

INFLUENCE RELATING TO THE STRATEGIES OF SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT OF THE CULTURAL DISTANCE BETWEEN THE RECIPIENT SOCIETY AND EMITTER COUNTRY OF TWO FOREIGN COMMUNITIES IN MONTERREY

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Abstract:

Being part of a larger project of investigation⁴⁹⁹, our principal aim constitutes the realization of an analysis of the dynamics of social interaction and the way that these dynamics are influenced by the most stereotypic perceptions between the foreign residents in Monterrey's city (Nuevo León, Mexico). In a previous paper (Doncel, in process of dictum) we tried to verify the hypothesis that, in the case of the communities that are made up of these foreigners, a higher degree of intracommunitarian cohesion corresponds to a minor degree of integration with the reception society. Since the results of this work are not as conclusive as would be required for the complete corroboration of the hypothesis, we decided to add as an independent variable for the measurement of the degree of integration to the reception society the cultural distance between this one and the origin society. So, here we set out the perceived cultural distance, the situations of intercultural conflict and the forms of differentiated adjustment of two foreign communities that we consider as exemplary cases: the Japanese and the Spanish society.

Key Words: Sociocultural adjustment, intercultural conflict, interethnic contact, foreigner's communities, cultural distance

Introduction:

The present paper is part of a larger project of investigation called "Dynamics of interaction, integration and conflict of the foreign communities in Monterrey", whose principal aim is to analyze the perceptions and the social interaction that reproduce the foreign residents in the city of Monterrey (Nuevo León, Mexico) towards the interior of their own community of belonging, towards other foreign communities and towards the reception society. In a previous paper (Doncel, in process of dictum), we tried to verify the hypothesis that, in the case of the communities that are made up of these foreigners to a higher degree of intracommunitarian cohesion corresponds to a minor degree of integration with the reception society. Since the results of this work are not all convincing that would be required for the complete corroboration of the hypothesis, we decided to add as independent variable for the measurement of the degree of integration to the reception society, the cultural distance between this one and the origin society. So, here we set out the perceived cultural distance, the situations of intercultural conflict and the forms of differenced adjustment of two foreign communities that we consider as exemplary cases: the Japanese and the Spanish society.

In the first part of this paper we justify the selection of these communities for which we consider essential cultural differences between the Japanese and Mexican society, as well as for the essential coincidences between the Spanish society and the Mexican one. Nevertheless, we will give more importance to the differences and to the cultural coincidences perceived by the same subjects of the migration in Monterrey, as well as to the relating of the situations of intercultural conflict that they live and to its foundations. After making clear the cultural distance, real and perceived, of these

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communities, we will describe the particular way of sociocultural adjustment of each of the communities. In this point we will be supported by the work of Berry (1980), basically on four strategies of acculturation that this author sets out, depending on the valuation and reproduction that the immigrant carries out of his own cultural identity of origin, his habits and his customs, as well as with regard to the habits, customs and personal values of the culture of the reception society: integration (affirmation of what is one's own and of what is new), assimilation (denial of the own thing and affirmation of the new thing), segregation (affirmation of what is one's own and denial of what is new) and marginalization (denial of what is one's own and of what is new).

Regarding the methodological approach, entirely qualitative, we have been served by the results obtained during our fieldwork among both communities. This fieldwork has been carried out principally through two methodological tools: in-depth interview and participant observation. This way, on one hand, I may have been present at numerous events carried out by both communities (barbecues, sporting events, celebration of national holidays, informal meetings, etc.). The fact that I am of Spanish origin and an immigrant in Monterrey has been of great help for the accomplishment of my fieldwork in a community of which, at last, I am an integral part. Likewise, one of our Japanese informants, the anthropologist Shinji Hirai, not only is developing his investigation and his social and personal life between the studied community, but in addition we must bear in mind that he forms part of the team of investigation constituted for the accomplishment of this project. Beyond the evident epistemological and methodological implications of confusing the papers of the investigator and investigated (debate in which we cannot enter here), the truth is that the degree of abstraction and the depth of analysis offered by Dr. Hirai for the knowledge of the Japanese community has been an invaluable contribution.

Likewise, besides the enriching dialog between a Japanese anthropologist and a Spanish anthropologist, theorizing on the customs and narratives of their compatriots, the contribution of other informants must not be undervalued. In fact, all of them can be considered key informants for their relative structural position in the bosom of their respective communities. In this respect, the interviews realized to the General Consul of Spain and with a Spanish immigrant taken root in the city for six years and married to a woman from Monterrey, served us to obtain a vision, as much panoramic as experiential, of how the intercultural relations are perceived between the Spanish and the residents of Monterrey. Concerning the Japanese community, the quite cold and external vision of the Honorary Consul of Japan in Monterrey, Mexican by birth and without any cultural or ancestral link to Japan, was perfectly complemented by the vision, much more vivid, of a Japanese female informant located in an ambiguous position in her reference group, because even she is a first generation Japanese immigrant married with a Mexican man and does not form a part of the breadth of the Japanese community, composed of men sent by their respective companies to give their services in Monterrey for a limited number of years. The vision of the latter group has been recovered in an indirect way by the story of the previous ones, and also by the direct summary of punctual observations expressed by themselves during the realization of the fieldwork.

1. Cultural distance, real and perceived, between the analyzed communities and the recipient society

As we indicated in the introduction, after comparing in a previous paper (Doncel, in process of dictum) the influence of the degree of intracommunitarian cohesion of the Chinese, Japanese and Spanish communities in their respective levels of isolation or of interethnic contact with respect to the recipient society, we could verify that, beyond the indicators observed to measure the degree of internal cohesion, we had to pay attention to a series of indicators that measure the cultural distance between the emitter society and the recipient society of these immigrants. This need is given by a few results according to which two communities with a very different cohesion degree (the Japanese, very high, and the Chinese, very low), but with a great geographical and cultural nearness, presented the same adaptative response opposite to the new sociocultural context: segregation. So, we have decided to compare here the adaptative response of two communities whose cultural distance with the recipient society that we presume is much differentiated. This case deals with the Spanish community that we view as very near to the Mexican society, and the Japanese society, perceived as more distant.

On what can we base to support a few differences or a few similarities that initially only form part of an intuition? (Even if this is the intuition of a Spanish anthropologist living in Mexico for almost five years, which gives him the support of the existential experience and the Weberian *verstehen*). If we accept Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis according to which our interpretation of reality is determined in an incisive way by language, this being determined culturally and provoking a distinctive interpretation of the reality on having centered our attention on certain phenomena (Sapir, 1929), it is clear that the linguistic variable has to be taken into account as the supposed first barrier that the immigrant must face to begin his process of acculturation. Also we can find as support to this proposal Lévi-Strauss's thought, which affirms that "one of my essential purposes has been always to fix the demarcation line between culture and nature (...) in the articulated language" (Lévi-Strauss, 1975, p. 133), to what he adds that:

Language manifests itself to me the cultural fact *par excellence*, and for several reasons; first, because language is a part of culture, one of these attitudes or habits that we receive from external tradition; secondly, because language is the essential instrument, the favored way by which we assimilate the culture of our group (...) Finally, and especially, because language is the most perfect of all the manifestations of cultural order that, somehow, forms systems, and if we want to understand what are art, religion, law and probably even cuisine or the rules of social etiquette, once must conceive them as codes formed by the union of symbols, in conformity with the model of the linguistic communication (Lévi-Strauss, 1975, p. 134)

Having accepted the transcendental importance of language for cultural production in the individual and, in consequence, for cultural reproduction in the process of adjustment to a new and strange sociocultural manner, in the cases chosen for our work the difference turns out to be indisputable. This way, on one hand, the Spanish immigrant, beyond the dialectal variants, faces an adaptation process very much achievable than the Japanese immigrant (with a mother tongue not remotely similar to the Spanish language).

If language is the vehicle of our interpretation of the world, at the base of our cultural identity we find our religious beliefs. Understanding religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relating to sacred things (Durkheim), we find between Mexico and Spain, one more time, historical continuity. Both countries are predominantly Roman Catholic, although México (and most of Latin America) is developing a diversification process through the formation and strengthening of alternative Christian sects and in Spain the process advances to a clear secularization of society⁵⁰⁰. In the case of Japan, Shinto and Buddhist majority, with respect to Mexico, the distance is evident in the religious field, considered as a pillar of any culture.

The contrast of the Catholic religion, very oriented towards collectivism and public practice, against the Japanese religious syncretism (a mixture of Shinto, Buddhism and ancestor worship), a religion much more subjective, individual and of intimate celebration experience, is also reflected in the values ingrained in the dominant ethic, in the form of regular everyday social interactions, etc.. In this sense, intercultural communication, beyond that measured by language, between Japanese and Mexicans is hindered by a hierarchical concept and strict social respect in relations in the Japanese case, as well as non-verbal communication also very differential between Mexican and Japanese (i.e., in terms of physical contact, much more limited in the case of Japan). In the case of Japan, for example, their cultural patterns have been written about prolifically (Benedict, 2008; Morris, 1998), but more than focus on the cultural characteristics of each of the cases in the society of origin, what we want to emphasize here is the subjective perception and intercultural conflict between Japanese and Spanish migrants settled in Monterrey. Therefore, it is a much more defined aim that, ultimately,

⁵⁰⁰ These opposite trends inside the same religious adscription must not be minimized, so though the catholic tradition is shared, this does not mean that it does not exist any conflict situations or of ethical totally opposing positions. Such is the case of one of the Spanish interviewed informants, who explains that "the (religious) conceptions that they handle in Mexico are very linked to a creationist position. Almost all the speeches of the people have a stench to theology that doesn't go with me. It attracts my attention, but I keep to my criteria".

allows us to ratify or reject the hypothesis that cultural distance is decisive in achieving successful cultural adaptation.

With respect to the generalized perception of the Spanish community, among the interviewed subjects the expression of the cultural similarities predominates over the differences, as well as the relatively easy adjustment to the Mexican society. For example, the interviewee that occupied the post of Consul of Spain in the moment of our fieldwork affirmed that the Spanish tend to have good relations with Latin Americans "because the cultural nearness and language". In the same way, another Spanish informant resident in Monterrey for nearly six years, indicated that the essence of the people in Mexican and Spanish cultures is the same, "defined by the sunny climate", to what he adds that: "when you have environmental situations that allow conviviality, this makes people warmer. Life is breathed in through all the pores of the Mexican society. They always open doors for you. This aspect also is very Spanish because the climate allows it".

Even when the last informant was questioned about the cultural differences between both societies, among which the most prevalent themes of discussion (both for the Japanese and the Spanish) was the greater individualism of Mexicans⁵⁰¹, he relativizes his response and the stereotype is conditioned and minimized by the context of comparison (Doncel, 2011b). This way, in another moment of the interview, our informant affirmed that "Here (in Monterrey) life is breathed more than in Spain. Over there we are more European, we tend towards the individuality, but in Europe the Spanish people are more like the Latin people, and it is obvious in spite of the differences that there could be with Mexico and other European countries".

One of our Japanese informants, anthropologist as well as immigrant, also refers to, with great lucidity, the individualism that he considers characteristic of Japanese society, individualism that entails some different forms of sociability compared to that of Mexico:

Also society does not teach young people to ask others for help, parents or friends, that is I think a great cause of suicide referring to the high rate of suicides in Japan). But look because we have seen that before committing suicide he wanted to speak (an acquaintance of the informant who committed suicide) ... so, for him he needed to say that he felt bad. But the society or we didn't have a way to help him. The individualism exists from the point of loneliness and isolation.

Nevertheless, we must not confuse the significances clearly differentiated of the "western individualism" than the Japanese vision of individualism. As the same informant and as other author as Benedict explained (2008), the collectivism and the social pressure to act in agreement with the

⁵⁰¹ Though in this case the perception of the Japanese and Spanish immigrants, according to which distinguishes itself unanimously the major individualism of its societies of origin with regard to the recipient society, agrees with the score granted by the famous anthropologist " of the intercultural communication " G. Hofstede, we have decided not to consider his cultural dimensions to be a valid criterion for our ends. Really, in the following table we can perceive how the score granted to Spain and to Japan as for the degree of individualism is similar, and equally distantly of the score granted to Mexico. Likewise, we can observe (in the numbers in brackets) how the distance between the scores of Japan and Spain with regard to Mexico is also similar. Nevertheless, we must consider that the work of this dutch anthropologist is orientated, more than to measure the real distance between cultures, to foresee the efficiency or the difficulty for the intercultural communication between individuals depending on the degree of similarity between the different cultural dimensions identified. All this based on a concept of national culture very debatable (for homogenizator and simplistic) and in a few mechanisms of measurement equally debatable.

Table 1. Comparison between México-Japan-Spain according to the cultural dimensions of G. Hofstede

	Power distance	Individualism versus Collectivism	Masculinity-Femininity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long-Term orientation
Japan	54 (+27)	46 (-16)	95 (-26)	92 (-10)	80 (¿?)
Mexico	81	30	69	82	-
Spain	57 (+24)	51 (-21)	42 (+27)	86 (-4)	19 (¿?)

expectations of the group are some of the characteristics of the Japanese society. To this fact our informant adds that:

If this collectivism is analyzed in generational terms, many Japanese of new generation do not want to get into the companies and into the social activities precisely for not surrender to this social pressure. In this situation the Japanese individualism arises. It is not the same thing that the western individualism. It is the individualism of loneliness and isolation.

2. Situations of intercultural conflict between the analyzed communities and the recipient society

However, for as much as we focus on the particular cultural features, real or perceived, of each of the societies of origin, we are interested in analyzing the cultural shocks that are given in the situations of interethnic contact between the immigrant and the society of recipient. In this respect, much more univocal, forceful and numerous were the explanations of different situations of cultural shock obtained during the fieldwork with the Japanese community. Next we will see a sample of quotes that clearly express the difficulties that a Japanese person must face to interact in a fluid way with a Mexican. In the following citation, for example, we can observe that the importance for the Japanese of the repentance and of the recognition of one's own weakness finds a wall faced with the response perceived as typical in the Mexican:

The Mexican instead of apologizing they say *chinga, chinga*. Even the grown-ups they never apologize ... when someone does something shh! For the Mexicans it is very important to always be worried about *chingar* or to be *chingados*. I *chingo* or I am *chingado* (...) Yes, I also (as a compatriot who is taking part in the interview) bothered people. I had something that I didn't like, it was this, they don't apologize. [A Mexican] is living in the moment, but he is not thinking that something might happen tomorrow or later. He does not apologize. Always says: "it's that ..., it's that ...". We (the Japanese people) apologize all time.

Very related to apologizing, the expression of repentance and of admitting mistake, appear to be the educational customs. In this respect, our Japanese informant affirms that "They taught me that I must say always "thank you" and "please". If not, you are a rude person. That's why my parents insisted that you always have to say "please" and "thank you" so that people respond to you ". In the same discursive line, another Japanese informant affirms that "the Mexican almost doesn't scold children. I do not know in another place ... yes, big problem ... When he does something with things of another person, ah he scolds me. It is necessary to learn".

Obviously, the problem of education and of values clearly differentiated between the Japanese and Mexican societies is not limited only to the social interaction with the children, these educational systems opposed in many senses, generate conflict also between adults. This happens with frequency, for example, in the workspace, in Japanese companies with branches in Monterrey in which Japanese executives have to interact with Mexican employees. We will appeal again to our key informant, who besides being anthropologist, Japanese and immigrant seated in Monterrey, was a translator in one of these companies, situation that in addition forced him to exercise informal labors of intercultural mediator. In his story this person expresses implicitly, across a concrete situation, the Japanese concept, notably paternalistic, of the relation between bosses and employees, as well as a significance of the physical punishment very different from the Mexican idea of it. These concepts generate a tense situation, which due to his reiteration, goes from the anecdotal to the structural.

For this reason I mediated, I was not only an interpreter ... when we were going to have dinner (between Japanese) they asked me why the Mexicans were like that and I explained that they were good people and hard-working. These engineers (Mexicans) are capable, but if you kick a box, it is synonymous of wanting you to learn, but the Mexican takes it as a blow ... (If I hit a child it is to say him) " child, pay attention " and if I lose my temper, maybe I must hit you and this doesn't mean that I don't love you. And the Mexican sees it as imposition of power and a dominant-dominated relation is established. Here they say that the one that gets angry loses because if you shout nobody

will pay attention to you (...) I explained to the executives that they have to speak kindly to the engineers. One day one asked me and told me that why he was annoyed: "he hit me in the head ". I told him: "It is not that he doesn't like you, it is because he is worried for you and he wants you to learn and to do your job faster and get a better salary" and this way he understood that it is a way of expressing friendship and fondness.

He concludes the previous quote referring to a particular way of expression of "friendship and fondness" that, from our own cultural position (Mexican or Spanish), can seem to us to be paradoxical. And the specific cultural regulation of emotion and of free expression of the feelings is one of the cultural features that determines, in a big way, intercultural social relations. In this way, a Japanese female immigrant affirmed, with certain valuable ambiguity, that: "(Mexican morality with respect to the Japanese one) is very different. Sometimes, in a good way. A part of the good, for example, here very much love to family. But Japanese don't say: I love you very much. They do not say in the family. Don't say. But here yes. Sometimes, it's good, but sometimes ...". Referring here to a Japanese woman married a Mexican man; she shows a high degree of acculturation in the recipient society, for which she can manage to value positively certain features of this society. But the certain thing is that a common response of Japanese people, in the face of an expression that they consider excessive of emotive from someone else, translates to an evasive reaction or denotes inconvenience. As another Japanese informant affirms "other times he cannot stand so much affection".

Also the value of commitment and trust is something that the Japanese immigrants suffer in their expectations towards Mexicans, because again and again these expectations are truncated. As our informant explains: "When I came here and checked over how were Mexicans. First, I did not like it because ah! 'Yes, yes I go' (the Mexican says) and they never come. They promise, but Mexicans (do not fulfill)... and a lot of corruption ..."

Hitherto we have explained some of the cultural features that provoke the most difficulty for an effective intercultural communication across the experience of Japanese immigrants with a high degree of contact with the recipient society. Besides being married with Mexican spouses, they have a good level of Spanish and are employed at places that forces conviviality with the Mexican society. But the truth is that the great majority of the Japanese community in Monterrey, as we explain in more detail in another part (Doncel, in process of dictum), presents a very different reality, because they are transitory immigrants that come to fulfill their service in multinational companies during a short period of time. For this reason, frequently, they almost neither speak Spanish nor interact with the society of Monterrey for more than the essential things. In these cases, the language turns into an insurmountable barrier, circumscribing their daily interactions almost exclusively to the area of their Japanese-work community. Paradoxically, this situation causes them to practically not have to face any situation of intercultural conflict, because inside their "ghetto" they can cover all their basic needs. This is expressed by one of these Japanese temporary immigrants when affirms (in English) that: "I use to speak in English. But I don't find any problem ... the problem is when I am shopping ... '*muy caro, muy caro*' (very expensive, very expensive)".

As a result of what has been examined, when we invited the Japanese immigrant to indicate the mutual cultural features between Mexico and Japan, in contrast to what happened with our Spanish informants, the Japanese informant affirms that to indicate them is "difficult, because they are very different (the Japanese society of the Mexican one)". This does not mean that the Spanish immigrant does not find difficulties in sociocultural adjustment, but the situations of intercultural conflict between Spanish and Mexicans are much less frequent and of less intensity that in the case of the Japanese.

One of the more common areas of conflict from the point of view of the Spanish, is conflict that becomes clearer in labor relations is the different conception of work. In this respect, one of our Spanish informants affirmed that "(between Mexicans and Spanish) there are different concepts of practicality; whereas the Spanish is more frontal and pragmatic, the Mexican worries more for how instead of when, the form instead of the root (...) Let's put a point 'A' and a point 'B'. For a Spaniard, one arrives with a straight not a rigid line (...) The Mexican sees infinite variations". In the same line of thought, another Spanish immigrant affirms that:

The view of work (for a Spaniard, with regard to a Mexican) is different (...) I've been educated to do things well and to work as hard as possible. It is a very European view. Here, I see that they are educated to do things in any way (...) There are problems with the establishment of rules. They all skip it. In the first six months I was thinking of leaving the country because of it.

In the following citation, expressed by the same informant as the previous one, we return to refer to the perception of the relations in the recipient society influenced by a conception of domination, of the social relations understood as relations of power in which one is necessarily imposed and the other one submitted. The interesting fact is the different interpretation that is made from this perceived characteristic. So, while the Japanese immigrant focused on the implication of this conception of the social relations on the fact that the Mexican cannot recognize his own mistakes and apologize (which emphasizes the value of the self-criticism of the Japanese), in the case of the Spanish, which we are going to analyze shortly, the same characteristic perceived as general appears now as the reason of the chauvinism and social inequality (which emphasizes the value of equality of the Spanish). This means that the same perceived feature as generalized in the recipient society is reinterpreted and given new importance in the light of the particular cultural substrate.

The presence of the idea between the one that dominates and the one that surrenders, the dominion-submission relation, is very established in the society and it clashes with the idea that we all are equals, especially with the idea of "machismo". This exists in all the levels of the society, and it bothers me very much. Here there is a much more ambivalent perception between domain and submission.

Also in the area of the familiar relations, the Spaniard interviewed in Monterrey finds important differences with regard to Mexicans (though we believe that this only will turn into a problem of intercultural interaction when interethnic marriage occurs). In this respect, a Spanish informant, affirmed that "the Mexican family system is more traditional, it is patriarchal. There is a higher weight in the area of family. Any excuse is good to get the family together". On the other hand, adding a clear expression of the endogroupal favoritism about which Tajfel spoke (1981), another informant affirmed that the family structure in Mexico and Spain are different, because "here (in Mexico) it is a bit apparent (...) more complicated. In Spain it is more sincere, but here it is stronger as an institution (...) The extended family is just as important as the nuclear, in Spain it is only the nuclear one (...) This current structure of the family in Mexico existed in Spain approximately 40 years ago".

This last affirmation, which compares the current Mexico with a past Spain, we think must be emphasized, among other reasons, for the reiteration of this perception not only among the Spanish informants interviewed, but also by the Spanish immigrant in Monterrey that writes these words. Another Spanish immigrant, after declaring that there are not so many cultural shocks between Mexico and Spain, states that there is a difference in the evolution of the societies, so "the impression that I have (to live in Mexico) is like to be living in the Spain of the (seventies) ... because of the idea of male chauvinism, of the link with religion ... ". What is interesting about this widespread impression takes root in the fact that this historical continuity perceived implies a cultural continuity and, therefore, identity. That is, it seems that the Spanish, as national group, feels like Mexicans, just in a different moment of development. On the contrary, from the previously explanation we can deduce that between the identity of the Japanese and the identity of Mexicans there is a much more abrupt break.

3. Adaptative responses, according to the Berry's terminology, of the two analyzed communities

The result of everything expressed up to this point is a certain cultural immersion in the Monterrey society by the Spanish community that we do not find in the Japanese community. That is how the Spanish Consul expressed himself when he referred to the community that he represents: "I have the impression that many people have adapted easily and don't miss so much the life there (in Spain)". From a more personal perspective, another Spanish informant, who considers himself as completely immersed in the Monterrey society, affirmed that "one of my objectives when I arrived was to soak in the Mexican culture, integrate myself, blend in... not to create a subculture or a sort of

Spanish ghetto. Above all because, nowadays, my daily relation is much more with Mexicans than with people of another nationality"

We can see with a bit more of thoroughness the particular case of this informant, because we consider that he represents faithfully the average adaptative solution of the Spanish immigrant in Monterrey, a solution that we could observe repeatedly during extended fieldwork among the subgroups that conform the Spanish community in this city. In this way, the quote that we read next tries to exemplify an adaptative response of the Spanish based on *integration* (Berry, 1980), since we have been able to confirm that there is a Spanish community in which these immigrants coexist, socialize and reproduce their cultural guideline, but that this intracommunitarian integration does not represent an obstacle for their integration with Monterrey society, with whose members they also interact daily and of whom they acquire certain cultural guidelines (always according to their culture of origin). Nevertheless, Berry's types of sociocultural adaptation must be considered as weberian ideal types, for what we are not going to find pure cases. In this concrete case, we can see how a certain trend to the assimilation is deduced from integration.

(Many of my friends) are of Mexican origin, but some of their roots (on the part of their parents) are Spanish. Nevertheless, they are totally immersed in the society of Monterrey (...) I do not gather so much with Spanish people because my idea was to join to the Monterrey culture more than to generate my own space here (...) Though I continue keeping touch with other Spaniards who live in cities in Mexico, like Guadalajara and Mexico City (...) My contacts with the Spanish in Monterrey are few ... On Columbus Day I went and passed time with the all Spanish community in Monterrey ... but besides that they are very casual, shallow contacts.

The same informant, married to a Mexican woman and resident in Monterrey for more than five years, relates the important role that compatriots play in the beginning of his process of integration, who eventually lose their support role for the newcomer. In conclusion, he synthesizes how his process went from segregation, to assimilation, on to integration.

The first years it (the relation with compatriots) was important because there were six Spanish colleagues (at work) who were here like me, all in the professional area ... (Conviviality outside of work) existed, but everything arose from the labor aspect. At the beginning we got together every week or every weekend, gradually and immediately after that everyone was doing their life and their personal dimensions and each time we meet less.

Another of the Spanish immigrants, the Consul of this country, shows an adaptative process that we can also locate in general terms in the area of integration, but in this case with a higher trend towards segregation. Here we must consider the professional nature of the interviewee, which demands a proverbial national identification of the subject, just like in a temporary migration similar to the Japanese who come sent by their companies for limited periods of time. These are undoubtedly conditions that should contextualize his concrete adaptative sociocultural response, as well as the generalized response that he perceives between his compatriots. The citation is as follows:

In a personal way I have begun good relations with the people of Monterrey... but not a friendship in the strict sense of the word (...) The people here (of the Spanish community) comment that the "*regio*" invites you to his house less often, keeps more distance, gives you less trust and these type of things. They say that many of the Mexican friends that they have here, are not from Monterrey (...) for persons of the third group (Spaniards without a Mexican passport) it can prove to be a bit frustrating the much closed environment that they live in Monterrey.

In any case, we are far from being able to affirm that the Spanish community is segregated from Monterrey society, whereas in the Japanese case it is unquestionable that what marks the adjustment of the Japanese community is segregation. This is explained by the Honorary Consul of

Japan in Monterrey, of Mexican nationality, who affirms that " (the Japanese) don't join to the (Monterrey) community very much, they gather amongst themselves and many of them do not bring their family with them, they come alone. (...) it is not an active community and doesn't have a great interaction with the outside (...) The Japanese do not come to assimilate the culture ". This way, the

Consul portrays a completely hermetic community dedicated to work:

The Japanese are very reserved, I never meddle in their private life, with their social life ... I don't know their wives, if they have children or not. In spite of the fact that we meet frequently we are not friends (...) The community is very volatile ... they come and go away (...) Of the hundred percent of the time of these Japanese who are here in Monterrey, ninety per cent of the time must be spent at work and ten per cent with their family ... No social activities at all (...) There is a meeting (in the company DENSO) ... between them, they are approximately 30 but it is informal and when I have taken the ambassador to these meetings they tell me, very diplomatically, to wait them out, they don't want Mexicans.

This view is confirmed point by point by the Japanese anthropologist in Monterrey (who also is investigating his own community) when he affirms that between his compatriots:

There isn't a quest for relations with the recipient society. One (reason) is in the limited time of their contracts and another is that they don't speak Spanish ... and communication with Mexicans often is meddled by interpreters. So they remain in their very closed circle and in link with Japan (...) There is no participation due to the language, even in their labor activity sometimes an interpreter is needed (...) The time of their contracts is an obstacle for integration to the society and the language is another one, (because) the majority do not speak Spanish just English.

Finally, other one of our informants, in spite of not forming part of the majority group (that is, the immigrants sent by their companies, which are those who present an extreme degree of segregation), again shows us an image of disconnection and isolation towards the recipient society, now justified by the feeling that provoked by the many cultural shocks to which we referred above: " That's why I don't want to contact so many (local people in Monterrey), because they hurt me and tire me. So no "

Conclusion:

The principal conclusion that we can deduce from our work is the corroboration of our initial hypothesis, according to which the cultural distance, real and perceived, between the emitter society and the recipient society results to be an important explanatory factor of the degree of integration of the foreign immigrants. Nevertheless, here we have to distinguish clearly between the more characteristic aspects of the culture (we have concentrated on language and on religion) and the more subjective and dependent aspects on the context of comparison. Though all the cultural guidelines (law, values, beliefs ...) internalized determine clearly the fluency or the inflexibility of the relations with the members of the recipient society, the truth is that the individual shows, in the case of need, a capacity for adjustment that provokes a change in his intimate cultural constitution and in his way of relating to the "others"

Here we must emphasize this "in the case of need ", because the cultural distance is as determinant for the success or failure of the intercultural communication as the specific circumstances of the migration. This is clear when we concentrate on the Japanese community, whose members are mainly sent by a company from their country, with a very definite aim and with expiration date. These conditionings do not allow them to interact with the wider society where they are temporarily inserted and, which seems to us to be more important, do not allow them to learn the only indispensable cultural feature to initiate a process of acculturation: language. Though the ignorance of the language of the place of destination is clearly an insurmountable barrier for the adjustment and that invariably drives to the constitution of the "ghetto", it is not the same with another cultural feature that we have considered to be essential to any culture: religion. During the fieldwork between Japanese and Spanish, this has never been indicated as an obstacle or as a bridge to improve the intercultural

communication, though undoubtedly the forms of sociability expressed by each of the subjects are influenced indirectly by the values promoted by two religious traditions so distant.

In this respect, the cultural differences perceived and the experienced situations of intercultural conflict, undoubtedly represent obstacles for sociocultural integration, but this problem has never seemed to be insurmountable (as long as there is the desire of overcome it, a desire caused by the need to adapt). As an encompassing example we have the story of the process of acculturation experienced by the Japanese anthropologist who has been our key informant for this work. It must be remarked that his particular migratory circumstances (migration that we can categorize as "adventurous", because he doesn't not have support of any institution from his country) and his occupation, made his integration to the recipient society necessary and, certainly, that for it he had to learn the language. In this respect, our informant affirms that "what you need as anthropologist is to adapt ". Likewise, he explains that the Japanese sent by their companies preserve their Japanese traditions, whereas those who migrate in an independent way adapt to the guidelines of the new culture. The following quote condenses the process of acculturation of someone who decides to go freely through this process, someone who, in order to live and to be established in a new society, decides to sacrifice "the Japanese criterion" of evaluating and acting in his daily social life.

Look, when I came to Mexico as a tourist any inconvenience was welcome. In a certain way anthropologists have to be like masochists, like culturally shocking and disagreeable elements. I was like that. But when I started living in Mexico, starting in 98, I had a Mexican neighbor who was living alone, like me, and we were always helping each other. But often I was scolding him because he was younger than me and then ... That is also odd, why do I have to scold the younger one? ... So I was applying the Japanese way. But then I realized why I get angry all the time with him ... and also when I went to do paperwork or buy something and be in restaurant, all the time I was angry. And one day I thought: "I was not like this in Japan. I was very calm and was trying to be always nice and tolerant with the others, but lately I am intolerant and am annoyed and shouting at my neighbor and friend ". And then I thought it over: "I do not believe that Mexico is bad, or my friend is bad. Rather the problem is what I have inside", because I was always looking at people with a Japanese criterion. And when I realized this, I calmed down very much. Why do I get angry?, Why am I always comparing with what I can enjoy in Japan?: the service, the customer service, the peaceful form to establish friendship ... But I do not live in Japan, I live in Mexico, so I have to learn to adjust my criterion. From there, I tried to accept anything and then, before getting angry, to stop and think why I felt uncomfortable, with what he did or said to me. And it's that I interpreted these behaviors, these comments, with my Japanese criterion. But, how might I interpret it with the criterion that the Mexicans use? And so, step by step ... and nowadays the Japanese criterion is almost eliminated.

Besides serving us to conclude our work, also this testimony represents the opening of a new line of investigation: the reconstruction of the social identity of the immigrant from a non-communitarian but individual point of view. Though hitherto we have worked on a level of communitarian analysis, examining cultural features and situations of interethnic contact (of concrete individuals but understood as integral part of a human group) and distinguishing its influence in a way that acquires the adaptative solution of every community, the truth is that all this has clear repercussions on the personal identity of the immigrant. Thus, from comes forth the intention of approaching in upcoming works an analysis of the reconfiguration of the identity of the immigrant to a more subjective, more psychological level. Here it would be necessary to propose such investigative questions as: what is the influence of the cultural distance between the origin society of the immigrant and the recipient society and its particular process of identity reconstruction? How does the degree of adjustment of the immigrant to the recipient society influence in this process of identity reconstruction? How does the degree of adjustment of the immigrant to the recipient society influence in this process of identity reconstruction? Finally, another work that can remain here as a pending issue would constitute the construction of a scale of measurement of the cultural distance between societies that allows us to establish this magnitude in a more precise way.

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