

Cultural Contributions of Brazilians in Japan and Japanese in Brazil through Informal Education and Leisure

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Introduction

The present chapter is based on my doctoral study entitled “Leisure, informal education and cultural aspects of the Brazilian migrant who lives in Japan for a while” and subtitled “Ethnical-cultural and leisure aspects dialogue between Brazilians in Japan and Japanese in Brazil.” Both positive and negative impacts were noted, impacts affecting cultural contributions in both Brazil and Japan. The set of the elements such as habits, cultural values, diet, spare time, language and speech, among other things, are reformatting cultural features of both countries through the means of informal education.

Initially, concepts of leisure and informal education are presented, working on the sub-themes such as cultural impression, habits, language and speech, as a cultural dialogue between Brazilians in Japan and Japanese in Brazil. Then social relationships and the adoption of Brazilianism by the Japanese are discussed. Finally some conclusions were elaborated.

Conceptualization

Leisure encompasses activities which lead to entertainment, relaxation as well as a way of learning how to improve one’s personality, according to Dumazedier (1972, 1976). In addition to contributing to friendship and/or social relationships, self-fulfillment and happiness, these activities lead to a physical and psychological well-being, to the satisfaction of individual needs, supposedly *salutary or beneficial*, which do not cause stress. Accordingly, *leisure must be developed in the available spare time, spontaneously, without pressure or any type of coercion, in the chosen space.*

Regarding the **informal education**, it is learning which takes place spontaneously and naturally, through family education and/or in the core of a community and/or another setting in which the learner is part of. Thus it occurs throughout one’s personal and social life, by means of one’s life style choices. Through informal education, customs, languages and rites of the environment in which one lives are transmitted.

What were the cultural impressions of migrants and immigrants?

Cultural Impressions

The first Japanese immigrants to Brazil a century ago were considered “of difficult assimilation by both authorities and Brazilian press” as well as by the people on the whole, since they were “closely attached to their language, habits and customs given their limited capacity of assimilation”

(Nogueira, 1984:150).

The Japanese living in Brazil at the beginning of the immigration process, isolated in their rural settlements and confined with their peers, kept their customs and values frozen in time. And even after the formation of associations that were initially limited to Japanese people, they were criticized for constituting a social ghetto, through the use of language, patterns of behavior and particular symbols, which repelled them from other ethnic groups, according to Vieira (1973:165).

Initially this situation, as well as problems in learning the language, social customs and habits of Brazil, caused difficulties in integrating Japanese and Brazilians. On the other hand, the immigrants managed to preserve several Japanese traditions, values and knowledge for years in an alien country to their origin.

However, the Brazilians in Japan in the past two decades have established direct contact with the Japanese people both at work and in their daily routine, living the country culture as soon as they have arrived, usually in urban zones, having to learn the language, social customs and habits.

It has been noted that the Japanese people do not look with kindly eyes upon the Brazilian migrants who move to Japan to make a living; they forget that the first fellow citizen immigrants went to Brazil at a hard time in Japan, and also faced a lot of difficulties. The emigrants of a hundred years ago founded Japanese schools in order to prepare their children to return to Japan, as the Brazilians are doing in Japan today through the foundation of Brazilian schools and the maintenance of their value standards hoping to return to Brazil.

According to Handa (1973: 400), the cultural shock experienced by the first immigrants was so strong that they had to adapt the aesthetic difficulties to their lives, since they had to live in houses without *tatami*, substitute regular Western clothing for *kimono* and forks for *hashi*, and drink coffee instead of tea.

In order to demonstrate a culture differential an interview with a Brazilian who observed a Japanese father meeting his daughter at the airport was taken as an example. The observer found it strange that the attitudes of father and daughter were so formal, since Brazilians express their feelings through laughter, hugs, joy and even tears when they meet their loved ones. The Japanese instead, are reserved, polite and do not express their feelings in the presence of other people, leaving an impression of coldness.

Hence, there are particular cultural impressions between Brazilians and Japanese which need to be recognized.

Customs

It has been verified that part of the Brazilian subjects in Japan had previous knowledge of customs and values learned from parents, relatives and/or community he or she had belonged to or attended. Thus, instructions, guidance and values learned through informal education, internalized by people, facilitated comprehension and appropriation of some social rules accepted and welcome in the Japanese society. Returning to Brazil, some Brazilians began to criticize cultural aspects of their origin, as if they were Japanese, since they started to see, accept and practice some customs of that people.

Cultural Values. They learned to talk in order to resolve problems and to reciprocate, when necessary, in the Brazilian manner, simply and spontaneously. Some of them said that they had been raised strictly, since childhood, acquiring some customs such as the ancient Japanese education, under the motto “*meiwaku o kakeruna,*” as part of their lives.

Some of them pointed out values they had learned in Japan, such as:

- Group cooperation and favor return.
- Change of customs and values.
- Change of language and speech.
- Respect to schedules and to the strict hierarchy between seniors and juniors.
- Respect and care for the elderly.

Nevertheless, the Japanese immigrants presented some peculiar cultural characteristics as they were “within the ambit of a completely different society in terms of culture and economy,” having only their family and home as a reference. This situation was reflected in the “wish to keep the family, which is their unique and exclusive world, under strict control.” And through the Japanese teaching, they tried to set the communication basis of their values and customs with their peers, according to Tsukamoto (1973: 26–27). However, it has been noted that the Japanese language in Brazil did not follow the dynamics of the Japanese language in Japan.

The Japanese parents in Brazil had a strategic position of authority over their children, expressed in terms of a debt, entitled *on*, in which children are the debtors and strive to return the debt to their seniors for all their lives, according to Cardoso (1995:105–106). Thus, loyalty should always be present, implying in returning important favors.

That explains the reason of hierarchical respect in family, companies, and other institutions relationships, as well as the loyalty a subordinate must have regarding to the company. Accordingly, senior and juniors relationship is crucial for the Japanese society, since the juniors have an everlasting debt to their seniors, who similarly must watch and care for them. All these categories of respect, hierarchy and procedures make the country full of formal rules for the migrants.

Many of these customs, habits and attitudes were transmitted from the Japanese immigrants to their children through informal education.

Diet. With regard to diet, both Brazilians in Japan and Japanese people in Brazil had difficulties. The first Japanese lacked soya-based products, the Japanese rice with no salt and beans for dessert. Their food was lighter comparing to the Brazilian cuisine, a tropical country (warm most of the year), and they had come to work hard which justifies Brazilians’ saltier and heavier food. Thus, a number of the first immigrants who suffered from gastrointestinal and dermatological diseases due to the fact their diet was improper for the climate, for the type of work and because they could not adapt to the Brazilian cuisine, since they did not eat neither as Brazilians nor as Japanese.

However, most of Brazilians went to Japan to work in urban areas, having more facility to obtain a variety of ingredients, pre-cooked food or even ready cooked meals, but they did feel the differential impacts on their diet, trying to solve it as fast as they could by means of importing several products from Brazil.

This situation shows that the physical experiences one lives are imprinted on one's memory, such as the gustatory, savor and sensory learning, in addition to the learned cultural values which are not forgotten. It also explains the existence and resistance of the district of Liberdade in São Paulo, where the urban establishment of Japanese immigrants started, neighborhood which reminds them of their cultural roots as if they could always return to their hometown.

The first Japanese immigrants in Brazil tried to adapt the Brazilian beans to make dessert, as they were used to eat in Japan, even though of a different species. Conversely, Brazilians in Japan tried to adapt the specific beans for dessert to make the beans broth as it is made in Brazil, to have it with rice. One of them, for instance, made it in the *denki-gama*, because he did not find a pressure cooker in Japan.

As Nogueira states (1984:158), the Japanese immigrant's diet in Brazil, in the first phase, was mostly composed of local ingredients, nonetheless, from 1918 on, he manages to make some Japanese dishes as a consequence of the enhancement of his financial situation, as well as the industrialization of Japanese products. It was only after 1925, in the third phase, that the diet "is greatly enriched due to the duality of both Brazilian and Japanese ingredients in the meals."

And amongst the adaptations, the great discovery of the Japanese immigrants in Brazil was to use cornmeal as a substitute for rice bran, called *nuka miso*, to prepare *tsukemono* or Japanese pickles, whose receipt is kept to date, due to the unpleasant smell of the original *nuka miso* (Handa, 1987: 542).

Concerning to families of Nikkeis (Japanese descendants) in Brazil, who had already got used to the meal, as the time passed by, they started to prepare a "double diet standard: lunch in the Brazilian manner and, whenever it was possible, dinner in the Japanese manner." They combined white rice, beans, steak, salad or *tsukemono*, and sometimes, *misoshiru* for dinner. Many immigrants were not pleased if they did not taste a little white rice, after the western meal, as *ochazuke* or white rice moistened with green tea, according to Handa (1987: 538).

As for the Brazilians in Japan, beans, coffee, vegetables, such as chayote, zucchini, kale, beetroot, etc, started being available at groceries, even though some fruits such as *jaboticaba* (round blue-black pulpy Brazilian fruit) were not part of the imported products to Japan, since as a Brazilian interviewee missed that fruit. They order by telephone and receive the product in two or three days. Since 1988, with the intensification of Brazilians going to Japan, more benefits such as supermarkets, stores, CD and video rent shops, dance clubs, etc. appear in districts where a large number of Brazilians live.

Amongst the most popular products and ready cooked meals for purchase or which they missed, firstly was the beans (more than half of the interviewees), some of them even mentioned *feijoada* (typical dish made of black beans and pork), *coxinha* (chicken croquettes) and *pastel* (fried turnovers). They also buy products such as manioc meal, Brazilian rice, vinegar, Italian porridge, wheat flour, corn starch, Brazilian curry, condensed milk, industrialized Brazilian snacks, Brazilian noodles, whipped cream, spaghetti, jerked meat and Brazilian sweets more easily. In short, they have access to a variety of food. Many of the products mentioned above have a similar one in the Japanese market, although Brazilians prefer to buy imported products from Brazil.

Some of the interviewees said they used to buy coffee powder to have a homemade coffee,

for the Japanese coffee is watery and it is prepared differently. They also look for the tomato sauce under the brand name “Pomarola” because of its flavor, since the Japanese ones are usually sweet-ish. Some of them also said they missed a traditional Brazilian homemade dish composed of rice, beans, potatoes and an onion-flavored steak.

The Brazilians said they used to buy imported meat from Brazil in Brazilian butchers, as the cut is different from the Japanese ones, especially to make barbecue. But this situation is leading Brazilians to develop illnesses of our century, since they have been diagnosed with high cholesterol and obesity problems, according to the researcher Schwingel.

Food staples and other items listed by the migrants no longer mean impediment neither to Japanese living in Brazil nor to Brazilians living in Japan.

Some dishes of the Brazilian cuisine are now made of adapted Japanese ingredients, reinvented and adopted. Thus, the dough for *gyōza* filled with ingredients and fried as if it was *pastel* in the Brazilian manner. They used to make pizza, in the frying pan, on the gas stove, as there was not an oven, by adding tomato sauce and melted cheese on the top. They substituted dried cod fish for smoked salmon to make “cod fish pie.” They used to make cake using the Brazilian wheat flour, since the Japanese one was different. So, they were able to make cakes, such as nuts and the like, in a micro-oven, to sell them in pieces to their Japanese co-workers who used to buy them because they tasted different.

As for the Brazilians’ favorite dishes in Japan were *onigiri* and *rāmen*, but some of them found it more practical to have the cup-noodles. They also enjoyed curry rice, *nikuman*, *sushi*, *udon* and *sashimi*. The latter, often made of raw fish, became appreciated by Brazilians. The *misoshiru*, soup made of soya, typical Japanese food, served with white rice, has been adopted by the Brazilians as if it was rice and beans, since some of them could not eat the *natto*, also made of soya, but fermented.

Therefore, Japanese dishes were included, and also Brazilian recipes were introduced in Japan, in an attempt to soften the impacts of the new life.

Leisure in the Free Time. Many of them used to go out when it was possible, while others had a lot of fun, participating in the picnics promoted by their bosses on weekends and also going camping. They used to go out with Brazilian colleagues and stay close to where they worked; just once in a while they would go to the large urban centers in order to know them. Some of them used to travel with those who had a car, on day-offs and when they were able to.

Others used to participate in social activities such as meeting friends at a bar or going downtown in the evening, asking for information. Sometimes they would go to dance clubs, listen to music, and go to karaoke clubs to sing or talk to the locals, trying to integrate themselves into the Japanese’ leisure.

However, some of them used to spend their free time to improve the Japanese language in Japanese schools for foreigners, promoted by Japanese people.

All those practices and activities have mainly aimed “to favor friendship,” which is verified in the content of the interviews, revealing a steady and spontaneous contact with Brazilian colleagues and friends, or supported by events promoted by the companies. This situation indirectly denotes

the social function and social capital formation, with the enlargement of information exchanging and the networking toward a possible better job.

On the other hand, the Japanese immigrants who used to live in the Brazilian rural area, had as a pleasant activity to go the Liberdade district, in order to meet 'other Japanese faces' and speak Japanese, since those were moments of identity with people experiencing similar situations. Tasting Japanese food in restaurants, and once in a while going to the movies to watch an easy film to understand, of *good and bad guys*, even to those who had difficulties to understand Portuguese; all of these were considered pleasant activities. On the Emperor's birthday, parties were organized to honor him, including *sumō* championship, theater performances, and food and beverage. New Year's Day was celebrated as a day-off, after a hardworking year, and also the June party, celebrated as a winter party. Just a long time later, some of them started to practice *ikebana* and the tea ceremony.

On Saturday nights or Sunday afternoons, the senior Japanese immigrants (*senpai*) and juniors (*kōhai*) used to get together to talk, boast, and complain about their lives, having delicacies such as beans cooked with sugar, sweet coffee and *pinga* (sugar cane rum) with dried fish desalted in hot coals. They introduced the *furo* or *ofuro* bath, improvised in empty barrels, where they could wash the exhaustion of a whole day as well as physical hygiene. Some of them who were more inspired used to write poems, in *tanka*, expressing their feelings towards life.

The immigrants also formed associations for several purposes, such as offer Japanese classes in order to prepare their children to return to Japan, and to have a venue to discuss their social problems. Some of these associations in the long run became cultural and entertainment locations, where people could organize sports festivals (*undōkai*), get-togethers and wedding parties, sports such as *sumō*, baseball and oratory sessions; in the *seinen-kai*, or youth associations, they could exchange ideas with their peers and read Japanese comics (*manga*).

In Japan, on July 2006 two Brazilian initiatives were announced: a Brazilian Cinema display and a Magic Show. These are examples of the Brazilian culture and some children had the chance to see films in Portuguese, experiencing a new situation. They could also enjoy "The Oriental Magic Show" of Brazil along with the Japanese, which was presented in a few Japanese cities, having a wider audience of Brazilians.

These examples show that both Brazilians in Japan and Japanese in Brazil organize their lives between work and leisure, making changes in the local setting of destination and manage the daily stress.

Language and Speech

Concerning this issue, almost half of the sample did not have difficulties concerning to the spoken language or to the understanding of the language and some could not remember any situation of linguistic misunderstanding, while others felt that the object of speech or of the referent were not balanced, since the referred social context is different, situations of non correspondence between the elements of communication, felt and observed in their original experience. Accordingly, there are difficulties of communication among people who do not know the social context experienced by other people, which differs from theirs.

Thus, we conclude that 50% of the interviewees had or used to have some difficulties in terms of language or they had experienced differentials in language communication. And the study of these difficulties showed that they were not distant from those of the Japanese immigrants in Brazil.

Linguistic communication was one of the main problems of the Japanese collectivity in Brazil. The Japanese people did not have facility and spontaneity as other people to get in touch with the Brazilians. The discomfort caused by lack of linguistic knowledge was great until the 1930s. The immigrants complained that they could not express their thoughts fluently and discuss with the Brazilians, which consequently would cause frequent confusions, as Handa states (1987:143).

As for the Brazilians interviewed, they mentioned a few confusions in Japan, as a consequence of ignoring the language and speech:

- As he did not know the pan to make rice, *denki-gama*, which literally means electric rice-cooker, an interviewee translated it as “gohan-nabe,” which means pan made of rice, which made everybody burst into laughter
- The word *person* in Japanese is pronounced *ningen*, which in Portuguese is very close to the word *nobody*, which means exactly the inexistence of the person, which caused a lot of trouble.
- The language learned by their parents had a lot of old-fashioned terms, and some expressions were not usual in Japan anymore; thus, the Brazilians were able to understand the context of a conversation, but the Japanese could not.
- Some interviewees felt the difference in the manner Japanese people express themselves, since Brazilians show more emotional involvement when they speak.

On the other hand, more extrovert children or friends in Brazil usually acted as interpreters. Many *isseis* could not get used to the use of Portuguese, while their children spoke Portuguese out of home and, when got home, they were forced to speak Japanese.

This situation happened to the Japanese immigrants in Brazil, situations in which children felt embarrassed because their parents did not speak Portuguese or spoke it very badly. Accordingly, Brazilians' children in Japan do not like the fact that their parents are not able to learn Japanese language and speech. Thus, the difficulties faced by Brazilians are akin to those of the Japanese immigrants.

Also the Japanese' children gradually adopted the Portuguese language, gestures and stances of Brazilians, their serious and quiet physiognomy became more open and expansive, even regarding how they would tell jokes, says Saito (1977: 21–23).

All those situations resulted in contributions, since many Japanese words such as sushi, shoyu, saquê, karaoke, sumô, judô, etc. are already part of the Portuguese dictionaries, borrowed from the Japanese language.

Social Relations and Social Capital

According to testimonials of people who stayed longer in Japan, they tend to live permanently in the country, as it happened to the Japanese and their descendants in Brazil. Thus, those who

intend to do it take part of several activities and district associations, along with autochthonous peoples, to better integrate themselves, as well as their family in the local community, trying to establish and reinforce the social capital network.

It has been mentioned the example of a Brazilian woman who has lived in Japan for more than 10 years and has more Japanese than Brazilian friends, because she does not intend to return to Brazil, and changed her focus of interest in order to integrate herself into the Japanese society. And one of the ways to integrate into the Japanese society is taking part in local associations, becoming a member, with the payment of a fee which will defray the events; participating in meetings and receiving information of several activities in the neighborhood, both for adults and children, collaborating with their organization. As these organizations have channels of social communication with other net of associations, they provide a wide opportunity of friendship and social capital.

The Japanese immigrants also felt this concern, when decided to stay and live in Brazil, after Japan was defeated in the Second World War. Then associations were formed and, some of them became clubs.

The Japanese Adoption of Brazilianism

Based on the interviews we tried to verify, from the viewpoint of the sample participants, which types of adoptions happened among the Japanese. It has been verified that:

Some Japanese appreciate novelties, so they go to Brazilian restaurants, and when they like it, they look for Brazilian convenience shops and start acquiring products to include in their daily life. According to an interviewee, her Japanese friends began to enjoy *caipirinha* (typical Brazilian drink made of lemon, sugar cane rum, sugar and ice). It has also been observed in the factory cafeteria that many Japanese chose Brazilian food such as rice and beans, for lunch made by the Japanese cook. Some of them began to enjoy barbecue, when Brazilians made, and others learned to consume chicory salad, *feijoada*, roasted chicken, cheese bread, fried turnovers, kibe, chicken croquettes, which have been sold by Brazilians in snack bars.

In terms of steak house, the restaurant “*Bacana*,” in Tokyo, is popular among the Japanese people, while the “*Barbacoa*,” also in Tokyo, is popular both for Brazilians and Japanese. This shows the internalization of the Brazilian food, the different service, which attracts many appraisers.

Regarding the other Brazilian products, it has been verified that the Japanese people like to buy jeans made in Brazil, as the design is different and the prints design values the Brazilians anatomy. Japanese women also look for lingerie models and even Dominican migrants began to order them, through colleagues, friends or Brazilian relatives, to be sent and resold. Also Hering-branded T-shirts are resold, showing that the paradigm of the Brazilian woman has its space of vanity and attracts the look from both Japanese youth and others.

As for the social relations, some Japanese learned that *Brazilian manner* of making friends, as a tap on the back and fellowship gestures to greet more informally, with a handshake. Others copied some typical Brazilian manners, such as gestures to speak and express themselves, when they thank or apologize, through soccer games and the Brazilian soccer team, as an interviewee stated.

The Brazilian events have also interfered in the change of local landscapes, as a number of

Japanese events take place simultaneously in Liberdade district and in Japan, such as June parties and Carnival, obviously, with a different format and adapted to the customs and culture of the endogenous populations. This proves the power of the facts, which transcends time and space, the reason of the synchronic study of two different spaces (Japan and Brazil), in different time, which repeat by the similarity of the events.

Therefore, “hybrid cultures” are noted where there is major agglomeration of Brazilians in Japan, for the last 100 years of Japanese immigration in Brazil. These are districts and towns with eclectic characteristics, particular of the intercultural phenomena. In these places, stores, products, exogenous propagandas mix with typical restaurants, where people meet in events of their people and country, with a new look, changing the previous homogeneous landscape of Japanese cities to hegemonic culture, which is added to other ethnics, resulting in cultural and multicultural diversity; as it took place in Brazil, with the Japanese immigrants and other ethnics.

Conclusion

These cultural contributions will remain forever, as a legacy, in the dynamics of the people formation, stamped on the miscegenation and registered in the different cultural features of places where Japanese and Brazilians are and were, as part of the historical scenery of international migrations.

As there has been changes and adoption of customs in general, increasing the vocabulary, etc., through the contact between Japanese and Brazilians in Brazil, Brazilians and Japanese also establish a dialogue and cultural negotiations through contributions made by Brazilians in Japan. These circumstances show how important is the other knowledge, the actual cultural differential, for a better comprehension, sustainable respect and acceptable limits between both populations. It has also been verified that the basic needs of human beings are similar, regardless the factor time.

Leisure was important to alleviate stress and bring joy to the Japanese immigrants in Brazil, approaching them to the group of equals as well as to the other ethnic groups. As for the Japanese in Japan, they took advantage of their stay, especially to know the country, valuing, nevertheless, the development of social activities, the meeting with other Brazilians living the same situation, the social relations of friendship and the formation of the social capital. They intensified their contact with the Japanese people, especially when they decided to remain in the country, getting interested in taking part of a variety of activities in their leisure time.

Therefore, it has been verified in this study that leisure, informal education and cultural features are overlapped with the formation of Brazilian profile of those who remained temporarily in Japan, as it has been observed among the Japanese immigrants in Brazil. These cultural features were adapted, assimilated and adopted, not as an imposition, but through the cultural dialogue among people, naturally and informally, processed in endogenous and exogenous societies.

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