

Nikkei Presence in Brazil: Integration and Assimilation

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Introduction

The identity of Japanese descendants in Brazil presents a complex combination of being Brazilian and being Japanese, with varied nuances and dimensions of influences of the two cultures. Defining this composition is not simple nor easy, for it bears influence of the two cultures and at the same time departs from them, making it difficult to establish a definite rule on the formation of identities.

The identity formed by this mixture of Brazilian and Japanese influences also results from individual experiences and reactions. It is also noticeable that there is a weakening of cultural heritage and Japanese values in successive generations of descendants in Brazil. However, this affirmation is also relative, for it is difficult to define given that Japanese culture itself changes; the cultural content brought by the immigrants in the period before the Second World War and transmitted in Brazil is different from the contemporary culture in many aspects.

Therefore, both culture and identity formation are dynamic elements. Stuart Hall, professor and founder of the Center for Contemporary Studies of the University of Birmingham, states that not only is the formation of identity variable, also the identity of one individual changes over time.

The subject takes on different identities in different moments, identities that are not unified around a coherent “self.” Inside us there are contradictory identities, pushing in different directions, on such a way that our identifications are being continually moved. . . . The wholly unified identity, complete, safe and coherent is a fantasy. (Hall, 2003, p. 13).

This reasoning helps to understand particularly the identity of post-modern individuals and it is a possibility for understanding why a Nikkei in Brazil can feel Japanese, but after a period living in Japan can find himself Brazilian. Or, even not going to Japan, the relation of the Nikkei population—composed of immigrants and Japanese descendants, regardless of the generation—with the Brazilian society is dynamic and leads to questions such as:

- a) Is there an assimilation process occurring? There are arguments in this direction based, for instance, in the fact of the reduction in the participation of Nikkei in Japanese organizations and cultural associations.
- b) How can one explain the complex dilemma between and within Nipponese-Brazilians, who do not acknowledge being identified simply as products of Japan’s diaspora, but also perceive themselves as distinct from the typical Brazilians? (Lesser, 2008, p. 179.c)

This essay will aim to reconstruct the process of Japan's emigration, showing its causes and factors that contributed to its orientation to Brazil in the beginning of the twentieth century and will discourse on the interaction of Japanese immigrants who came to the country and their descendants in the Brazilian society.

Historical Introduction to Immigration

Japan has passed through a long period of international isolation in which the country's relationships were restrict to commercial trades with the Netherlands on the port of Dejima, in Nagasaki. The country's internationalization process began to occur after 1853, when it was compelled, by attack threats of the U.S. military fleet commanded by Commodore Perry, to open up to international trade. This opening of ports provided opportunities of emigration to the Japanese, who began to seek better opportunities of economic realization abroad. This is so because in the isolation period of the Tokugawa shogunate the government did not allow its citizens to emigrate. There was departure only of some students who received special long term permissions, some political refugees and clandestine passengers in ships, totalizing despicable numbers compared to the exodus since the Meiji Restoration (Onozawa?, 2003, p. 117) which occurred in 1867.

With the Meiji Restoration, which put political power back in the hands of the Emperor, there were large internal changes and also changes in the Japanese external relations. The aim was to develop the country in the economic, social and technological areas. Internally, Japanese economy, which was basically agricultural during the Tokugawa era, passes through a process of industrialization, which was important to Japan's military strengthening and expansion and promoted a displacement of workmanship to the urban centers. The population passes through difficulties caused by the impoverishment of rural owners and of the urban population, which suffered with the unemployment. The development of the manufacturing industry created jobs, but their numbers were not enough to compensate the growing demand due to the population increase. The populations of rural areas, which represented around 80% of the employed total in Japan in 1880 (Nogueira, 1973, p. 18), migrated to the cities looking for new opportunities, accentuated the unbalance between the jobs supply and demand.

In the agricultural sector, the tributary reform implemented in 1873 started to demand money and not products anymore in the tributary payment, this turned the solvency more difficult to the population and made many tillers lose significant parts of their properties in the end of the nineteenth century. Between 1883 and 1990, 367 thousand properties were confiscated on the outcome of processes against tillers (Nogueira, 1973, p. 23).

Unemployment and poverty were aggravated by the population increase stimulated by Meiji nationalist government politics, which promoted the increase of the nativity tax in the country, under the slogan *fukoku kyōhei* (rich and militarily strong nation) (Onozawa, 2003, p. 117). In the period of the Tokugawa shogunate there was tolerance towards the practice of abortion, and even infanticide, to keep the balance between the population and resources available in the country, in

the Meiji era the increase in population started to be seen as something important, hence the government, in order to raise the population numbers, adopted measures such as hospital and medical organization, among other assistances (Nogueira, 1973, p. 20).

Aiming to try to reduce the social tensions in the country, Tokyo government proceeded to adopt a politics of reallocation to areas in the North of the country, such as Hokaido, Kuril and Sakhalin islands. However, the results were not satisfactory and emigration became a necessity, making governmental politics to transfer the population excess to foreign countries to be initialized (Onozawa, 2003, p. 117). Associated to this goal there was also the Japanese interest in expanding its international acting and creating conditions for the enlargement of the market to its products. This made Japan's concerns to be projected beyond regional Asian boundaries and led to the pursuit of an approximation with Brazil in the end of nineteenth century.

Japanese Emigration Politics

The nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century comprehended a period of large international migratory movement. Although estimations are not precise due to the incipient conditions of records in that period, there are records pointing that between 70 and 75 million people have left their countries and transferred to others (Leão, 1989, p. 7).

These migratory fluxes can be divided in two groups:

- a) The first started around 1840 and had the important contribution of countries such as Ireland, United Kingdom, Germany and France;
- b) The second, with the exodus of people that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century, involved countries such as Italy, Spain and Portugal, Russia and Poland, and Japan is also included. The greatest contribution was of European countries, which corresponded to approximately 85% of the total of emigrants in this period; the Asian contribution was significantly smaller.

Comparing the participation of countries between the mid-1880s and the mid-1930s, period of greatest intensity of movements, it is noted that the total number of Japanese emigrants was small, not reaching 500 thousand people. By contrast there were almost 3 million Germans, 10 million Italians, and 11 million British (Leão, 1989, p. 8).

In the period prior to the Meiji era, as it was mentioned, immigration was even more restricted. There are records stating that, in 1868, 148 people emigrated to Hawaii and 40 to Guam (Azuma, w/o date; Mofa, 1985). These immigrants went out illegally and, due to the treatments received by Japanese citizens in those two places—close to slave work—the government of Japan forbid new departures for almost two decades. Only from 1885, close to the middle of the Meiji era (1868–1912), emigration authorizations were officialized. Therefore, considering that the largest number of emigrants was until the Second World War, Japanese emigration history can be divided in three phases (Mcnamara & Coughlan):

- i) First, coincides with the Meiji era

- ii) Second, takes place in the Taishō era (1912–1926)
- iii) Third, starts with the the Shōwa era (1926–1989) and goes until the Second World War.

The first phase of official Japanese immigration was inaugurated with the departure of 945 people to Hawaii (Tigner, 1981, p. 458), the first great departure of people from the territory, who were employed to work in sugarcane plantations and sugar factories. The emigration to Hawaii was so intense that it reached 12,610 people in 1890 and ten years later, in 1900, when they already numbered 61, 111 (Onozawa, 2003, p. 116), Japanese immigrants represented approximately 40% of the total of Hawaiian population, which was 154 thousand people.¹ Until the end of the nineteenth century, the five main countries that received Japanese immigrants were Hawaii, United States, Canada, Australia and Mexico.

Japanese immigration has gained more notoriety since 1893, with the Colonization Society—formed by government officers, politicians and intellectuals. This institution, which was led by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Enomoto Takeaki, had the colonizing actions of the Western countries as model. In 1894, the Japanese government published the “Emigrant Protection Ordinance”—*Imin hogo kisoku*, which delegated functions of recruiting to the emigration companies, and in 1896, the “Emigrant Protection Law”—*Imin hogohō*—was decreed (Azuma). It regulated the activities of emigration companies and protected emigrants’ interests (Saito, 1961, p. 26). With these new measures, in 1898 there were already more than ten companies working with the purpose of leading emigrants to Hawaii.

One of the first projects of the Colonization Society was the establishment of an agricultural colony with 28 immigrants in Chiapas, Mexico, in 1897. Despite the failure of the colony, this initiative has marked the beginning of immigration to Latin America, and it was followed by another contact of work for 790 people in 1899 to Peru, and from those 91 were redirected to Bolivia (Azuma).

The second phase of immigration occurs in the Taishō era (1912–1926), period in which international resistances to the acceptance of Japanese already occurred. In USA, American citizens contested the entrance of these immigrants, accused of submitting themselves, many times, to extreme conditions and thus contributing to the reduction of salary rates. In a vicious cycle, the diminution of gains motivated the Japanese not to participate in the strikes to obtain extra gains, and this aggravated even more the discontentment of Americans (Nogueira, 1973, p. 33).

Resistance to Japanese immigration was present also in Mexico, Canada, Australia and South Africa (Tigner, 1981, p. 459). In Central America, Costa Rica had already imposed restrictions in 1896, under the argument of the yellow danger that threatened the jobs of local workers, a preoccupation that motivated similar measures in Guatemala in 1909. These actions forced the redirecting of the ship courses to South America, particularly to Peru and Brazil, for countries such as Paraguay and Colombia, among others (Nogueira, 1973, p. 34), had also restricted the entrance of the Japanese.

The third phase of Japanese immigration, which coincides with the Shōwa era (1926–1989), was the period with greater regularity in the fluxes of Japanese to Brazil. In the previous phase there

was some instability caused primarily by the interest of Japanese in entering the U.S.A. and by the irregularity of the government of São Paulo state support to the coming of new workers. But in the third phase, the direct involvement of Japanese government engendered a continuous and growing flux of Japanese immigrants to Brazil until mid-1930s. This process was interrupted by the Second World War, but it is resumed, in smaller scale, after the end of the Second World War, continuing until the 1970s.

Immigration to Brazil

Brazil, with the promulgation of the *Lei Áurea*² [Golden Law] on May 13, 1889, started to suffer a lack of workmanship in the tillage, motivating the realization of many immigration agreements with European countries, and particularly Italy provided a large quantity of workers to the coffee farms. In 1902, however, Italian government imposed restrictions to the coming of more immigrants to Brazil, which perhaps would not have had a great repercussion on the country, had not coffee tillage dynamics been retaken in 1903, leading again to the search for more workmanship.

Those facts contributed to the appearance of the opportunity for Japanese immigration. In reality, in 1894 there had been a first attempt to bring Japanese immigrants to Brazil, “when Kichisa-Imin Kaisha company, specialized in immigration, contacts Prado Jordão company, in São Paulo” (Rezende, 1991, p. 34). However, there was not yet an agreement between the two countries that could ground such an enterprise, despite the coming of Nemoto Shō as the emissary of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Brazil in 1894. In that year Nemoto visited several states, among them Bahia, Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, and São Paulo (Nakasumi & Yamashiro, 1992); his trip reflected growing interest in expanding Japanese relations beyond the Asian region. The emissary’s good impressions favored the development of closer contact between the two countries, and contributed to the signature, on October 5, 1895, of the Friendship, Trade and Navigation Treaty to take place in Paris, formalizing the beginning of Brazil-Japan relations.

Since then, Nipponese-Brazilian relations have diversified and broadened. Started by the migratory fluxes, this history has not occurred without difficulties. In 1901, there was another immigration attempt, but even counting with the participation of Brazil’s Ministry of Foreign Relations, reflecting the resistance to the Japanese immigration, no success was obtained. Manuel Oliveira Lima, Plenipotentiary Minister of Brazil in Japan, quoted by Valdemar Carneiro Leão (1990, p. 22), states that “[Japanese] immigration seems to me little desirable both for the danger it offers of a greater mixture of inferior races in our population and for the lack of agricultural experiments with modern processes and utensils among the rural population of those Asian countries.” This feeling expressed by Oliveira Lima and the coffee crisis in Brazil in that period added to the fact of Japan having focused immigration initially to Mexico and Peru, postponing the coming of Japanese to the country.

On the Japanese side, however, the report written in June 1905 by Suguimura Fukashi, Plenipotentiary Minister in Brazil, demonstrated optimism towards a Japanese immigration to Brazil. He assessed as positive the Italian immigration to the country and believed that the interruption of Italian immigration would make Brazilians to receive the Japanese with open arms. In his report he

pointed that there would be difficulties, but they would be overcome.

Despite the statements that the Japanese would not adapt himself to the soil and language conditions, I have as example that the Italian immigrants who arrived here have gone through a thousand difficulties and situations of extreme poverty, and nevertheless they have not failed. Instead, many of them are already landowners and can hold their families. (Koyama, 1949 in Rezende, 1991, p. 19)

In the beginning of twentieth century, economic incentives to start the Nipponese immigration to the country strengthened. As already mentioned, on the Brazilian side the dynamics of coffee tillage were retaken in 1903, raising demand for workmanship, and on the Japanese side, economic difficulties deriving from Russian-Japanese War in 1904–1905 made concerns with emigration to gain impulse.

Itamaraty [Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations] saw great risks to the country, fearing to face difficulties similar to the USA with the Japanese immigration, but Carlos Botelho, São Paulo state Secretary of Agriculture, more concerned with the workmanship supply to the coffee tillage, sent in April 1908 a document to Brazil's representative in Tokyo, in order to appease the diplomats. Botelho stated that the use of workmanship did not mean a Japanese colonization (Leão, 1989, p. 27).

As economic factor prevailed, on June 18, 1908, the ship *Kasato Maru* arrived in Santos port bringing on board 781 people, setting the beginning of Japanese immigration to the country. It was also the beginning of the adaptation period between the peoples of the two nations, with tensions caused, among other factors, by the shock between two very diverse cultures and by the immigrants' delusions regarding economic gains. (Leão, 1989, p. 28).

Japanese Immigrants' Problems in Brazil

The majority of Japanese immigrants, in fact almost the totality, who arrived in Brazil in the period before the Second World War, had the expectation to save money and return to Japan. Hence, there was the preoccupation not only of preserving their cultural roots, but also of forming the Japanese in Brazilian lands. With this purpose they made efforts to build schools where they would realize the transmission of their country of origin's language and culture. This determination, however, strengthened, sometimes, the suspicion feelings existing in the society which accepted them. In addition, in the 1930s, Brazilian nationalism also weighed against a greater integration of the Nikkei in the Brazilian society (Miyao, 2002, p. 24). And this article aims to make an assessment of the insertion of immigrants and descendants in the Brazilian society through social and economic perspectives.

a) Social perspective

Insertion and adaptation of Japanese immigrants in Brazil were benefited by the fact of they having come in family—a requirement made by the government of São Paulo state, which under-

stood that this way there would be lesser risk of escapes (Rezende, 1991, p. 13). This characteristic was decisive to the “evolution of the Japanese group, assuring: normal population growth; continuity of generations and relative family life stability; culture transmission due to the presence of intermediary generation” (Saito, 1980, p. 82), all this helping in the preservation of Japanese culture in Brazil.

According to the 1920 census, the Japanese represented 0.09% of the total Brazilian population (30.1 million inhabitants). In the following years, there could have occurred a reduction in the immigration flux due to the suspension of subsidies provided by São Paulo state government. However, an acceleration is noticed, this act derived from the subventions to the company Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushiki Kaisha (KKKK) by the Japanese parliament, in 1921, and from the approval of 220 thousand yens by Japan’s Department of Interior Businesses, in 1923, to support the campaign of incentive of immigration to Brazil (Leão, 1989, p. 30).

These actions, although on one hand they favored the conservation of Japanese culture, generated an environment of low integration in Brazilian society and maintained difficulties of communication, contributing to the strong resistance to the Japanese. This fact has lasted, generally, until the first half of the twentieth century. In 1923, the speech of Fidélis Reis, Minas Gerais state congressman, reflected this resistance:

This immigration represents a phase, a stage of Japanese expansionism. Japanese expansionism, which Mussolini has called “Japan’s dynamic imperialism,” follows an invariable order—infiltration, influence sphere, absorption; or if you prefer, invasion, occupation. . . . (Leão, 1989, p. 320).

With the establishment of the Estado Novo³ [New State], difficulties to foreigners in Brazil are broadened.

Through a number of decrees, Federal Government has effected since 1938 the nationalization campaign, which determined that use of the Portuguese language was obligatory [even] in ethnic schools, in public activities, such as commerce and religious services. . . . Particularly regarding the Japanese community, these determinations led to the closing of their schools and their press agencies. (Takeuchi, 2008, p. 39).

The Second World War reduced even more the possibilities of Japanese cultural manifestations.

Those facts demonstrate that there has been an insertion of Japanese workers in Brazilian society, but their integration was deficient and there was no assimilation until the first half of twentieth century. Instead, the predominance was of preoccupation with Brazilian society’s reactions to the Japanese cultural manifestations. According to Pereira (2004, p. 513), “in the beginning, although there were legal warranties to religious freedom in Brazil, propagation of Nipponese religions was inhibited by Japanese authorities—intending to avoid with it that the immigrant came to be victim of repudiation and hostility—and by the Brazilian environment under Catholic hegemony.”

b) Economic perspective

The immigrant's economic situation was not satisfactory from the beginning, coming to the point of Ryu Mizuno, founder of Koukoku Shokumin Gaisha company (Company of Imperial Emigration) which brought the first Japanese to Brazil in the Kasato Maru, facing a climate of revolt among the immigrants, who were armed with bamboo spears, hoes and sickles (Rezende, 1991, p. 64). Around two months after the arrival in the country, the Japanese immigrants in Brazil presented the following preoccupations:

- 1st. They arrived in Brazil when half of the coffee harvest had already been done. . . . also the gain was not enough to fulfill the family needs, much less to pay the loans made in Japan, on very high interests, to be able to immigrate.
- 2nd. Difficulties of adaptation to the language, climate and culinary. . . .
- 3rd. The near-slavery system existing in the majority of the farms . . . waking them up at 4 in the morning with the bell beating. The work extended until sunset. . . .
- 4th. The choice of immigrants. Actually not everyone of them were agriculturists . . . not used to the country work. (Rezende, 1991, p. 64)

The dreams of success were far from the reality lived by the immigrants, in August 1908 there were already people who came in the first group of the Kasato Maru who wanted to leave Brazil. In face of this situation, the immigration initiative was assessed as a failure and the government of São Paulo, which had financed the journey, decided to reduce the number of immigrants from 1000 to 650 per year (Rezende, 1991, p. 66).

As the years went by, noticing that the economic success would not be reached, the immigrants' entrepreneurship actions started with the acquisition of lands in the interior of São Paulo state, their aim was to become independent agriculturists (Sakurai, 2007, p. 247). The acquisition opportunity arrives with the enlargement of the railroad through virgin lands, which needed to be deforested to allow the plantation of coffee. These new localities had very low prices due to the necessity of preparation and also because they were still occupied by Indians.

A second moment of expansion of purchasing of lands by Japanese immigrants occurred after the 1929 crisis, which drove down the international price of coffee and led many farmers to sell off part of their properties. By Rezende's (1991, p. 68) account, two years after landing in Brazil some immigrants already lived in the urban zone and were working as waiters, butlers and cooks, and had gained a reputation for being honest, serious, and reliable about performing their obligations, and above all for having education and culture. These had not only found a new economic insertion but also had incorporated some Brazilian habits, for instance, they already consumed coffee and fatter foods and chose to sleep in beds.

From economic successes in agriculture, the enterprises started to diversify in the cities, seeking to broaden the economic gains through commerce. This process is not immediate, many times they required a transition period. "There is alternation of the agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, the first always serving as a support for the second. They resign themselves to entering into tillage leases, and there is always a lack of capital and a necessity for saving" (Cardoso, 1998,

p. 61). Many initiatives in non-agricultural sectors sought to preserve some relation with the experience obtained in the rural area.

At first, they dedicated themselves to activities that were closely connected to agriculture: cereal purchasing, rural property brokerage, grocery stores, taverns and boarding houses, agricultural implements workshops. Among the successful, some managed to assemble machines for processing rice, coffee, cotton and other products. (Saito, 1980, p. 86).

From the 1930s, the agricultural production of Japanese immigrants began to gain visibility. There is the introduction of alternative products to coffee, such as rice and potato to be sold in the cities, which with the development of Brazilian economy were in expansion. Another product that reached notoriety in this period was cotton, easily and quickly cultivated, which was supplied to the Paulista⁴ textile companies (Sakurai, 2007, p. 248). In that decade, the relative importance of the Nikkei population in agriculture was already considerable (Leão, 1989, p. 58), and was not well seen by the Brazilians. Contributing to this vision, for instance, was the creation of the already mentioned infrastructures, which fed the certainties that there would be an imperialist plan of Japan to occupy the Brazilian territory (Takeuchi, 2008, p. 42).

Table 1: Participation of the Production of Immigrants and Their Descendants in Total Production, São Paulo state - 1931–1932 crop

Products	Participation %	Products	Participation %
Tea	75.0	Bananas	11.3
Vegetables	70.0	Rice	8.0
Silkworm cocoons	57.0	Coffee	5.0
Cotton	46.4	Beans	4.6
Potatoes	14.0	Corn	4.0

Source: MAURETTE, Fernand. “Alguns aspectos sociais do desenvolvimento atual e futuro da economia brasileira” [Some Social Aspects of Present and Future Development of Brazilian Economy]. *Revista Brasileira de Imigração e Colonização*, 9(1), Mar/1948; pp. 47–89. (In: LEÃO, Valdemar Carneiro. *A crise da imigração japonesa no Brasil (1930–1940): contornos diplomáticos* [The Crisis of Japanese Immigration in Brazil (1930–1940): Diplomatic Contours]. Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 1989).

The period of restrictions against Japanese immigration lasts until the end of the 1940s, but already in the first years of the 1950s the bilateral tensions reduce significantly, Brazil-Japan relations are retaken and publications in Japanese were allowed to be resumed (Saito, 1980, p. 86).

Changes after the Second World War

After the Second World War, the image of Japanese immigrants made by Brazilians has suffered important changes, and the new standard of relationship between the two countries is among the factors which may have contributed to that. Until the beginning of the 1950s, per capita income

in Japan was lower than US\$180, while in Brazil it was already over US\$250 (Yokota, 1996, p. 30), motivating retaking immigration to Brazil. However, in the 1950s, Japanese direct foreign investment (IDE—*investimentos diretos estrangeiros*) fluxes to the country also started, having as a great mark of this period the Minas Gerais Steel Works (USIMINAS—Usina Siderúrgica de Minas Gerais).

Economic relations between the two countries accelerated after the Second World War. In Brazil, the presence of Japanese capital “until 1955 was of only six companies, in the five-year period between 1956 to 1960 it raised to thirty-five companies. Representative cases were textile companies such as Tōyōbō Co. Ltd., Kanebō Co. Ltd., and others such as shipyard Ishikawajima, Toyota Motor Corp., Yanmar Diesel Engine Co. Ltd., Howa Machinery, NGK Spark Plug Co. Ltd” (Horisaka, 1997, p. 75). These investments converged with Brazil’s industrialization concerns.

Two other facts that seem to have influenced the new image of the Nikkei in Brazil were:

- a) The United States changing their relation with Japan after the Second World War, particularly from the moment that the communist forces, led by Mao Tse Tung, started to gain political space in China;
- b) The fast recovery of Japanese economy, in that same period, generated admiration in the Brazilians and greater acceptance of Japanese cultural influences.c)

An example of this greater receptivity was the dissemination of Japanese religion in the country. Paiva (2005) notes that Seicho-No-Ie arrived in Brazil around 1950 and Perfect Liberty in 1957, and Gonçalves (2008, p. 2) reports that the Church of World Messianity “was introduced in 1955 through the work of missionaries Minoru Nakahashi and Nobuhiko Shoda.”

Table 2: List of Names Honored by Exame Magazine

Person/Family	Company	Activity	Foundation
Chieko Aoki	Blue Tree Hotels	Hotels	1992
Family Kitano	Yoki Alimentos	Food Industry	1960
Family Kurita	Hikari	Food Industry	1965
Family Maeda	Grupo Maeda	Agribusiness	1932
Family Nakaya	Sakura Nakaya Alim.	Food Industry	1940
Family Sasazaki	Sasazaki	Framing ⁶ Industry	1943
Family Takaoka	Y. Takaoka Empreend.	Civil Construction	1951
Hideaki Iijima	Soho Hair International	Beauty Salon	1982
Ruy Ohtake	Ruy Ohtake Arquit. e Urbanismo ⁷	Architecture Office	1960
Satoshi Yokota	Exec. Vice-president Embraer	Aircraft Industry	1970
Shunji Nishimura	Jacto	Equipment Industry	1948

Source: “Exame homenageia empresários nipo-brasileiros” [Exame Pays Homage to Nipponese-Brazilian Businessmen]. Available at: <<http://japao100.abril.com.br/arquivo/exame-homenageia-empresarios-nipo->

brasileiros/>. Accessed on June 5, 2008. Author's elaboration.

In addition to the influx of Japanese direct foreign investment (IDE) and the recovery of the Japanese economy, "Japanese products, supposedly better than those of national fabrication, caused many Brazilians to associate this same quality with the Nipponese-Brazilians" (Lesser, 2008, p. 50). This contributed to their gaining of a positive perception. The improvement of the environment for the Nikkei in Brazil coincided with the consolidation of some important economic enterprises, several examples of which were presented in the work of Deliberador (2000). It was marked also by recognition of successful entrepreneurs of Japanese descent who were honored on July 4, 2008, by Revista Exame.⁵ It should be noted that, with the exception of Grupo Maeda (Maeda Group) and of businessman Itimura, all the others present a history initiated from the 1940s on.

Final Considerations

As can be noticed throughout this essay, at the beginning of Japanese immigration to Brazil, neither the immigrants nor the Brazilians thought of integration. The first immigrants planned to return to the land of the "Rising Sun," while Brazilians of European and other non-Asian descent feared the inclusion of Japanese in the heart of Brazilian society, worried about problems that could incur from that attempt due to cultural differences and in some instances even fearful of a Japanese invasion. However, as time passes, both perspectives change leading to the differentiated insertion.

In the immigrants' case, the instability in international relations marked by the two World Wars caused the plans of return to Japan to be aborted and the odyssey of Japanese immigration in Brazil to take new courses. Instead of aiming to return to the country of origin, they started to seek adaptation to Brazilian society. In the case of Brazil, the new relationship between Tokyo and Washington and Japanese economic development brought about change in the standard of relationship in the post-World War II era.

Hence, there was a change in the Brazilian environment to the Nikkei, who, seeking professional qualifications, passed examinations to occupy 10% of the places in the universities in the 1960–1970 period, despite representing only 2% of São Paulo state population. This larger presence in higher education led to a participation in some professions, greater than the representation in the population. For instance, in the 1970s they already represented 11.8% of the professionals in the chemistry sector, 9% in the economic sector and 8% in the odontological sector. By 1977, around 5% of all São Paulo academic professors were of Japanese ascendancy. There was also an important social mobility, which can be understood as corollary to the educational formation. According to the 1988 IBGE's PNAD report, Asian-descended Brazilians (mainly Japanese descendants) were situated at the top of the social pyramid. With an income "around 76% greater than European-descended Brazilians and 4.3 times greater than African-descended Brazilians" (Shoji, 2002, p. 62).⁸

Integration of the Nikkei in Brazilian society also comprehends politics, passing to ascend to public offices. Some are: Fábio Riodo Yassuda, entitled Minister of Industry and Commerce in 1969; Shigueo Watanabe, entitled for the National Research Council in 1971; Shigueaki Ueki, who was Minister of Mines and Energy (1974–1979) and President of Petrobrás; recently Brazil had Luis Gushiken as Minister of Government and Management Communication (2003–2005). Those

are some examples, but the number of Nikkei politicians in Brazil is already large, occupying different posts in all the country. These data show that there is a greater integration of the Nikkei in Brazil, including an image very distant from what it was in the beginning of the immigration history. A fact which corroborates with this interpretation is that Semp Toshiba company in the 1990s used the sentence “Our Japanese are more creative than the others’ Japanese.” According to José Eustachio, director-partner of Talent, the company that created this slogan, the sentence “not only made Semp Toshiba stand out in relation to its competitors, but also created a sub-segment in the TV set category: that of Japanese brands” (Horvath, 2008).

This advertisement shows that from the end of the twentieth century there is a much more positive insertion of the Nikkei in Brazil than in the beginning of the century, however, the fact of using the reference “our Japanese” corroborates with Lesser’s (2008) interpretation that there are two seemingly contradictory movements, the Nikkei seeking to show its Brazilian character, while the Brazilian society seeks to reinforce its Nipponese character. In 2008, the media made a large coverage over the year about the centennial of Japanese immigration in Brazil. And it is interesting to note that what regards the Nikkei as being “Japanese” was mainly highlighted, even though he was born and grown in Brazil.

Therefore, it can be concluded that there have been many changes over the century of Japanese immigration in Brazil, but the debate on identity and the interaction between the two cultures, Japanese and Brazilian, is still a fruitful theme.

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NOTES

- 1 Hawaiian Historical Society. Censuses. Available at: <<http://hawaiianhistory.org/moments/censuses.html>>. Accessed on Oct. 10, 2008. U.S. President McKinley signed the resolution of annexation of Hawaii on July 7, 1898.
- 2 Abolition of slavery [translator’s note]. The year 1889 was important to Japan due to the promulgation of its Meiji Constitution.
- 3 Authoritarian government of President Getúlio Vargas (1937–1945) [translator’s note].
- 4 “Paulista” here refers to São Paulo state [translator’s note].
- 5 Influential Brazilian economic magazine [translator’s note].
- 6 Sashes, windows and doors [translator’s note].
- 7 Architecture and city planning [translator’s note].
- 8 IBGE: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics], a government agency responsible for statistical, geographic, cartographic, geodetic and environmental information in Brazil. Source: Wikipedia. Available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazilian_Institute_of_Geography_and_Statistics>. Accessed on: Jan. 23, 2009 [translator’s note].