

## The U.S. Frontier and the Making of Two Migration States

At noon on December 15, 1869, in the castle of Goryōkaku near contemporary Hakodate, followers of the Tokugawa regime who fled to Hokkaido after losing their ground in Honshū during the Boshin War proclaimed the formation of the Republic of Ezo. These samurais held an allegedly democratic election and invited the Ainu tribe leaders to attend as observers. They voted Enomoto Takeaki, admiral of the Tokugawa Navy, president of the new government. Having studied in the Netherlands and trained in Western diplomacy, Enomoto proposed a ceasefire and an alliance with the Meiji forces. He asked the latter to allow the Tokugawa loyalists to colonize Hokkaido and turn this “barren island” into a “land of prosperity,” and they would, in return, help defend the Japanese empire from Russian threats.<sup>1</sup> With its military ascendancy, the Meiji regime rejected the proposal and managed to completely defeat Enomoto and his followers within half a year. The Republic of Ezo, accordingly, quickly came to an end, and the newly formed Meiji empire officially annexed Hokkaido as its own territory.

Twenty years later, on the other side of the globe, in a military coup in Rio de Janeiro on November 15, 1889, Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca deposed Emperor Dom Pedro II and established a federal republic, which was officially titled the United States of Brazil. Fonseca also became the first president of the republic. Unlike its very short-lived Japanese counterpart, the United States of Brazil, also known as the First Republic, was remarkably successful. Faithful believers of “order and progress,” its leaders managed to consolidate the new regime and maintain its solidarity for several decades.<sup>2</sup> It only came to an end following another coup d'état in 1930, succeeded by the long-lasting dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas.

With profoundly different paths, nevertheless, both republics were regimes of modern settler colonialism. Their formation marked a turning point in the settler

colonial expansion of Japan and Brazil, respectively. The efforts of the Tokugawa diehards to establish an independent government in Hokkaido during the Boshin War were the culmination of a long-term and gradual expansion of the Tokugawa regime into Ainu land.<sup>3</sup> But as political democracy and polity served as the republic's central point of legitimacy, its birth also marked a radical departure from the past and symbolized the beginning of modern Japanese settler colonialism under the impact of the West. Meiji Japan's annexation of Hokkaido was immediately followed by the nascent empire's systematic colonization of the island, marked by the immigration of Japanese settlers, the institutional dispossession of the Ainu people's ancestral lands, and the massive extraction of natural resources.

Similarly, the formation of the First Republic was by no means the beginning of Brazil's colonial history, which could be traced to Portuguese expansion into Latin America in the sixteenth century. The history of modern settler colonialism in Brazil started in the early nineteenth century, together with the proclamation of the Empire of Brazil's independence from Portugal. The liberal-leaning elites in the era of the empire had already connected the racial exclusion of Black people, racial whitening through immigration, and the dispossession of Indigenous land in their political agendas.<sup>4</sup> However, the unprecedented usurpation of Indigenous land in Brazilian history, made possible by the massive influx of foreign immigrants, only started due to the new policies on land and immigration launched by the First Republic.

These two regimes, established by colonial expansion and legitimized by the claims of democracy and republicanism on opposite sides of the globe, both revealed the profound imprint of Anglo-American settler colonialism. While the fate of the two republics turned out to be very different, the historical paths of modern Japan and Brazil converged in their reproduction of Anglo-American expansion. As the following pages explain, the rise of modern Japan and Brazil as civilized nations and empires would require migration and colonial expansion at the same time. Elites in Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro alike justified such expansion by adopting the three logics of Anglo-American settler colonialism, namely, demography, race, and capitalism. Leaders of Meiji Japan saw emigration as a central means to expand the Japanese empire, through which the Japanese, people of a superior and expanding race, would claim their rightful share of power, wealth, and land in the world. Brazilian elites, on the other hand, believed that the immigration of superior ethnic groups was crucial not only for improving the existing racial composition of Brazilian society but also for claiming and utilizing the country's vast unoccupied land.

This chapter discusses the surprising parallel in the histories of Meiji Japan and independent Brazil in the nineteenth century, in which the ideas and practices of migration and colonial expansion entwined. In particular, their imitation of and interaction with U.S. westward expansion led to a series of changes in the 1880s in both countries that escalated their processes of settler colonial expansion. These

changes led to the birth of migration states in Japan and Brazil, which eventually brought Japanese and Brazilian diplomats in touch with each other to start the negotiation for Japanese emigration to Brazil.

#### THE U.S. FRONTIER AND JAPANESE SETTLER COLONIALISM

Thrust into the world of modern empires in the middle of the nineteenth century, Japan's rapid transformation into a modern empire took place around the same time that U.S. westward expansion and British colonial expansion shifted into high gear. Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in the Edo Bay in 1853, only five years after the conclusion of the Mexican-American War in which Perry himself fought as a navy commander. A few years later, the Government of India Act of 1858 put India under the direct control of the British Crown. The Homestead Act of 1862 stimulated an epic wave of mass migration from the eastern side of the Mississippi to the American West. In the same decade, the introduction of the Selection Act by British colonial authorities in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia propelled a similar process of mass immigration and dispossession of Indigenous land in Australia. Around the same time, Tokugawa society also underwent a series of political and cultural upheavals that culminated in the formation of the Meiji empire.

The nascent Japanese empire was quick to secure its ground. Within a decade after its inception, the Meiji regime had already conducted a series of territorial expansions, including the annexation of Hokkaido and Okinawa and a military expedition to Taiwan, all of which were justified as measures of self-defense.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Japan also emerged as a source of cheap labor in global capitalism's supply chain. As territorial expansion and outgoing migration had developed hand in hand, Japan's empire builders, like their counterparts in the United States, saw migration as a primary means of colonial expansion.<sup>6</sup>

The Meiji reproduction of U.S. settler colonialism showcased all the central logics of the latter, including the logics of demography, race, and capitalism. First, emigration-centered settler colonialism was initially put into practice during Japan's expansion in Hokkaido at the beginning of the Meiji era, when the modern discourse of overpopulation emerged in the Japanese archipelago as a rationalization. Mirroring the demographic logic of American westward migration, a governmental document in 1869 contrasted an overpopulated Japan proper with an empty Hokkaido and concluded that the unbalanced distribution of Japanese population had led to regional poverty.<sup>7</sup> The solution, accordingly, was to relocate the surplus people to underpopulated Hokkaido.<sup>8</sup> By exporting the "surplus people" as trailblazers of an expanding empire, Meiji Japan would not only alleviate its domestic population pressure but also expand its power and acquire additional wealth. In the same year, the imperial government established the Hokkaido

Development Agency (Kaitakushi) to oversee the colonization of Hokkaido. The agency quickly launched a series of migration campaigns that showed the clear imprint of Anglo-American expansion in the recent past. The *Hokkaido Development Journal* (*Hokkaido kaitaku zasshi*), the mouthpiece of the agency, compared the Japanese migrants in Hokkaido to the *Mayflower* pilgrims. It urged the first Japanese migrants to overcome all obstacles to clear a path for future empire builders in the northern frontier, just as the Americans' ancestors had done in the New World.<sup>9</sup>

Second, like its Western counterparts, the Japanese discourse of overpopulation emerged together with a celebration of the overall increase in the Japanese population, which served as evidence for Japanese racial superiority. Sugi Kōji, commonly known as the founder of modern Japanese demography, used modern statistical methods to illustrate the comparability of Japan's population growth rate with that of the European powers.<sup>10</sup> For the educated Japanese, Japan's world-class rate of population growth was a clear sign of its racial superiority and the government's political success. While they imagined the Japanese migrants in Hokkaido as Japan's own *Mayflower* settlers, the Ainu, native residents on the island, were cast in the role of the Native Americans. Horace Capron, American chief adviser of the Development Agency, came with a resume in colonial expansion: during Millard Fillmore's presidency, Capron had overseen the removal and resettlement of several Native American tribes after the Mexican-American War.<sup>11</sup> While investigating the land of Hokkaido, Capron perceived clear parallels between the primitive Ainu and the unenlightened Native Americans.<sup>12</sup> The description of the Ainu by Meiji leaders and Capron as an uncivilized people served as a justification for the Meiji government's appropriation of their ancestral land. Tsuda Sen, editor of the *Hokkaido Development Journal*, argued that the Ainu lacked both the drive and the ability to develop their land. Rather than let the land sit wasted, it was only natural for the civilized Japanese to take over the land and use it for better purposes.<sup>13</sup>

This racial hierarchy was codified in laws and regulations that empowered the Japanese government to deprive the Ainu of their land. The Land Tax Reform (*Chiso Kaisei*) of 1873 defined the Hokkaido land that sustained the Ainu's livelihood as wasteland and allowed the government to grant landownership to the Japanese settlers. In 1876, the Meiji government also outlawed the Ainu way of fishing and hunting.<sup>14</sup> In the name of spreading civilization, this series of policies deprived the Ainu of their land, materials, and cultures, leading to a sharp decline in the Ainu population. The educated Japanese, once again, looked to American history for an explanation. They described the Ainu as a vanishing race (*horobi-yuku minzoku*), like the Native Americans in North America. They believed that the demographic decline of the Ainu, though unfortunate, was both natural and unavoidable: in a Social Darwinist world, the backward Ainu could not hope to successfully compete with the superior races.<sup>15</sup>

Last but not least, Meiji leaders also legitimized settler migration and land acquisition in Hokkaido by the logic of modern capitalism. In the mind of Tsuda Sen, once in the hands of the Japanese, Hokkaido could be transformed into a land of formidable wealth where the Japanese settlers could farm, hunt, and engage in commerce.<sup>16</sup> It would become a precious source of ever-growing wealth, because its earth, river, mineral deposits, and flora and fauna were all potential resources for Japan's nascent capitalist economy. In this respect too, American westward migration served as a guide. Even though Japan could not yet compete with the United States in terms of wealth, power, and progress in democracy and education, Tsuda argued, the soil of Hokkaido was as rich as that of North America, and its climate was equally suitable for farming. He declared that an "America" would soon emerge from the Japanese archipelago, because as Japan's colonial project continued to develop, material production in Hokkaido would match that in the United States. In particular, he likened the position of Hokkaido to that of California. In his mind, California had been no more than an empty land until it became a U.S. territory, yet within two decades of American settlement, blessed with the discovery of gold and tremendous improvement in agricultural technology, California's population and material products had grown exponentially. Tsuda placed his hope in Hokkaido because he found it comparable to California in terms of both latitude and natural resources; and he envisioned that as Japanese settlers continued to make progress in land exploration, the Ezo of yesterday would become the California of tomorrow. A transformed Hokkaido would become Japan's own cornucopia; its output would both sustain Japan's economic growth at home and bring in wealth from abroad through exportation.<sup>17</sup>

#### THE AMERICAN WEST AND COLONIALISM IN THE EMPIRE OF BRAZIL

Where Meiji leaders viewed U.S. westward expansion as a model for emigration-driven settler colonialism in Hokkaido, Brazilian elites also studied the U.S. experience closely as they designed their own blueprints for expansion in the Southern Cone. Brazil's history as a colonial territory of the Portuguese Empire could be traced to the sixteenth century. It did not emerge as an independent geopolitical power until the early nineteenth century. Due to immigration restrictions during the centuries-long colonial period, the settler population in Brazil remained relatively small, mainly residing on the east coast.<sup>18</sup> The settlers had made efforts to expand into the hinterland since the very beginning of the colonial era. The most noteworthy campaign of their inland exploration was the Bandeirante Movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that began with slave hunting and ended with mining.<sup>19</sup> In general, these activities did not seek to occupy the land itself. However, the Brazilian elites' ambition for land colonization in the interior grew rapidly after Brazil declared its independence, especially after Pedro II came

to power in 1840.<sup>20</sup> They began to see colonization of the hinterland as a critical step in the dual process of nation making and empire building for the newly independent Brazil.<sup>21</sup> The ongoing U.S. westward expansion served as a successful example that they could borrow a page from.<sup>22</sup> Like their Japanese counterparts, the Brazilian elites strove to imitate the U.S. frontier experience by following the logics of demography, race, and capitalism.

First, the Brazilian elites saw population growth as the cornerstone of Brazil's rise as a modern nation. Similar to the United States in the nineteenth century, Brazil had a large territory and a small settler population. Impressed by the role that immigrants played in land exploration in the American West, Rio had an urgent demand for immigrants as the engine of colonization. Brazilian leaders expected immigrants to assist the government as the state moved to claim its sovereignty over the vast Indigenous land it had inherited from the Portuguese Crown. As a result, migration, colonization, and peopling were often conflated in the minds of Brazilian elites at the time.<sup>23</sup>

In Brazilian elites' blueprints of empire, race also played a central role. They were convinced by the history of immigration in the United States that only white people could create progress. Henrique J. Rebbello's 1836 book, *The Treatise of the Population in Brazil*, for example, stressed the urgency to increase Brazil's population through immigration but also made it clear that only migrants from "civilized" Europe were welcome.<sup>24</sup> As subscribers to modern racism, educated Brazilians concluded that the nation's current backwardness was due to the inferiority of its racial stock, a product of miscegenation between the Portuguese, the Indigenous peoples, and African slaves.<sup>25</sup> They believed that the only way for Brazil to catch up with the United States was to "whiten" Brazilians through immigration.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, Brazilian leaders also believed that immigration-centered colonization was crucial for Brazil's economic development and cultural progress. For those who endorsed the abolition of slavery, immigration was essential to agricultural development. They wanted to model Brazil's agricultural structure after the United States, preferring small farms to big plantations. As abolition appeared increasingly inevitable, the planters themselves were also warming up to the idea of lenient immigration policies. Though having little interest in turning immigrants into settlers, they believed that immigration could fill the eventual labor vacuum on plantations.<sup>27</sup>

The Brazilian elites' desire for non-Portuguese white immigrants was evident in the Imperial Constitution promulgated in 1824. One article of the constitution permitted people of all religions to worship privately in this formally Roman Catholic nation. Another article offered Brazilian citizenship to all born in its territory and to women who married Brazilian men.<sup>28</sup> While this new constitution opened Brazil's doors to immigrants, 1850 marked a decisive moment in the convergence of immigration and settler colonialism. The Queiroz Law, enacted in that year, cut off the major source of slave labor by ending Brazil's participation in the

international slave trade. As the labor demand on plantations continued to grow along with Brazil's coffee exports, the ban on the international slave trade made the inflow of free immigrants an economic necessity.

Passed in the same year, the Land Law (*Lei de Terras*) would allow the government to legally deprive Indigenous peoples of their land by defining it as publicly owned. The Land Law also banned private acquisitions of such land except through purchase, enabling the government to monopolize ownership of the land and its distribution. Due to the overall weakness of state power at the time, large planters often ignored this law by claiming new land near their plantations through *de facto* occupation. Nevertheless, the law established a legal basis for the Brazilian government to appropriate Indigenous land. Together with the law, the central government created a bureaucratic service, the *Repartição Geral das Terras Públicas*, in charge of managing public land and promoting colonization.<sup>29</sup> Immigrants were among the main beneficiaries of public land. They were invited into the country and then transported to the inland region, occupying and farming the land there in the decades to come. In essence, they functioned as colonial settlers.<sup>30</sup>

These two important laws represented a turning point in Brazilian history during the mid-nineteenth century, a time when Rio de Janeiro was adopting an increasingly favorable view of immigration. The reasons for this attitude shift included the modernization of Brazil's transportation system and the rise of a generation of liberal-leaning intellectuals and politicians who were amazed by American achievements in modernization and territorial expansion. They believed that immigrants, like their counterparts in the United States, could serve as agents of progress and civilization for Brazil. To make the country more attractive for immigration, they called for a more liberal, open, and democratic Brazil by emphasizing local and provincial power, slavery abolition, and free trade.

In 1866, a group of politicians, journalists, and intellectuals formed the *Sociedade Internacional de Imigração* (SII; International Immigration Society), a symbol of the Brazilian liberals' collective effort to promote immigration. The founders of the SII believed that immigration was a crucial tool to bring about structural changes in Brazil. They argued that immigrants were an essential source for non-slave labor and agents of civilization and progress.<sup>31</sup> However, Brazil's conservative institutions made the country an undesirable destination for migrants. The society's mission, as its members envisioned, was to facilitate immigration through political liberalization in the form of slavery abolition, greater religious freedom, and revision of existing laws on land and taxation. In addition to calling for these institutional reforms, society members tried to attract more immigrants through a variety of avenues. Some tried to promote the image of Brazil as a wonderful migration destination, others urged the government to improve transportation logistics for newly arrived immigrants, and still others became migrant recruiters.<sup>32</sup> Though the society itself only lasted a year because of a lack of governmental support and resources, the words and deeds of its founding members deserve close



examination because they represented the aspirations of the liberal-leaning elites, the same group that successfully turned Brazil into a republic by deposing Dom Pedro II. Once in power, the republican government immediately carried out the liberals' agenda and ushered in the era of mass immigration.

A particularly noteworthy figure was Aureliano Cândido Tavares Bastos, an influential politician and journalist. He was one of the core leaders of the SII who had drafted its manifesto. An admirer of the United States, Tavares Bastos believed that the U.S. immigration-driven model of nation building was the one that Brazil should imitate. A set of far-reaching liberal reforms, including the establishment of a federal system, free trade, the opening of the Amazon, and the gradual abolition of slavery, was necessary to attract immigrants.<sup>33</sup> However, not all foreigners were suitable for Brazil's grand task. Tavares Bastos's admiration of the United States made him particularly interested in recruiting U.S. citizens.<sup>34</sup> The fact that the SII was founded in 1866, only one year after the end of the U.S. Civil War, reflected the Brazilian elites' intention to recruit Confederate supporters.<sup>35</sup>

American westward expansion also profoundly shaped the migration recruiting activities of William Scully, another core member of the society, whose primary targets were Europeans. An admirer of the success of Anglo-American settler colonialism in general, Scully believed that the English and the Irish, two major immigrant groups in the United States, were the most desirable for Brazil.<sup>36</sup> To attract Anglophone immigrants, he named the newspaper that he founded for migration recruitment purposes *Anglo-Brazilian Times*. The newspaper was published in English and circulated in both Brazil and Europe. Its central message was straightforward: like the United States, Brazil was a land of promise for agricultural settlers. It was similarly endowed with vast terrain, fertile soil, and a pleasant climate; there ordinary men could easily acquire land and farming tools and prosper through honest labor.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to attracting the British, the Portuguese, and former U.S. Confederates, Brazilian leaders explored other migration sources. Between 1820 and 1875, they conducted several campaigns to attract immigrants from central and northern Europe as well as Qing China. While none of these campaigns succeeded as planned, the government did manage to bring in 330,000 immigrants overall.<sup>38</sup> With free land granted by the government, some immigrants indeed became frontier settlers. However, this number was dwarfed by the nine million immigrants who entered the United States during roughly the same period. Moreover, over half of the immigrants who arrived in Brazil during this period were Portuguese, the majority of whom resided in coastal cities instead of the interior.<sup>39</sup> Although the last fifteen years of the empire saw the arrival of some additional 330,000 immigrants, compared to the massive influx of immigrants during the First Republic, the immigration policies of this period were far from effective.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, neither the idea nor the practice of taking Indigenous land through immigration was new in the era of the First Republic. Settler colonialism, as both



a political structure and an ideology, had already been firmly established during the imperial era.

#### THE RISE OF MIGRATION STATES IN BRAZIL AND JAPAN IN THE 1880S

The decade of the 1880s saw both Brazil and Japan making a substantial leap forward in their practice of settler colonialism, a development that was driven by political and economic changes at both global and local levels. In the Southern Cone, the State of São Paulo's coffee economy continued to expand. This led to not only further encroachment of Indigenous land, but also a series of institutional changes that resulted in a mass influx of immigrants. Meanwhile, in East Asia, the Meiji government made policy changes that opened the gate for Japan's emigration-driven expansion overseas. These developments symbolized the formation of the migration states in Japan and Brazil that jointly brought the diplomats of the two settler colonial regimes to the same table to discuss Japanese migration to Brazil.

Commercial coffee cultivation in Rio de Janeiro first started in the late eighteenth century, and the beans quickly became a major source of wealth in Brazil's export-centered economy. By the 1850s, half of the country's export revenue came from coffee. In the 1860s, thanks to the sale of coffee, the Brazilian empire finally achieved a positive trade balance.<sup>41</sup> The expansion of coffee cultivation also brought about monumental economic and political changes. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Rio de Janeiro remained the central state for coffee cultivation, and the city of Rio continued to be the central port for coffee exportation. By midcentury, however, coffee cultivation had expanded southward to São Paulo and Minas Gerais. By the century's end, the state of São Paulo had overtaken Rio de Janeiro and became the new coffee center. The rise of São Paulo in the coffee economy was accompanied by the emergence of a new mode of coffee production. Traditional coffee *fazendas* (plantations), represented by those in Rio, were supported almost exclusively by slave labor. However, because the abolitionist movement increasingly gained momentum, new coffee planters in São Paulo turned to immigrants as an alternative source of labor. As coffee cultivation in the state of São Paulo expanded westward into the inland region, the reliance on immigrant labor only increased.

The westward expansion of coffee cultivation was made possible by the construction of railways in the state. Since the formation of the São Paulo Railway Company at the turn of the 1860s, several railway lines had begun to link the state's interior with the city of São Paulo and then to the Port of Santos.<sup>42</sup> New railway lines kept pushing the frontier of the coffee economy westward and northward, making possible the transportation of coffee and goods between the eastern coast and inland. In the name of law, more and more Indigenous land was taken by



FIGURE 3. The front cover of an 1882 issue of *Revista Illustrada*, an independent cartoon magazine based in the capital, Rio de Janeiro. The magazine was one of the most influential humor periodicals focusing on contemporary politics in Brazil at the end of the nineteenth century. The image shows that the speeches and debates in the imperial parliament of the day only led to the further deterioration of the living conditions of Indigenous people. The caption reads, “Poor thing!” Source: *Revista Illustrada*, no. 301 (1882).

coffee growers. The rapid appropriation of Indigenous land can be measured by the increase in coffee trees in the state: in 1870, there were 70 million coffee trees; in 1880, 106 million; in 1890, 200 million; and in 1900, 600 million.<sup>43</sup>

The coffee boom in São Paulo hastened the political rise of the liberal-leaning Brazilian elites. Seeing the United States as a role model of nation building, they were advocates for both slavery abolition and mass immigration. Two organizations for immigration promotion emerged in the 1880s as a result of their efforts. Of the two, the Sociedade Central de Imigração (SCI; Central Immigration

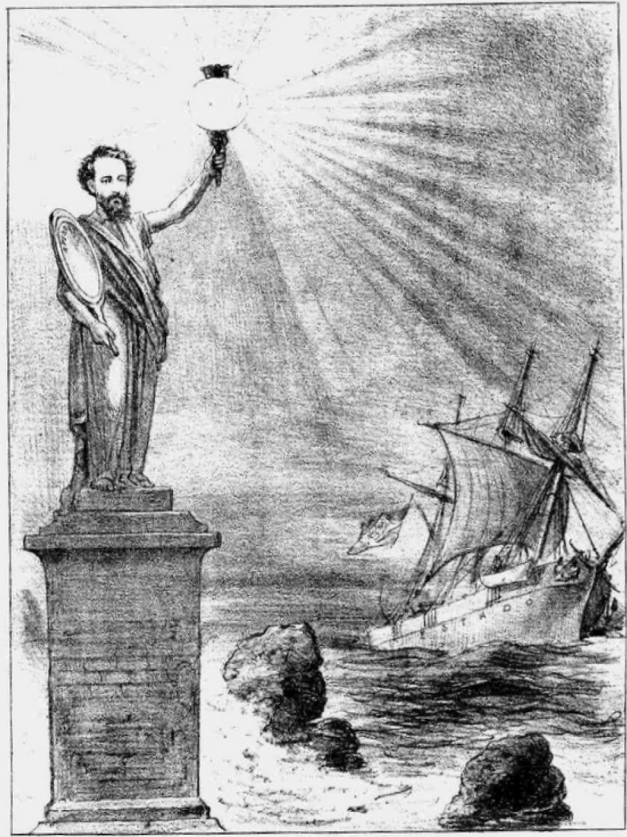


FIGURE 4. The back cover of an 1877 issue of *Revista Ilustrada*. It shows how Quintino Bocaiúva, a leading anti-monarchy journalist and politician in Imperial Brazil, envisioned the United States as a model for Brazil's future nation. Bocaiúva served as Brazil's foreign minister after the republican revolution. Source: *Revista Ilustrada*, no. 63 (April 1877).

Society) called for an increase in government subsidies to attract immigrants, hoping that increased immigration would foster the growth of the small farm economy.<sup>44</sup> The large coffee plantation owners and their supporters formed the Sociedade Promotora de Imigração (SPI; Immigration Promotion Society). Its members opposed government subsidies for immigration and believed that only private funds should be used for this purpose. While these two societies represented the divergent interests of two very different social groups, both functioned as key organizations sponsored by the government to recruit immigrants and promote immigration. In addition to seeing immigration as the primary labor source for the booming coffee economy, members of both societies believed that immigration was essential to claim and occupy the vast land in the interior and to whiten the Brazilian racial stock.<sup>45</sup>

With military support, the liberal-leaning faction brought the empire, already exhausted by the Paraguayan War, to an end in 1889. Brazil's transition to a republic, along with the abolition of slavery, marked the political ascendancy of its southern coffee elites, especially those from the state of São Paulo. The establishment of the First Republic was the culmination of policy and institutional changes within the government aimed at fostering immigration—a process that was already underway in the final years of the empire. This regime change, therefore, marked the formation of the migration state in Brazil. As the SPI and the SCI continued to function toward the end of the century, funds to subsidize immigration, drawn from both the public and private sectors, grew steadily.<sup>46</sup> As a result, the republic would receive 2.6 million immigrants within the next three decades. The Japanese were initially deemed undesirable. Merely a year after its formation, the new regime banned the immigration of Africans and Asians, as its leaders considered these two groups racially inferior and believed they would only degrade Brazil's racial stock.<sup>47</sup> Yet the republic soon reopened its doors to Asian immigrants in 1893 due to a pressing demand for coffee labor. In response to the Meiji empire's overall successful Westernization and expansion in East Asia, Rio turned to the Japanese as a more palatable alternative to the heavily maligned Chinese.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, Japanese expansionists had begun to look beyond Hokkaido to search for migration destinations overseas. The rampant inflation triggered by the Satsuma Rebellion forced Meiji leaders to adopt a restrained fiscal policy known as the Matsukata Deflation. Amid steep budget cuts, Tokyo suspended government-sponsored migration to Hokkaido and lifted the ban on overseas emigration. Thus, Japan's emigration-centered migration state took shape. Just as the Japanese were initially unwelcome in Brazil due to its policy of racial whitening, Brazil was not the first choice for Meiji leaders, who sought to reposition the Japanese within the global racial hierarchy through emigration-driven expansion.

While the Meiji government had first sponsored Japanese labor migration to the Kingdom of Hawai'i in 1885, American westward expansion had inspired Japanese expansionists to view the American West itself as the first ideal destination for Japanese emigration. In the mind of Fukuzawa Yukichi, one of the most influential intellectuals in Meiji Japan, what made the United States especially attractive was not its material wealth but its recent experience of westward expansion. Fukuzawa described the United States as an expanding nation that kept opening up new land through frontier conquest and migration. He believed that the Japanese should follow the example of the Europeans by migrating to this land of promise and participate in U.S. frontier expansion as colonial settlers. One day, he envisioned, the offspring of Japanese immigrants would gain political rights in the United States and sway American politics. Starting from the United States, Japan's overseas migrants—and their descendants—would establish ten or even twenty settler nations, which he called “new Japans” (*shin nihon*), around the world.<sup>49</sup>

Fukuzawa put his ideas into action. He did not achieve much success with his campaigns to relocate Japanese subjects to the U.S. West Coast, but a number of

students from his Keiō School did manage to land in San Francisco. In 1888, they formed the San Francisco chapter of the Keiō Alumni Association with thirty-five members.<sup>50</sup> During the 1880s and 1890s, many educated youth, like these Keiō students, had reached the U.S. West Coast along with Meiji Japan's political dissidents. Together, they constituted the bulk of the elite circle of the Japanese American community of the day.<sup>51</sup> Although holding divergent political views, they all saw the United States as both a land of promise for individual success and a frontier for Japanese expansion.

The Japanese settlers' experience at the frontier of American westward expansion confirmed the intrinsic ties between migration and colonial expansion in their minds. However, those who hoped to pursue a colonial dream in the American West were soon disillusioned by rampant racism against Asian immigrants on the West Coast. Some took the institutionalized Chinese exclusion and the rise of anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century as an announcement that white settlers had monopolized the land of North America. As a result, the United States was no longer an ideal target of expansion for Japan. Instead, the Japanese should make haste to occupy the supposedly unmarked and unowned territories in the South Seas and Latin America; once they staked their claims to ownership, they could exclude other races, just like white Americans were now doing.<sup>52</sup> Of course, in the minds of Meiji expansionists, only the "civilized" races were qualified to compete for land-ownership. Indigenous peoples such as Native Americans and Pacific Islanders were, like the Ainu in Hokkaido, uncivilized races who had no right to the land they were wasting. It was at this time that Brazil caught the interest of Meiji expansionists.

#### FROM MEXICO TO BRAZIL

The central figure behind the ideas and practices of Japanese expansion to Latin America was Enomoto Takeaki. After serving as a high-ranking official during the colonization of Hokkaido in the 1870s, Enomoto rose to a series of key cabinet positions in the Meiji government by heading the Ministries of Communications (1885–89), Education (1889–90), Foreign Affairs (1891–92), and, finally, Agriculture and Commerce (1894–97).<sup>53</sup> Believing that national strength could only be achieved by frontier conquest and colonial expansion, Enomoto made a few unsuccessful attempts to purchase the Mariana Islands, the Palau Islands, and Borneo as early as the mid-1870s.<sup>54</sup> To promote studies on the Pacific Rim with colonial ambitions in mind, he helped establish the Tokyo Geographical Society (Tokyo Chigaku Kyōkai) in 1879, modeled after the Royal Geographical Society in London.<sup>55</sup>

A decisive step that Enomoto made in his promotion of Japanese expansion in Latin America was the formation of the Colonial Society (Shokumin Kyōkai) in 1893, the same year that Brazil's First Republic reopened its doors to Asian immigration.



As Japan's first nationwide organization to facilitate overseas expansion, its members and donors came from a variety of social backgrounds and political causes. Their ranks included politicians and bureaucrats, owners and employees of migration companies, journalists and business elites. However, they were unified in their acceptance of the convergence of emigration and settler colonialism, and they shared a belief in the urgent need for Japan to participate in the scramble for land and resources through overseas migration.<sup>56</sup> The society diligently disseminated information and ideas for overseas expansion by hosting public lectures and publishing its official journal, *Reports of the Colonial Society* (*Shokumin Kyōkai hōkoku*). It also sponsored investigative trips and expeditions around the Pacific Rim. Facilitating Japanese migration to Mexico was among the society's first missions.

In 1891, two years before the formation of the Colonial Society, Enomoto had already begun exploring the possibilities of Japanese expansion to Mexico by taking advantage of the Mexican government's policies to attract immigrants and international investment.<sup>57</sup> In the same year, under his leadership, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Japanese consulate in Mexico City, which collected local information in order to facilitate migration planning. Fujita Toshirō, Japanese consul in Mexico, investigated Sonora, Sinaloa, and Chiapas to evaluate their suitability for Japanese migration.<sup>58</sup> Fujita hired D. W. Jones, an American expert, as a translator and adviser for this project. Jones convinced Fujita that Mexico was endowed with fertile land and limitless natural resources. He reasoned that because the majority of existing residents were Native Americans who were backward and inferior, Mexican land could be considered empty and open. Jones suggested that Japanese settlers should purchase land along the Mexican west coast, where they would settle and prosper.<sup>59</sup> In his report to Tokyo, Fujita also pointed out the importance of coffee cultivation as a promising business for potential Japanese colonies in Mexico.<sup>60</sup>

In 1893, the Colonial Society dispatched its secretary, Nemoto Tadashi, to southern Mexico to conduct another survey, and Nemoto pointed to Chiapas as the best region to establish Japan's first colony in Mexico. After a few more inspections and years of negotiation, Enomoto and the Colonial Society eventually garnered sufficient financial and political support to complete a land purchase with a fifteen-year loan from the Mexican government. They established the first Japanese settler community, known as Enomoto Colony, in southern Chiapas in 1897. This colonial project intended to relocate Japanese subjects to Mexico as agricultural settlers who would make a living by cultivating coffee and other tropical crops.

Though Enomoto Colony quickly ran into trouble and collapsed because of a lack of financial backup and a labor shortage, the efforts of Enomoto and his followers marked the starting point of Japanese expansion in Latin America.<sup>61</sup> During his trip to Mexico in 1893, Nemoto also investigated Peru as another potential destination for Japanese migration.<sup>62</sup> The next year, following the first meeting between Japanese and Brazilian diplomats in San Francisco, Tokyo dispatched Nemoto to investigate Brazil. Nemoto reached Rio de Janeiro in September 1894



FIGURE 5. This is a picture of a European settler community called Nova Europa in São Paulo that Fujita Toshirō attached to his report to Tokyo in 1908. Japanese policy makers referred to European immigration and land acquisition in Brazil as a model for Japanese migration since its very beginning. Source: Fujita Toshirō, Box 1, Access No. 2017C47-14. 36, Hoover Institution Archives.

and, in the next few weeks, toured Brazilian coastal states such as Pernambuco, Bahía, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo. Unsurprisingly, he was most impressed with São Paulo. There he was not only warmly welcomed by the governor but also amazed by the developed transportation system and the facilities to accommodate immigrants in the Port of Santos.

In his report to Tokyo, Nemoto concluded that the Brazilian East was a perfect alternative to the American West as a destination for Japanese migration. Just like the United States, he reasoned, Brazil was endowed with vast and rich land. Among its most prosperous states along the east coast, São Paulo was particularly promising. Its climate was as pleasant as San Francisco's, and its vast land had boundless potential to accommodate Japanese migrants, who could easily settle down and expand their community.<sup>63</sup> Encouraged by Nemoto's report, the Meiji government and Japanese migration companies began to earnestly explore the possibility of migration to Brazil. Their Brazilian counterparts, including government officials, planters, and migration recruiters, were likewise awash with enthusiasm. Thus began the negotiations. After a few failed attempts, the first official group of Japanese migrants eventually reached the shore of São Paulo in 1908 via the *Kasato Maru*, one year after the United States shut its doors to Japanese labor migrants in the Gentlemen's Agreement.



The settler colonial nature of Japanese migration can be attested further by the sailing of the *Kasato Maru* itself. This first group of immigrants appeared to be no more than contract laborers who simply filled the labor vacuum in Brazil's coffee plantations created by the abolition of slavery. Among the 793 migrants on board, all but 12 had signed labor contracts with São Paulo's coffee planters.<sup>64</sup> However, the initial agreement actually required the government of São Paulo to establish colonies for these Japanese migrants along the state's central railway line so that they could purchase land at a low price. This was because the Japanese government, which had actively supported the *Kasato Maru* migration campaign, expected these migrants to eventually settle down in Brazil as landowning farmers once their labor contracts ended.<sup>65</sup>

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This chapter explains how American westward expansion inspired settler colonialism in both Meiji Japan and post-independence Brazil. These two countries' paths to settler colonialism eventually crossed when their diplomats made contact in 1893 regarding Japanese emigration to Brazil. The convergence of Meiji Japan and post-independence Brazil in their nineteenth-century expansion deepens our understanding of the history of Japanese migration to Brazil in two ways. First, it demonstrates that both the intellectual and political origins of the migration should be traced to the nineteenth century, decades before the sailing of the *Kasato Maru*, hitherto the commonly accepted starting point of the migration. Second, the migration itself, from its inception, should be understood in the context of both Japanese and Brazilian settler colonial expansion.

Meiji leaders believed that the Japanese, people of a civilized race like the Anglo-Saxons, had their own manifest destiny to fulfill. The empire's expansion started with the colonization of Hokkaido through the migration of Japanese settlers to its northern frontier. During the 1880s, it turned to the American West and later Latin America as destinations for Japanese emigrants. In the Southern Cone, Brazilian elites saw immigration-driven colonization as a primary means for Brazil's own project of nation building. For the liberals who established the First Republic in 1889, immigration meant much more than simply meeting the growing labor demand in coffee plantations. An influx of racially superior people, they believed, would not only improve the existing Brazilian racial stock but also turn Brazil's hinterland into a source of wealth and power for the expanding nation.

From both the sending side and the receiving side, leaders of Meiji Japan and post-independence Brazil saw migrants as agents of colonialism. Both regimes had embarked on the processes to institutionally dispossess Indigenous peoples of their ancestral land through migration. These processes were marked by the promulgation of the Land Law of 1850 in Brazil and the Land Regulation Ordinance of 1872 in Japan. Both laws defined the land owned by Indigenous peoples

as wasteland and allowed the government to legally appropriate and redistribute it to migrants.

In addition to the formation of migration states in both Brazil and Japan in the late nineteenth century, a comparison of the migration organizations established in the Empire of Brazil and Meiji Japan reveals yet another surprising parallel between these two colonial powers on opposite sides of the globe. Established by Brazilian elites at different times in the nineteenth century, organizations that promoted immigration, such as the SII, SCI, and SPI, all aimed to attract white immigrants to Brazil as agents of civilization and land colonization. The Colonial Society, established in Tokyo in 1893, on the other hand, took upon itself the mission of facilitating Japan's emigration-driven expansion overseas. In both Japan and Brazil, the sociopolitical elites who made up the membership of these migration societies revealed the link between migration and colonial expansion in their minds. The next chapter examines more closely the contexts of the sailing of the *Kasato Maru*, the commonly accepted starting point of Japanese immigration to Brazil.