Based Interviews

While some of the following research originated from literature review, the majority of what is presented in this paper originated from interviews with Japanese-Argentines currently living in Buenos Aires. Wikipedia reports that Asian-Argentines migrated in three primary waves. The first wave was composed of Japanese immigrants (largely from Okinawa Prefecture), that arrived in small numbers during the early twentieth century. The second wave

consisted of primarily Korean entrepreneurs, settling in Buenos Aires during the 1960s while the third wave were mostly Chinese and Taiwanese entrepreneurs who settled in Buenos Aires during the 1990s. Today, there are an estimated 130,000 Asian-Argentines, with 60,000 of Chinese descent, 35,000 of Korean descent, 32,000 of Japanese descent, and 2,000 of Lao descent.⁸ The first Japanese-Argentine Nisei (second generation Japanese), Seicho Arakaki, was born in 1911.⁹

Several Japanese-Argentines were interviewed over the course of three days. The following table lists the name of the person interviewed, their local affiliation, and their background. Each person communicated their own perspective and experience regarding immigration and culture shock.

Person Interviewed	Affiliation	Background
Merian Claudia	Casa Japonesa store	age group 40's, 2 nd generation Japanese-Argentine
Hirokatsu Uchima	Centro Okinowense Argentina	age group 70s, 1 st generation Japanese-Argentine
Yuji Misu	F.A.N.A. (Federacion de Asociaciones Nikkei en la Argentina)	age group 30's; 1 st generation Japanese-Argentine
Alexis Nagai	F.A.N.A. (Federacion de Asociaciones Nikkei en la Argentina)	age group 20's; 2 nd generation Japanese-Argentine
Pastor	Iglesia Evangellica Japonesa	1 st generation Japanese-

⁸ Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, *Asian Argentine* [on-line]; accessed 28 June 2007; available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian-Argentines>; Internet.

⁹Ibid.

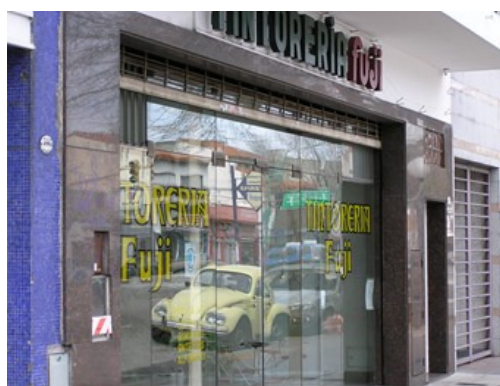
		Argentine
Louis	Kyoshin Trading S.A.	age group 50s, 2 nd generation Japanese-Argentine
Akio Watanabe	Tintoreria “Kampai” II	age group 50s, 1 st generation Japanese-Argentine
David Nagata	Iglesia Evangellica Japonesa member	age group 30’s; 2 nd generation Japanese-Argentine
German and Ana Tamahiro	Shonon Hardware Store	2 nd generation Japanese- Argentine
Hideaki Doi	Centro Cultural e Informativo de la Embajada del Japon	age group 40s, 1 st generation Japanese-Argentine
Juan and Lydia	Tentoreria Fuji Dry Cleaners	2 nd generation Japanese- Argentine
Alfredo	Historian of Japanese culture	Age group 70s, Argentine

A common understanding among the interviewees was that World War II was the driving force behind Japanese immigration to Argentina. While many Japanese came to Buenos Aires, larger populations of Japanese came to live in Escobar, La Plata, and Burzaco. Merian Claudia’s parents immigrated to Buenos Aires because of the war. Juan’s father came to Argentina in 1938 from Hiroshima because the economy in Japan was severely weakened as a result of ongoing wars with Russia and China as well as WWII. David Nagata’s parents left Japan just after the war but first went to San Diego, CA first. After experiencing anti-Japanese feelings in the US, they moved to Argentina. Alfredo’s first wife was born in Japan and lived

there until she was 7 or 8 years old. Her family immigrated to Argentina due to the invasion of Okinawa. Alfredo recounted that most of the Japanese immigrated to Brazil in mass while smaller numbers came to Argentina by association among families. As evidenced by others like German and Ana Tamahiro, there are Japanese-Argentines whose parents emigrated from Japan many years after the conclusion of WWII (about forty years ago) although the economic aftermath of the war may have still been a contributing factor in the move.

Research into published material on Japanese-Argentines indicates that many Japanese immigrants came from the island of Okinawa. This finding was confirmed in several interviews. Louis at Kyoshin Trading explained that more immigrants came from Okinawa because it was the first island taken in the war. He further elaborated that there was always a division between Okinawans and the Emperor of Japan. Much like the independence Taiwan achieved from China, Okinawa wanted independence from Japan. Hirokatsu Uchima explained that there is a distinction between the Japanese and Okinawan cultures. In fact, he preferred to use the term Okinawan, rather than Japanese when speaking of Japanese-Argentines. He even corrected the interviewer each time he used the word “Japanese.”

Hideaki Doi affirmed that the majority of Japanese in Argentina are from Okinawa and that they immigrated either before or after WWII through Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil. He stated that you can tell where a Japanese-Argentine family is from in Japan by their last name.



Mr. Nagata believes that Japanese immigrants initially lived in the western part of Argentina where they worked as farmers. He stated that, among immigrants, everyone did some type of agricultural work in addition to any technical training they might have. David and Lydia

also affirmed that most first generation Japanese were farmers, florists, or in the dry cleaning business. Louis noted that Japanese immigrants once came to both Argentina's cities and countryside, but now they come only to the city. Mr. Uchima said the first Japanese immigrants came to Argentina with the goal of earning money and returning to Japan, but now they do not immigrate from Japan. Whether or not Japanese are still immigrating to Argentina, it is certain that economics was a significant motivating factor among many early Japanese immigrants. David Nagata's father worked as a farmer until he could afford to go back to Japan and learn acupuncture and massage therapy. Once he learned a marketable skill he returned with his family to Buenos Aires.

Whenever people move from one culture to another, they are sure to experience difficulties adjusting. This phenomenon is typically referred to as culture shock. Those interviewed stated that the hardest thing they had to face was learning a new language. They also struggled with significant financial pressures for the early immigrants. They had to work very hard to survive, but many were successful. Most of those interviewed did not experience discrimination, prejudice, or persecution from Argentineans. However, among the older Japanese-Argentines, such as the pastor of a Japanese church, discrimination was a problem. As he grew up in Buenos Aires, he did not fit in and others harassed him and called him "oriental". He recounted feelings of rejection and longing for acceptance with peers. This produced anger toward his parents for bringing him to Buenos Aires. To lessen this stress, he rejected his family culture and faith and tried very hard to be Argentine. Whether they are conscious of it or not, the majority of those interviewed have suppressed their Japanese heritage by identifying themselves as Argentinean first and foremost, thus creating a significant distinction between the first generation Japanese and the second/third generation.

Considerable differences between the Japanese and Argentine cultures have been the

cause of some cultural stress for the immigrants. A statement found on the Japanese embassy's website in Argentina explains that the Argentines are very direct in their dealings whereas Japanese have a high context protocol of politeness. The site notes how this would generate cultural stress for a first generation Japanese immigrant. From his Latin American perspective, David Nagata, a second generation Japanese-Argentine, has experienced relational openness among native Argentines that is expressed in hospitality. His family has grown to adopt some of the characteristics of Argentine hospitality. His parents invited Japanese strangers at the airport to stay in their home. His father frequently invited his fishing buddies to the house. He noted how this type of openness to others is usually unheard of in the Japanese culture. Juan, also a second generation Japanese-Argentine, remembered that his parents were the product of an arranged marriage while his marriage was of his own choosing. This is a clear break with traditional Japanese culture, although he did agree to honor his parents' wish that he marry a Japanese woman. His experience was that at an absolute minimum, first generation Japanese-Argentines wanted their children to marry other Japanese. Juan believes it is now acceptable to marry non-Japanese which indicates that successive generations are self-identifying more as Argentine and less as Japanese.

Ironically, while many Japanese came to Argentina seeking greater financial stability, many have left due to problems in Argentina's economy. Akio Watanabe recounted that prior to the 1980s Argentina was economically strong but has faltered in recent decades leading many to leave the country. When Argentina's economy collapsed in 1989 and Japan needed low cost labor, many second generation Japanese-Argentines reverse immigrated to Japan. This move back to Japan has proved difficult because the Japanese people saw them as foreigners which resulted in isolation and loneliness. While some Japanese return to Japan because they don't feel comfortable in Argentina, many of the younger generation who return to Japan are not

comfortable there either. People in Japan do not consider those who return to truly Japanese because of the loss of language and other traditions. Immigrants from Argentina to Japan typically group together in Japan. Japanese-Argentines who move back to Japan see themselves as Latin American but the children born in Japan see themselves as Japanese and want to remain in Japan.

Even though reverse immigration issues are common and complex, the provincial governments of Japan provide scholarships to children born of Japanese immigrants to allow them to return to Japan and study. These scholarships will allow the children to learn not only a vocation but also Japanese language and culture. The scholarships provide for transportation, room and board, books, and provide a living stipend. Many of the individuals with whom we spoke have either studied in Japan through these scholarships or have family members who have. They indicated it is often difficult to fit in while studying in Japan because the Japanese see them as foreigners and they see themselves as Latins.

A great deal was learned in the areas of immigration and culture shock by interviewing Japanese-Argentines. May the Lord use this information as part of his unfolding plan to bring



many Japanese to faith in Christ in Buenos Aires and throughout the world.

FAMILY STRUCTURE OF JAPANESE-ARGENTINES

Introduction

Migration to Argentina brought abundant changes to the traditional Japanese family and its structure. The first wave of immigrants maintained the traditional family roles and structure while successive generations have all but lost these familial bonds. To better understand the changes that have taken place, it is necessary to briefly examine historical Japanese family units.

Traditional Family Structure

Since World War II, significant changes and Westernization of the government and culture of Japan has occurred. With the continued influence of Western thought and morals, modern Japan resembles the West in many ways. Yet, traditional structures can be found within much of the family and culture as a whole and is helpful to understand the foundation on which the first immigrants to Buenos Aires built their new lives.

Traditional Japanese families are aligned along patrilineal and patriarchal patterns. The head of the family is the husband, or in the case of a deceased husband, his eldest son. This allows each family an unending kinship tie that extends from father to son to grandson. Maintenance of the family name and social-economic status are the primary concern. It is the sons' duty to marry and produce other sons for the family honor and name. If no sons are produced, one can be adopted and thereby create a male heir. The duty of the eldest son is especially important in the burial customs of Japanese Buddhists, which will be discussed later in this section.

Within the family structure the wife of the head man is in charge of the household and all functions related to its proper maintenance and operation. This would include not only child rearing, but also child education, the management of household finances and the overseeing of buying and preparation of food, preliminary marriage arrangements, and serving as hostess to all family guests and relatives.

Matters of great importance such as buying or selling property, marriage and divorce, as well as funerals, require calling members of the extended family together to share in the decision making process or mourning. Elderly members, who hold a high place of honor within traditional Japanese families and society, are especially sought out for their wisdom when making important decision. Honoring the elders of the family is continued after their death in

the practice of ancestor worship. “The kin tie through the generations is actively maintained by daily ancestor worship at the household Buddhist shrine. In matters of family solidarity, the family group attitudes and the Japanese Buddhist beliefs and practices reinforce each other.”¹⁰

The traditional Japanese household includes not only the nuclear family but the extended family as well. In addition, even among the rural poor, each household will usually have a maidservant, manservant, or both. This household structure serves as the foundation of traditional Japanese civil society. Each rural household is expected to provide at least one worker to cooperative labor endeavors. In addition, military service is expected of each family

As previously mentioned, men have the dominant role in Japanese society. Boys or men of the same age are especially close, and the words of the elderly male carries the greatest weight in society. This patriarchal framework stems from the creation myth of the Japanese culture. This story is found in the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, the two earliest Japanese books in existence. It is from these books that the Emperor traced his lineage from the Sun Goddess as well as the basis for the Japanese patriots’ claim that they and their lands are divine descendants of the early gods.¹¹ In the creation story, which is taught to Japanese school children, Izanagi, the Male-Who-Invites and Izanami, the Female-Who-Invites were given a jeweled spear to “make, consolidate and give birth to this drifting land.” So, standing on the Floating Bridge of Heaven, they pushed the spear down into the sea and stirred the water. As they withdrew the spear, the brine which dripped from its end became the land. Once this occurred the deities came to earth and erected a hall. There they created a “heavenly august pillar” and circled it with Izanagi moving around it to the left and Izanami to the right. They met and Izanami spoke first. Izanagi was displeased because the woman spoke first, so they repeated the dance. Upon meeting again, Izanagi spoke first saying, “How delightful! I have met a lovely maiden.”

¹⁰ John F. Embree, *The Japanese* (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 1943), 18.

¹¹ John F. Embree, *The Japanese Nation: A Social Survey* (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1945), 165.

Izanagi then asked the female deity if she had a place in her body where things are formed. Answering in a provocative way, Izanagi then asked if he could unite his “source place” with her “source place” and the two were united. It is in this story that we see the origin of male priority in relationships and the female’s role of passivity and acceptance.¹² From this union many of the deities of the Japanese pantheon spring and form the basis of Japanese Shinto. The traditional stories are an excellent resource to study and learn about the basic aspects of Japanese culture. These stories are usually taught in the school setting but if recounted in the family, they are usually told by the mothers.¹³

From a Western perspective, the traditional role of women may seem less than ideal. The woman is expected to first obey her father, then after marriage she is to obey her husband, and finally as a widow, she is to obey her eldest son. Her husband can divorce her at will for any cause. In urban and upper-classes when men engage in social functions they often leave their wives at home and participate in social events with other men. If they wish female companionship, they hire *geisha* girls to sing and entertain. Geisha girls found in urban areas are courtesans with traditions and training that stems from court ladies during the feudal era of Japan and do not function as *joros* or prostitutes. However, in rural areas the line is so thin between *geisha* and *joro*, that it is almost indistinguishable.¹⁴

Women are rarely educated beyond the high-school level. It is only the upper-class who are given more opportunities for advanced education and may even travel abroad. Because they have servants, they have more time to engage in educational and artistic pursuits, though they are still expected to serve and obey their husbands. The rural class husband and wife are regarded with greater equality. Because life on a farm requires many hands to do the work, husbands treat

¹² Ibid., 165-166.

¹³ Nagata, David, M.D. 2007. Email from Dr. David Nagata to Dr. Jeffrey Love, 23 July. Transcript in the hand of Jeffrey Love. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

¹⁴ Embree, *The Japanese Nation*, 167-170.

their wives with more respect. As a result, the rural wives often engage not only in the household work, but often assist their husbands in the field.

Japanese-Argentine Families

It has been necessary to lay the foundation for understanding the traditional family so that the differences between the Japanese-Argentines and the traditional Japanese can be more easily understood. The contrasts are stark and the pull of the traditional family heritage among the Japanese-Argentines was evident in this project. In the research conducted for this section some interesting observations about the relationship between the traditional and contemporary Japanese family became evident. Those contrasts will be discussed as a means to more fully understand the Japanese-Argentine of Buenos Aires.

First, the traditional Japanese family is not to be found among the Japanese-Argentine population. There are certainly remnants of that heritage, but it is no longer the expected, dominate mode. The remnants of the tradition were most clearly seen in the role of the wife among those we interviewed. All of the wives represented served as the manager of the household and did all the shopping and cooking. The wife was the primary caretaker of the children and deferred conversations to her husband. However, we noted that the wife would often speak to correct or complete the information her husband communicated. The families indicated they typically eat Japanese cuisine though many of the families stated that both Argentine and Japanese food were served in the home. The obvious preference of all those interviewed was Japanese food.

Second, the role of decision making has changed from the traditional model. The older generation of Japanese found themselves marginalized within the family as well as the Japanese-Argentine population as a whole. This proved to be very emotional when discussed with the elderly interviewees. They expressed sorrow about the demise of traditional Japanese values and

worried about the implications for successive generations born outside of Japan. Some respondents indicated that Japanese values and culture would be passed on as children will be educated in Japanese cultural schools currently being developed in Buenos Aires. This seems to be in line with the traditional model as cultural values were formally taught in school..

Third, the primary language spoken in the home was Spanish. With only two exceptions, all of the second generation Japanese-Argentines interviewed spoke Spanish within their homes and even in the homes of their parents. However, it is not uncommon for the second generation to speak in Japanese to their parents, even though their proficiency in Spanish is superior to their Japanese. We did speak with one individual who was an exception to the trend of second generation individuals speaking Spanish in the home. David, a medical doctor, stated that he and his siblings spoke Japanese in their home of origin and continued to do so in the homes they have established as adults. However, he indicated that among his siblings and peers, Spanish is the primary language spoken. Interestingly, David's unique experience extended beyond linguistic issues to religious belief. He was interviewed at an evangelical Japanese-Argentine church and served as the English interpreter for the service. David indicated that both of his parents were Evangelical Christians and that he and his siblings were raised in a Christian home. Of the four siblings in his family, three of them were in medicine and one in real estate. This move into professional careers and away from family owned and operated businesses is typical for the second and third generations.¹⁵

Finally, we discovered a longing for the traditional Japanese culture and values among the Japanese-Argentine. Many of those interviewed indicated that they felt as though honesty,

¹⁵ Nagata, David, M.D. 2007. Interview by author, 8 July, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Transcript. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

loyalty, trustworthiness, and hard work were being lost among the young, especially those farther removed from the first generation of immigrants. Feelings of “swimming upstream” against Argentine society were frequently expressed. Though the Japanese-Argentine willingly isolated themselves from one other as they moved from the rural areas of Argentina to Buenos Aires, they are now beginning to form loose associations among their people. This isolation from other traditional Japanese and assimilation into Latin American society has undoubtedly played a role in the demise of the traditional family.

Implications for Reaching the Japanese-Argentine Family

What then can be done to reach these people with the Gospel of Christ? First, anything that will strengthen the family will be a helpful bridge to the Gospel. Loyalty, honesty, hard work, trustworthiness are all biblical values that provide a positive witness. It is important for the missionary to understand and appreciate the traditional Japanese family unit, since many still have some form of that heritage within their own family unit.

Second, learning to speak the language they speak is of tremendous importance. An understanding of Spanish is essential. Beyond basic communication in Spanish, if one could learn Japanese it would be helpful to communicate with the first generational Japanese-Argentines as well as help the second generation improve their Japanese abilities.

Third, establishing Japanese cultural schools or programs would foster many new relationships among the second, third, and fourth generations of immigrants who wish to have their children learn about Japanese culture. A possible hurdle to the role of Japanese education and the Gospel is the prevalence of Shinto and Buddhist thought in many of the Japanese traditions and stories. Great care should be taken to ensure that further syncretism would not occur through the teaching of these schools.

Fourth, with reverse migration back to Japan and the trend toward traveling to Japan for

education, establishing a travel agency would be a possible means of entry into the community. Beginning an agency that specializes in educational and cultural trips would provide an excellent way to establish trust and build relationships.

Finally, since there is already an evangelical church established among the Japanese, supporting and partnering with them should be a strategic first step in furthering the Gospel among the Japanese-Argentine in Buenos Aires. Discipleship and leadership development could be a key means by which the missionary maximizes time and resources to empower and encourage the Japanese-Argentine to reach their own people.

The family has traditionally been held in high esteem by the Japanese people. The assaults on it are as rampant and devastating as are the assaults on the family in the United States and Europe. If the church is to reach the Japanese-Argentine of Buenos Aires, she must reach the families. With an eye toward an understanding of the traditional Japanese culture and family, relationships can be built so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be shared and the picture of Revelation 7:9-10 will include those Japanese-Argentines who have accepted His grace and mercy.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Introduction

Buenos Aires has become home for many peoples from countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, Korea, and Japan, to name only a few. In Buenos Aires, the dominant language is Spanish, at least for the Argentines. Yet, in order to better understand a population segment within Argentine society, such as the Japanese in Buenos Aires, it is necessary to discover which language the majority speak, both in the home and in the community. This knowledge should then be extended to discover the language in which the Japanese-Argentine

feel most comfortable reading, or if they are literate at all. This significance of this knowledge is increased by the generational and assimilation issues within the Japanese-Argentine community.

Our research indicated that use of the Spanish language is now a prominent aspect of the Japanese-Argentine life. Although the answers given in response to the question, “What language do the majority of Japanese-Argentines speak?” are from first, second, and third generation Japanese, the answers offered were consistently the same. The majority of the interviewees are second generation Japanese living in Buenos Aires. It could be argued that their perspective holds the most weight as they are caught between their parents, of the first generation, and their children, the third generation, in what may seem to be an ever-changing assimilation process.

Generational Distinctions

While the perspective of the second generation may prove to be more normative than those of the first or third generations, a look at the responses in a proper sequence seems best. Akio Watanabe, a first generation Japanese man who works in a dry cleaning store (*tintorería*) called Kampai said that the second generation Japanese-Argentines do not speak pure Japanese. He as well as other interviewees explained that the second generation mixes the use of Spanish and Japanese.

Hideaki Doi, also a first generation immigrant, further established the status of Japanese usage among the Japanese-Argentine. Hideaki works in the Cultural and Informative Center of the Embassy of Japan in Buenos Aires, and wishes it to be known that all of his answers reflect his own opinion and not that of the embassy. He indicated that the majority of Japanese-Argentines do not speak Japanese and that Spanish is the main language spoken.

Yugi Misu, a first generation immigrant said, “the number of Japanese language speakers is always decreasing. The younger generation doesn’t have much interest in learning. It is also

difficult to find teachers to teach Japanese.” The interview with Misu served as an intriguing display of the very subject we were studying. Misu was accompanied by Alexis Nagai, a second generation Japanese-Argentine. Misu translated the questions asked by the researcher in English into Japanese for Nagai, and Nagai would answer in Spanish. This occurrence served as at least one confirmation that the second generation knows both Japanese and Spanish, but that Spanish is the more dominant language. Nagai explained that the second generation speaks Spanish, and some of the third and fourth generation speaks Spanish but are also learning English.

The interviews conducted revealed that while there are certainly linguistic trends and norms among the various generations of Japanese-Argentines, each family has unique factors that impact the language spoken. The complexity of this issue was reflected in the story of Juan and Lydia, owners of Fuji Dry Cleaners. Juan, a second generation Japanese man and son of first generation parents, spoke Japanese in the home while growing up. Lydia, born to a first generation father and second generation mother, said she spoke only Spanish in the home. The only variable changed in the equation was the fact that Lydia’s mother was a second generation immigrant. The prevalence of Spanish among the second generation immigrants resulted in the fact that Lydia was brought up speaking only Spanish.

Our research found that discussing language preferences and usage was a sensitive issue. Some of the interviewees were resistant to the thought of being lumped in with all of the Japanese immigrants. This was especially true among the people from Okinawa, the island furthest removed from the Japanese chain of islands. In their minds they did not speak Japanese at all, but Okinawan. In fact, one man said, “Okinowans don’t speak Japanese with their children in their homes, other Japanese do.” To prove that this was not an isolated incident, another Japanese man said, “In my house, I speak Japanese, but also Okinawan. We send my grandson to a Japanese school so that he can get a scholarship to study in Japan. People want to

study there because there are better schools in Japan.” He said that while he speaks to his children (second generation) in Japanese and Spanish, he speaks to his grandson (third generation) in Spanish.

The second generation Japanese-Argentines offered very similar answers when questioned about language preference and usage. Some said they speak Japanese to their parents but only know “conversational Japanese.” They indicated that they always speak Spanish except for with their parents. One man named David said that he and his siblings speak Japanese in their parents’ home, but speak Spanish to one other. This trend and the consistency with which it was offered reflects a substantial change in the Japanese culture, perhaps trading tradition for convenience and acceptance.

Generational Literacy Prevalence and Preference

The spoken language is advancing more rapidly each day toward a point where it could be conceived that all Japanese-Argentines will only speak Spanish. However, the written language is also a subject of interest. Given that so many Japanese are inclined to speak Spanish because that is the culture in which they live, it is also necessary to determine the language they are most comfortable reading.

Our research team asked the interviewees about the prevalence of literacy and the language in which the various generations read. Yugi Misu stated that the first generation is largely literate, but only in Japanese. The immigrants originally worked jobs that did not require reading or speaking in Spanish. Segregated from Spanish speakers and surrounded by other Japanese immigrants, the first generation immigrants had neither the need or opportunity to learn to speak or read Spanish. According to Hideaki Doi, there are two newspapers printed in the Japanese language. One of the newspapers has a bilingual edition printed in Japanese and Spanish on Thursdays. Another interviewee said that one of these newspapers is called *La Plata*

Hochi, which is written in Spanish for the Japanese-Argentine community. Hideaki Doi elaborated on the newspaper situation as a distinguishing marker for some of the differences between the generations. He said that because the second generation speaks Spanish instead of Japanese, they subscribe to the newspaper to get the Thursday Spanish edition. Doi indicated that the paper features local editorials written by Japanese-Argentines. By subscribing to the Spanish edition of this paper, the second generation immigrants are able to have a connection to the local Japanese community without being able to speak the language.

It can be deduced that there is a high degree of literacy in both Japanese and Spanish among the Japanese-Argentine community by the responses of interviewees and by the presence of Japanese-Argentine newspapers printed in Japanese. It was also stated by several of the interviewees that there are some Japanese children who are being sent to Japanese schools to learn the spoken and written language in hopes to preserve their culture. However, the prevalence of Spanish as a written and spoken language among the Japanese-Argentines reveals that they have a strong desire to continue to assimilate into the Argentine way of life.

The responses of the interviewees indicate the best way to reach the majority of this population segment is to use the Spanish language. Although some knowledge of the Japanese language would be beneficial, particularly in reaching the first generation Japanese, it is becoming much less of a necessity and much more of a commodity.

DAILY LIVING

Introduction

One week of field research and interviews produced insufficient data to make this section of the people group profile for the Japanese in Buenos Aires comprehensive. The interviews

conducted by our group yielded only general residential information, and the abbreviated transcripts provided by the other groups were not specifically related to this topic.

However, as a missionary working in a church-planting role among Spanish-speaking Argentines in the Federal Capital, I will try to add some additional observations and suggestions related to the spread of the Gospel Japanese Argentines.

Brief overview on types of dwellings:

There are over 4 million homes in greater Buenos Aires. They come in all shapes and sizes and economic levels, but generally share the common factor that they are all squeezed tightly together into city blocks. The main avenues and central downtown streets have even more densely packed buildings. There are houses, duplexes, and even *pasillos* (hallways that open onto a street and recess to the doors of several homes so that not even the center of a city block goes unused for residential space). *Villas de Miseria* are shanty towns that have appeared in different locations throughout the city.

Apartments are the most common residences inside the Federal Capital district, as well as in many parts of Greater Buenos Aires. On certain principal avenues, the only visible features in any direction are the rows of generic high-rise apartment buildings. An overarching feeling of *inseguridad* (lack of physical safety from robberies, etc.) is pervasive, and *porteños* (Buenos Aires city dwellers) are distrustful of strangers. Residents of apartment buildings do not typically know their neighbors.

Due to locked entrances and paid doormen, door-to-door visitation is a physical impossibility in apartment buildings. In traditional houses, door-to-door evangelism is also ineffective. The majority of house dwellers have likely been visited by various cult groups, such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, which adds confusion to an already distrustful and

syncretistic atmosphere. Therefore, neither random nor systematic home visitation is as impacting as Gospel transmission through genuine, quality relationships.

Japanese residences in Buenos Aires:

One couple interviewed at a dry-cleaning business lived in a residence attached to the business. Another couple who were interviewed at their hardware store stated that while they live in a house, many of the Japanese in Buenos Aires live in apartments. As previously discussed, the general impression generated through our research was that the Japanese-Argentine population is dispersed throughout Buenos Aires. We did discover that tightly gathered Japanese communities exist outside of Buenos Aires, in Escobar and in the province of Misiones. Our research and personal experience has led us to form the following unconfirmed suspicions about the daily life of Japanese-Argentines living in Buenos Aires:

- Business owners have little free time
- Students enrolled in Japanese schools, which meet on Saturday, do not have excess free time
- Many Japanese-Argentine homes have more of an Argentine look and feel, with some retention of Japanese food preferences and the custom of taking off shoes upon entrance

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMICS

Our research revealed that economics and employment opportunities were the primary reasons the Japanese originally immigrated to Argentina. Enough time has now passed to be able to reflect on the economic and employment impact the immigration had on the individuals, community, and culture. Given our team's limited amount of time, we focused on asking interviewees the following two questions in regards to employment and economics: What kinds of jobs do Japanese-Argentines typically have? And, would you say that Japanese-Argentines are financially better off in Japan or Argentina? The respondents' answers aided our team in forming

a general understanding of the economic and employment factor impacting the Japanese-Argentines in Buenos Aires. This brief section will serve as a summary of those conclusions.

When looking at the career path chosen by the original Japanese immigrants, it is important to note that several interviewees mentioned that language was one of the biggest barriers upon arriving in Buenos Aires. This barrier strongly impacted the decision to have careers and businesses where language was not primary. This factor further impacted their economic status and the opportunities and goals of subsequent generations. The responses to our questions on this subject revealed the following information:

- Many of the first immigrants opened dry cleaning businesses (*tintorerias*), mostly in the city, and florists, mostly in the more rural area north of the city.
- Immigrants, particularly the first generation, often worked in the agriculture business outside the city.
- The second and third generation Japanese-Argentines are not taking over their parents' dry cleaning businesses as would often be the cultural norm in Japan.
- The second and third generation Japanese-Argentines are joining the Argentine work force in the same manner as other Argentines.
- The Japanese-Argentines do not have large, strong businesses. As previously discussed, their businesses are smaller due to the decentralization of the community unlike the Chinese and Korean communities.
- The first generation immigrants were very poor when they arrived in Argentina, but have established a certain degree of wealth through their businesses.
- The Japanese-Argentines have an extremely strong sense of a work ethic..
- The first generation immigrants, mostly from Okinawa, came to Buenos Aires for work. Most of the interviewees agreed that there is no current wave of immigrants coming to Argentina from Japan.
- Most interviewees felt that they were financially better off in Buenos Aires, but acknowledged there are not many jobs. Another interviewee expressed that he came to Buenos Aires for work, but that his son has indicated a desire to return to Japan for employment. One interviewee was planning on returning to Japan in the near future to live with her brother and work in a factory.

JAPANESE-ARGENTINE FOOD IN BUENOS AIRES

Introduction

Food is a significant part of every culture. It is therefore necessary to examine the food preferences of a people group being researched. This section is written with the intention of discovering the food preferences of the Japanese-Argentine people of Buenos Aires. Our research sought to identify the role of food in Japanese-Argentine culture by asking the following questions: What are the major differences between Argentine food and Japanese food? What kinds of foods are typical in the Japanese Argentine home? This section reflects the answers given by our interviewees to these questions.

Japanese Food

The contemporary diet in Japan typically consists of fresh fish and seafood. Maki Bayard is a Japanese woman who grew up in Japan and has spent about five years in the United States. She says that traditional Japanese foods are “sushi, lots of seafood, seaweed, rice, udon, ramen noodle, vegetable and pork pancake”.¹⁶ The Japanese people use chopsticks and eat three meals a day. Sushi, which is the most well known Japanese food around the world, is defined as “cold rice dressed with vinegar, formed into any of various shapes, and garnished especially with bits of raw seafood or vegetables”¹⁷ Hideaki Doi, the first generation Japanese-Argentine mentioned previously in this report, told us that meat is very expensive in Japan and must be imported either from Australia or the United States.¹⁸

Argentine Food

Argentina is famous for their cowboys and beef. There are many different foods that are prepared using beef as well as a lot of steak. Potatoes are another common food item and are far more common than rice, highlighting a distinction between Argentina and other South American

¹⁶ Bayard, Maki. Personal Interview. July 2007

¹⁷ <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=sushi>

¹⁸ Hideaki Doi. Personal Interview. July 2007.

countries. Due to a large wave of Italian immigrants in the late 19th century, Italian food is quite prevalent in Argentina.¹⁹ Favorite Italian meals include pizza, ravioli and other pastas. The Argentine people typically eat breakfast later in the morning and then eat a large lunch. They also might have a light snack in the afternoon as supper will not be eaten until around 9:30 or 10:00PM. As in other South American countries, empanadas are also famous in Argentina. These small pieces of dough stuffed with various meats, cheeses, and even sweet potatoes are a staple of the Argentine diet.

Japanese-Argentine Food

The Japanese-Argentine population in Argentina eats a combination of Argentine and Japanese food. First and second generation Japanese-Argentines tend to eat primarily Japanese food in the home. However the younger Japanese-Argentines prefer to eat more Argentine foods. Hideaki Doi told us that the younger generations “cannot go without their meat.”²⁰ Our interviewees gave varying responses as to the typical foods eaten in the Japanese-Argentine homes. Some respondents said they mainly eat Japanese food while others told us that they prefer Argentine food. An interview at the Kyoshin Trading S.A. estimated that 80% of the food eaten in a Japanese-Argentine home is Argentine food.²¹ The consensus seemed to be that both foods are eaten in the home and the ultimate decision depends on the personal preferences on any given day.

While a consensus could not be gained on the favored food among Japanese-Argentines, there was one issue related to food that drew unanimous agreement among the respondents. When asked whether they would have a combination of Japanese and Argentine food within the

¹⁹ <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Algeria-to-France/Argentina.html>

²⁰ Hideaki Doi. Personal Interview. July 2007.

²¹ Interview at Kyoshin Trading S.A. Personal Interview. July 2007.

same meal, they were emphatic and united in their response. They were all quick to say that they would never mix the two foods.

Japanese Grocery Stores in Buenos Aires

The respondents indicated they often purchased their food at a couple different Japanese grocery stores. Our team visited one of the stores and found many Japanese products and decorations. Another interviewee, Alexis Nagai also told us that many Japanese-Argentines go to Chinese grocery stores as the products are very similar.²² Nagai said that key traditional items in the Japanese-Argentine kitchen include soy sauce, rice, ginger, seaweed, and sushi. He went on to elaborate that another favorite among Japanese people, sweet noodles, cannot be bought in Buenos Aires. The respondents indicated that the prevalence of Japanese food items has improved significantly over the past twenty years. Items such as soy sauce are now easy to obtain, while just a couple of decades ago they could not be found in Argentina.

The Japanese grocery stores are one of the ways that the Japanese-Argentine people are able to preserve their heritage and connect with their community. Since they are able to buy things such as soy sauce and seaweed, they are able to pass on some of their traditional foods to their children. Several interviewees intimated that sushi has become popular in the last five years among the Argentine people.²³ The popularity of sushi within the Argentine population will also help the Japanese to preserve some of their heritage. The importance of food in the Japanese-Argentine community was well stated by German and Ana Tamahiro. They communicated the belief that the Japanese-Argentines are losing a lot of their culture, but areas such as food, martial arts, and anime, that are growing in



²² Nagai, Alexis. Personal Interview. July 2007.

²³ Interview at Kyoshin Trading S.A. Personal Interview. July 2007.

popularity among the Argentine people.²⁴ This can only help to preserve aspects of the traditional Japanese culture.

Japanese Restaurants in Buenos Aires

There are several Japanese restaurants in various parts of Buenos Aires. Several of these restaurants served both Japanese and Chinese cuisine. Most of the menus included varieties of sushi, and salmon. The menus were very similar to Japanese menus in the United States. Some of the restaurants had a *Menú Ejecutivo*, the normal lunch menu in Argentina. It is a special set price for lunch that typically includes an appetizer, main dish, dessert, and beverage. The Japanese restaurants had a version of the lunch special that included the Japanese version of the typical courses of the meal.

Lunch at Japanese Argentine Church

After attending worship service at the Japanese-Argentine church our team was invited to eat lunch with the congregation. This allowed the team the opportunity to experience some Japanese-Argentine food while conversing with members of the church. We ate Milanesa de pollo for lunch. Milanesa, which is an Argentine food, is a very thin strip of chicken battered and fried. We ate it as a sandwich, served with lettuce and tomato. Instead of having a fork to put the lettuce and tomato on our sandwich we had a pair of chopsticks. After the main course we were served either an *alfajor* cookie or something that was orange, citrus, and looked like a raisin. Overall, the lunch was fare more Argentine than Japanese.

CONNECTIONS IN THE JAPANESE-ARGENTINE COMMUNITY

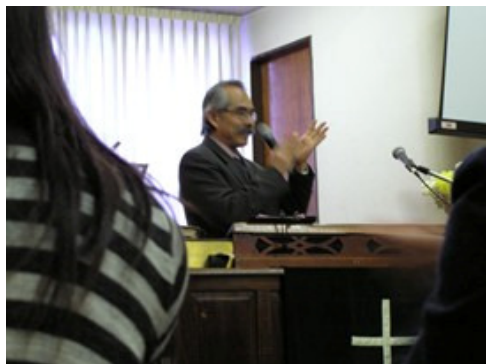
Introduction

²⁴ Tamahiro, German and Ana. Personal Interview. July 2007.

As previously discussed, the issue of cultural self-identification is complex among the Japanese-Argentine population in Buenos Aires and often depends on generational issues. Another key factor that influences cultural self-identification is the way the Japanese-Argentines are viewed by the Argentines. The Japanese-Argentine may often say that he is only Argentine. However, when the issue is pressed, he may often admit that he *feels* Japanese because Argentines see him differently and treat him as such. There is an obvious contradiction between the Japanese-Argentines' self-identification, actions, and words. Fortunately, they have several ways of connecting and staying connected with the Japanese culture that can help foster their heritage and identity.

Means of Connection

The Japanese-Argentine Evangelical Church has been mentioned several times in this report. It is a key place to connect with the Japanese-Argentine community. The church has two services. The first service is at 9:00AM and is conducted in Japanese. The second service is in Spanish and begins at 11:30AM. It is indicative of the factors previously discussed that the Spanish language service is the larger of the two services. The congregation meets together for a



fellowship meal after the service. The same pastor, Ruben Luis, preaches both services. Luis is a converted Buddhist whose father was a Buddhist monk. Ruben Luis is a second generation Japanese-Argentine with a charismatic personality and seems to be well connected

within the community. Many of the members of the church travel from great distances passing by many Spanish speaking Argentine churches to attend a Spanish speaking service with other Japanese people. This seems to indicate that even though these Japanese-Argentine believers say

they are more Argentine than Japanese, they continue to feel more comfortable worshipping with people from their own cultural background.

The second way that Japanese-Argentines remain connected to their culture and community is through clubs and organizations. JICA is an organization that helps to preserve the Japanese culture among Japanese-Argentines. The most obvious way that the organization tries to preserve the culture is by granting scholarships, enabling Japanese-Argentines to go to college in Japan. The students must be fluent in the Japanese language to study in Japanese universities, thus offering an incentive for Japanese-Argentine youth to study Japanese. If they can speak the language and do the work, they receive a full scholarship with room, board, and a stipend for the duration of their studies.

The Centro Nikkei Argentino is the largest and most encompassing of the clubs for the Japanese-Argentine community. It offers classes and seminars on all things Japanese. It reaches out to the Japanese-Argentine people and the more distinct group from Okinawa. In addition to the previously mentioned church, this would be one of the places that a new missionary would want to visit soon after arriving on the field. The prominence of this club offers a great perspective on what is happening in the community. The Japanese from Okinawa have a club their own club, the Centro Okinawense Argentino. This club focuses exclusively on immigrants from Okinawa. They have courses and seminars similar to the Centro Nikkei, but all of the courses at this highlight aspects of Okinawan culture. The club has its own restaurant that features food from Okinawa. There is also a large meeting room that may be used for some type of religious service.

The Japanese Association in Argentina as well as The Culture and Information Center of the Japanese Embassy have information that enables Japanese-Argentines to connect with their community. These organizations offer various language schools, cultural programs,

and seminars. One of the programs offered through these associations is the Asahi Cultural Association. This program is especially interesting to the English speaking missionary because the material they use to teach basic Japanese phrases and language includes translations into both Spanish and English. The classes at Nichia Gakuim have more distinctively focused language and culture classes. The Japanese Gardens is another place where the culture from Japan is displayed, as a Japanese restaurant, store, and library are all contained in a beautifully designed garden.

As displayed in the previous section on language and literacy, print media is a common way that Japanese-Argentines stay connected to their community. There are also at least two forms of print media that individuals use to stay connected. One is printed in Japanese and the other is printed in Spanish. The Japanese form is a weekly newspaper from La Plata called “La Plata Hochi.” During our interviews almost every Japanese speaker had one of these papers on hand. The prevalence of the paper among Japanese-Argentines speaks to the usefulness of this paper for ministry purposes. Among the non-Japanese speaking Japanese Argentines the paper was not as well known or respected. Additional information about the prevalence and use of newspapers in the community can be found in the section, Language and Literacy.

The other form of print media serving as a means of connection for Japanese-Argentines is extremely popular. It is a Spanish language pamphlet produced monthly called “Alternativa Nikkei”. This pamphlet was very well known and frequently mentioned by our interviewees. The pamphlet was displayed and available at many places frequented by Japanese-Argentines. The pamphlet includes articles about recent happenings in the Japanese Argentine Community, cultural tidbits, news from Japan, modern cultural change items, and advertisements. The advertisements were noteworthy and reflective of the influence of the pamphlet. Every club, organization, and church within the Japanese-Argentine community had an advertisement in the

pamphlet. Every page included business advertisements focused toward Japanese-Argentines and one page included only advertisements for Japanese-Argentine businesses. Obtaining this pamphlet each month is essential for anyone who desires to connect with or plug into the Japanese-Argentine community in Buenos Aires.

None of the people interviewed knew of any Japanese radio programs or stations in Japanese or targeted at the Japanese-Argentine population. Nor did they know of any local television station or program specifically for the Japanese-Argentine population. Only one interviewee mentioned watching television from Japan by satellite, but this may be more prevalent than our limited research indicates. The overall impression of all the people interviewed was that they received their information from the community itself.

As previously mentioned, many people stated that Japanese food is “in style” in Buenos Aires. Sushi places can be found all over the city. Several of the restaurants were listed in the “Alternativa Nikkei” and others had their business cards in the locations we visited. The Japanese restaurants seem to be places where Japanese-Argentines gather. The interviewees expressed a general preference for getting together in large groups for dinner at nice restaurants. A missionary desiring to reach this community will have to identify which of the many restaurants are frequented by the Japanese-Argentine community and which are just restaurants serving Japanese cuisine.

The final way the team identified that the Japanese-Argentines connected with their community was through the businesses they own and operate. This was especially true of stores that sold articles imported from or directly associated with Japan and its culture. One store owner said that ten years ago a store like his would not have been successful in Buenos Aires, but now that Japanese food is so popular, the Argentine market can support a Japanese store.

Our limited observation was that the customers present in the stores were almost exclusively of Japanese descent.

The Japanese-Argentines are well connected considering the decentralized nature of their community and the assimilation factors that complicate communication and identification. Although they may think of themselves as “only” Argentine, they have several ways of staying connected to the Japanese-Argentine community. A missionary desiring to make an impact in the Japanese-Argentine community should utilize these networks and connections as part of the overall mission strategy.

DECISION MAKING

A Brief Overview

Decisions are traditionally made through a middle man in Japan. Business deals and marriages are arranged through these hired middle men, allowing both sides to save face if the deal is not successful. The first generation Japanese-Argentines continued to use middle men. Many of our interviewees indicated that grandfathers used to arrange the marriages in their families. However, this practice has essentially evaporated in the midst of the Argentine culture and assimilation. Additional information specifically dealing with marriage traditions can be found in the Family Structure section.

The weakening of the traditional Japanese culture has had a significant impact on the decision making process. Every generation that has followed the first generation immigrants is more independent than the last and moves further from the group mentality associated with traditional Japanese culture. People interviewed said that the young people in Argentina were respectful of their elders, but do not regard the hierarchical structure as was once typical in decision making.

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

While many of the sections contained within this report include ministry recommendations specific to the particular areas of Japanese-Argentine life, there are a few suggestions that are broad in nature and fit best in a category of their own. Each of these draw on the research of this team, personal experience of missionaries on the field, and published resources.

Suggestions for potential new missionaries among the Japanese -Argentines:

- *Prepare*

Our team's general impression is that the Japanese-Argentine community maintains communication within their own group. It should be expected that a North-American missionary's reputation would precede him among this population segment. Tremendous care should be taken to ensure a quality first impression, devoid of *faux pas*.

- *Read everything available*

According to one interview, there are at least two books about the Japanese-Argentine community. It would also be extremely beneficial to read back issues of some of the Japanese community publications, particularly the *Alternativa Nikkei*.

- *Dry cleaning and floristry*

Dry cleaning and floristry are two remarkably common occupations among the first generation Japanese-Argentines. It would be helpful and impressive within the community to learn to speak intelligently about these vocations (ideally in Japanese!).

- *Study Japanese and Argentine cultures individually*

Having a deep understanding of both Japanese and Argentine cultures within their own context would be invaluable for understanding the wide range of cultural identification and assimilation patterns within the various generations of the community. Tremendous sensitivity should be given to the issue of cultural self-identification among the various generations. Additional study should be given to the cultural distinctions between the Okinawans and traditional Japanese.

- *Take classes and join clubs*

Play soccer at the sports clubs, take cooking or floristry classes, or study the language. The second and third generation Japanese-Argentines may be the more open group in the community. They are most likely to participate in classes and clubs. Establishing relationships within those generations could provide segues into the older, harder to reach generation.

- *Be strategic in choosing a residence*

Since the Japanese-Argentines are dispersed, living centrally would reduce commutes to target locations. In addition, living close to a Japanese-Argentine Sports Club would provide a more geographic reasoning for joining.

- *Form at least a loose association with the existing evangelical Japanese-Argentine churches*

Various sections of this report include information on the Japanese-Argentine evangelical churches in Buenos Aires. The information gained from the individuals associated with the congregations was crucial to this report and indicative of the wealth of knowledge among the members.