

## Seizing the Land

### *Coffee, Railroad, and Settler Community Making*

In 1907, a group of Japanese political and business elites led by Minister of Agriculture and Commerce Ōura Kanetake gathered in Tokyo. In response to the suspension of Japanese labor migration to the United States due to the Gentlemen's Agreement, the participants sought to promote Japanese overseas expansion by altering the general nature of emigration. Echoing the growing calls for farmer migration among Japanese empire builders as a solution to the rural depression in the archipelago, they vowed to replace temporary labor migrants with permanent agricultural settlers.<sup>1</sup> The next year, they jointly established the Tokyo Syndicate, a business cooperative dedicated to facilitating the emigration of Japanese farming settlers. Aoyagi Ikutarō, head of the Tokyo Syndicate, embarked on an investigative trip to Brazil in 1910. Two years later, he obtained a land grant contract from the state government of São Paulo that allowed the Tokyo Syndicate to establish a few Japanese settler villages that were collectively known as the Iguape colony, the first official Japanese colony in Brazil.

Iguape was quickly followed by the formation and development of more Japanese settler villages of different sizes and types in São Paulo and nearby states. The rise of these villages marked the beginning of a new stage in the history of Japanese migration to Brazil: Japanese immigrants' transition from plantation laborers to landholding farmers. This transition and the continuation and further development of Japanese migration to Brazil during this period took place hand in hand with the Japanese expansionists' efforts to export farming settlers to Northeast Asia and the South Seas.

As this chapter explains, the Japanese exclusion campaigns in the United States that culminated in the Gentlemen's Agreement ushered in a new era in the development of the Japanese migration state. Concluding that the Gentlemen's

Agreement signified the failure of labor migration as a means of expansion, Tokyo in the 1910s and 1920s not only explored alternative destinations of migration but also sought to replace temporary laborers with farming settlers as the backbone of Japanese emigration. Compared to the organized campaigns of farmer migration to Northeast Asia and the South Seas, Japanese farmer migration to southeastern Brazil proved most successful in terms of the number of farmers relocated.

The birth and growth of Japanese settler villages was also made possible by the new development of Brazil's own migration state. Along with Brazil's territorial expansion in South America through diplomatic maneuverings, the government at the central and especially the state level escalated its efforts to build railways that connected the coast with the inland regions. As exemplified by the developments in the state of São Paulo, these penetrating railway lines not only expanded coffee cultivation but also accelerated the process of Indigenous dispossession by redistributing the land near the new railway lines to immigrants.

This chapter details the origin, development, and expansion of Japanese settler villages in southeastern Brazil. It explains this success by placing it in three distinct but interconnected contexts, namely, new developments in Japanese migration-driven expansion, railway expansion and new land distribution policies in the state of São Paulo, and global changes in politics and the economy as a result of World War I. Tokyo's success with Japanese farming villages in Brazil boosted enthusiasm for expansion in Brazil throughout the Japanese empire. More importantly, the growth of Japanese farming villages also convinced Japanese empire builders to view farmer migration as the most effective means of colonial expansion in the decades to come.

#### THE GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT AND NEW DIRECTIONS OF JAPANESE EXPANSION

In 1908, the same year the Gentlemen's Agreement took effect, a novel titled *Two Dragons on the Pacific Ocean* (*Taiheiyōjō no sōryū*) was published in Japan. The story began with a honeymoon period between Japan and the United States starting from Perry's arrival in the Japanese archipelago to the American acclamation of Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War. However, the bilateral relationship started to deteriorate due to American expansionism in the Pacific region and growing racism in the United States marked by the annexation of Hawai'i and the Philippines, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and anti-Japanese campaigns on the U.S. West Coast. The story climaxed in a war that took place in 1918, an event triggered by the massacre of fifteen hundred Japanese immigrants amid intensified anti-Japanese campaigns in the United States. The war began with Japan's swift seizure of the Philippines, Hawai'i, and Alaska, with the Japanese navy completely wiping out the American fleet. While Japan did not attack the U.S. mainland, it imposed a devastating embargo on the latter. Meanwhile, the United States suffered from



FIGURE 9. The front cover of *Tokyo Puck's* Issue of Anger Toward the United States (*Taibei happungō*). Titled *A Medical Examination*, the image shows how “Dr. Taft,” representing then U.S. secretary of war William Taft, is astonished by the fast-beating pulse of “Miss Rising Sun,” representing an angry Japan. Source: *Tokyo Puck* 3, no. 17 (1907).

domestic rebellions launched by African American soldiers and Native Americans. Eventually it was forced to accept a peace treaty with Japan with France as the mediator. As a result, in addition to a large amount of indemnity, the United States had to cede Hawai‘i, the Philippines, and Alaska to Japan.<sup>2</sup>

Likely the first fiction imagining a war between Japan and the United States with the former’s victory, *Two Dragons on the Pacific Ocean* was serialized in *Amerika*, a Japanese journal designed to promote U.S.-bound emigration.<sup>3</sup> It reflected the ire of Japanese intellectuals toward the United States as a result of the anti-Japanese campaigns that reached a peak at the time of the Gentlemen’s Agreement. *Tokyo*

*Puck*, a popular satirical magazine, voiced similar anger a year earlier in a special issue not too subtly titled, "The Issue of Anger toward the United States" (*Taibei happungō*). It criticized the hypocrisy of white Americans, who failed to live up to their self-professed principles of freedom and democracy by cruelly discriminating against peoples of color in both domestic politics and immigration policies.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these public expressions of anger, Tokyo's overall diplomatic strategy toward the United States in the two decades following the enactment of the Gentlemen's Agreement remained one of reconciliation and cooperation. This was signaled by the signing of the Root-Takahira Agreement in 1908, the same year the Gentlemen's Agreement took effect. Sealed by U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root and the Japanese ambassador to the United States, Takahira Kakugorō, this agreement confirmed the two countries' acknowledgment of their respective colonial acquisitions and interests. Japan recognized U.S. annexation of the Kingdom of Hawai'i and the Philippines and vowed to defend the American "Open Door" policy in China. In exchange, the United States acknowledged Japan's right to annex Korea and its newly gained colonial privileges in southern Manchuria following the Russo-Japanese War.

The context of Tokyo's pro-U.S. diplomacy was the steady growth of Japan's geopolitical influence in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Japanese empire not only entrenched its market monopoly and commercial advantages in China thanks to the outbreak of World War I but also became one of the four permanent members of the League of Nations Executive Council. Along with Japan's ascendancy as a world power, its politicians and intellectuals continued to be captivated by the even more successful ongoing process of empire building of the United States. The United States was quickly expanding its geopolitical and economic influences around the world, and Japan saw it as both a model to imitate and a partner to work with.

The consistency of the Japanese elites in pursuing Japan's expansion by cooperating with the rising American power in the 1910s and 1920s can be seen in the establishment and activities of two associations: the Great Japan Civilization Association (Dainihon Bunmei Kyōkai) and the Emigration Association (Imin Kyōkai). While the former aimed to foster the appreciation of modern Western knowledge and culture among the Japanese public, the latter focused on promoting migration-centered Japanese expansion by reconciling it with the existing world order. Both associations were led by political and business elites of the day; their activities demonstrated a synergistic partnership between the imperial government and civil society in the venture of emigration.

Formed in 1908 under the auspices of Ōkuma Shigenobu, the Great Japan Civilization Association was the wellspring of the Civilization Movement (Bunmei Undō) in Japan. Centered on Ōkuma and his associates both in and outside the government, the goal of this cultural movement was to prepare Japanese subjects to become qualified citizens as the Japanese empire was quickly emerging as a

global leader. The intellectual core of the Civilization Movement was Ōkuma's idea of reconciliation between Eastern and Western civilizations (*Tōzai bunmei chōwa*). Ōkuma and his followers believed that the Japanese empire, due to its history, functioned as a bridge between the East and the West; therefore, it was destined to play a unique and leading role in guiding the world toward a better future.<sup>5</sup> The actual activities of the association, however, demonstrated that Japan's role as a bridge was rather one-sided in the design of Ōkuma and his followers. The association was mainly dedicated to diffusing Western knowledge in the social sciences to the Japanese public by writing and translating books and holding public lectures; it urged its audience to embrace the Anglo-American world order by finding Japan's place in it.<sup>6</sup> The association's influence substantially expanded after Ōkuma became prime minister in 1914.

Also in 1914, the newly minted Prime Minister Ōkuma became the founding president of the Emigration Association. Similar to the Great Japan Civilization Association, the Emigration Association sought to expand the wealth and power of the Japanese empire in the Anglo-American order. Members of the Emigration Association saw the emigration of Japanese subjects overseas as the most desirable means to this end. In Ōkuma's imagination, the fate of Japanese migration to the United States had a particularly significant meaning. The American acceptance of Japanese immigration, he believed, would prove that the Japanese were the ideal candidates to integrate the essences of the East and the West.<sup>7</sup> The Emigration Association, therefore, made cultural and diplomatic efforts with the goal of reopening U.S. doors to Japanese immigrants. This was to be achieved by disciplining the bodies and minds of Japanese American immigrants, on the one hand, and improving the image of Japan and the Japanese in the United States, on the other.<sup>8</sup>

A careful examination of the activities of these two associations further reveals that Japanese expansionists were also exploring migration destinations outside of North America, including Northeast Asia, the South Seas, and South America. In 1916, the Great Japan Civilization Association published a major book, *The Overseas Development of the Japanese* (*Nihonjin no kaigai hatten*). With an enthusiastic preface by Nitobe Inazō, the book enumerated the previous activities of Japanese emigrants in different locations around the Pacific Rim, such as southern Manchuria, the Philippines, Hawai'i, the United States, Canada, Australia, Mexico, and Brazil. It urged its readers to take on the mission of expansion by migrating overseas.<sup>9</sup> The Emigration Association too published books and hosted lectures to encourage ordinary Japanese to see a number of destinations around the Pacific Rim as their future homes.<sup>10</sup>

These two associations' efforts in exploring alternative migration destinations were echoed by *The Sun* (*Taiyō*), one of the major popular magazines of the day. In 1910 and 1914, the magazine published two special issues to popularize the debates among Japanese expansionists on where and how the empire should expand: "The

Expansion of the Japanese Nation” (*Nihon minzoku no bōchō*) and “Expanding to the South or to the North?” (*Nanshin ya, hokushin ya?*).<sup>11</sup> The contributors to the two issues—policy makers, military officers, diplomats, university professors, and journalists—were united in their belief in Japan’s destiny of overseas expansion. However, the contributors also advanced their own agendas on the directions and strategies of this endeavor. These calls for empire building followed the same guiding principle of the Emigration Association and the Great Japan Civilization Association: to pursue Japan’s expansion by cooperating with the United States and the United Kingdom. This principle was best presented by Takekoshi Yosaburō in his article published in *Taiyō*’s 1910 special issue, “The Expansion of the Japanese People.” Though Japan was late in joining the civilized world, Takekoshi argued, it was now ready to partake in carrying the “White Man’s Burden” (*Hakujin no omoni*) and bringing civilization to the unenlightened corners of the world.<sup>12</sup>

Guided by the principle of cooperating with Euro-American powers, Japan’s expansion in the 1910s and 1920s took three general directions: Northeast Asia, the South Seas, and Latin America. Campaigns of Japanese expansion along these three paths were closely connected by shared ideologies, institutions, and enduring human networks. For all three routes, farmer migration stood out as the optimal means of expansion, and most efforts to promote farmer migration started between 1908 and 1913, during Prime Minister Katsura Tarō’s second term.

One of the most vocal supporters of expansion in Northeast Asia was Komura Jutarō. As minister of foreign affairs in the second Katsura cabinet, he famously proposed the agenda of “concentrating on Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula” (*Man Kan shūchū*) to the Diet in 1909 as Japan’s grand strategy of empire building. His primary goal was to minimize the empire’s conflicts with Anglo-American powers by limiting Japanese expansion in Northeast Asia. A year earlier, Tokyo had put this strategy into practice through the formation of the Oriental Development Company. With the government’s financial aid, the company aimed to acquire farmland in the Korean Peninsula by taking advantage of the colonial privileges the Japanese enjoyed there and redistributing the land to the recruited Japanese farmers.<sup>13</sup> Kanbe Masao, a professor of law at Kyoto Imperial University, supplied justification for their land acquisition and migration campaign. In his book, *On Agricultural Migration to Korea* (*Chōsen nōgyō imin ron*), Kanbe promoted the migration of Japanese rural residents to the Korean Peninsula as a way to bring the blessings of civilization to Koreans.<sup>14</sup>

The empire’s annexation of Korea in 1910 and the substantial growth of Japanese political and economic influence in China during World War I, however, did not bring success to Japanese farmer migration in Northeast Asia. Despite its consistent efforts, the Oriental Development Company managed to relocate fewer than four thousand Japanese farming households to colonial Korea by 1924. About eight thousand Japanese farmers settled in Japanese-controlled southern Manchuria by 1931.<sup>15</sup> These lackluster results were mainly due to the Japanese farmers’ inability to



compete economically with local Korean and Chinese farmers, who had a much lower cost of living than the occupiers did.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of governmental policy, Japan's efforts to export farming settlers to the South Seas dates to Katsura Tarō's tenure as governor general of Taiwan in 1896, when he envisioned Taiwan as a base for the empire's expansion into the South Seas.<sup>17</sup> Katsura also served as the founding president of the Taiwan Association (Taiwan Kyōkai) in 1898, a semigovernmental organization that supported Japanese colonization of Taiwan by promoting Japanese migration and business expansion on the island.<sup>18</sup> Japan's government-sponsored farmer migration to the South Seas indeed began with Taiwan in 1910. That year, the Japanese colonial administration on the island established the Department of Migration and began to attract farming settlers from Japan by distributing local land to them.<sup>19</sup> Yet, because of the higher living costs of the Japanese compared to those of the local farmers, the migration scheme in Taiwan, like its counterpart in the Korean Peninsula, proved unsuccessful.<sup>20</sup>

The end of World War I brought another wave of Japanese expansion to the South Seas. The victorious empire not only annexed German Micronesia but, as an ally of the United Kingdom and France, also gained further access to their Southeast Asian colonial markets and resources. In 1915, Inoue Masaji and Uchida Kakichi, both employed by the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan, established the South Seas Association (Nan'yō Kyōkai), an organization that had financial support from both Tokyo and Taipei. Like the Taiwan Association, it was a semigovernmental organization that sought to aid Japanese expansion in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific by facilitating investigations in these regions and educating the public about them as potential migration destinations.<sup>21</sup> The primary target of this wave of expansion was Micronesia, migration to which began soon after World War I. Yet commerce, rather than migration, proved more successful in this endeavor.<sup>22</sup>

The third target of Japanese expansion was Latin America, particularly southeastern Brazil. Japanese farmer migration to Brazil, first launched by Aoyagi Ikutarō in 1908, was closely connected to the contemporaneous campaigns in Northeast Asia and the South Seas. Like its counterparts in the Asia-Pacific region, Aoyagi's project was made possible by political support from Katsura Tarō during his second term as prime minister. On a more practical front, the Aoyagi project mirrored the other two by acquiring local lands, relocating Japanese farmers there, and then distributing the lands to them. Between the 1910s and the mid-1930s, southeastern Brazil was where Japanese farmer migration proved to be the most successful. In 1920, among the 28,000 Japanese settlers in Brazil, 94.8 percent earned their livelihood by farming in one way or another.<sup>23</sup> Until the early 1930s, along with the steady inflow of Japanese migrants, the number of Japanese farming settlers continued to grow annually. The success of Japanese farming settlers in São Paulo, as the following paragraphs explain, was not possible without the political

and economic transformations taking place within the state as well as in Brazil in general during the early twentieth century.

#### THE UNITED STATES, RAILWAYS, AND A NEW PATTERN OF SETTLER COLONIALISM IN SÃO PAULO

At the turn of the twentieth century, a parallel developed between Japan and Brazil as both countries successfully pursued territorial expansion. From 1895 to 1910, Meiji Japan quickly emerged as a regional hegemon in Northeast Asia after the First Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, turning Taiwan, southern Manchuria, and the Korean Peninsula into its colonies. At the same time, the First Republic substantially expanded its territory in Latin America through diplomacy. Through stunningly successful negotiations, Brazilian diplomats led by José Paranhos, Baron of Rio Branco, settled Brazil's historical territorial disputes with Argentina, Peru, British Guiana, French Guiana, Colombia, and Bolivia. As a result, Brazilian territory expanded substantially both in the Amazon region in the north and the La Plata River Basin in the south. This series of land acquisition and border settlement concluded the centuries-long Luso-Brazilian territorial expansion from the Atlantic coast toward the Andes. During this period, Brazil added 342,000 square miles, an area bigger than that of France, to its territory. It was now the fifth largest country in the world.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to territorial expansion, Rio sought to assert the republic's leadership in Latin America. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Brazil not only became the first Latin American country to have a cardinal assigned by Rome, but it also played a central role as mediator in a number of diplomatic disputes among Latin American countries. Brazil became the only Latin American country to actively participate in World War I, and, like its fellow victor, Japan, it profited from the war by cementing its status as a major power of the world. Though it was unable to become a permanent member of the League's Executive Council like Japan, Brazil was reelected repeatedly to the council from 1920 to 1926.<sup>25</sup>

Comparable to Japan's quest for empire by maintaining friendly relations with the United States, Brazil's quick rise as a regional power was only possible through its close alliance with the United States.<sup>26</sup> Its transition from an empire to a republic at the end of the nineteenth century decisively shifted the anchor of Brazilian diplomacy from Europe to Washington, DC. Founders of the First Republic not only modeled its 1891 Constitution after that of the United States but also saw the latter as the best example they could follow.<sup>27</sup> Rio welcomed the ongoing expansion of the United States, both in the Americas and across the Pacific, and strived to pursue Brazil's own wealth and power under the umbrella of growing American hegemony.

In 1905, Brazil became the first South American country to exchange ambassadors with the United States. Joaquim Nabuco, one of Brazil's most vocal and influential pro-U.S. elites, arrived in Washington as the republic's first ambassador to the United States. He worked closely with Elihu Root, U.S. secretary of state, to





MAP 1. This map shows the territories that Brazil acquired from its neighbors through diplomacy from 1895 to 1928. Source: E. Bradford Burns, *A History of Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 279. A. Acquired from Argentina in 1895; B. Acquired from Swiss Federal Council in 1900; C. Acquired from Bolivia in 1903; D. Acquired from Italy in 1904; E. Acquired from Peru in 1909; F. Acquired from Colombia in 1928.

promote Pan-Americanism. With the endorsement of Washington, Rio hosted the third Pan-American Conference the next year, consolidating its role as an ally and proxy of the United States in Latin America. The United States, in return, stood firmly behind Brazil's demands at Versailles as a victor of World War I and its broader quest for increased influence in the postwar world.<sup>28</sup>

The political closeness between the First Republic and the United States developed in tandem with the rapid growth of American economic interests in Brazil. After World War I, the United States replaced Great Britain as the biggest investor in the Brazilian economy. With British presence waning, the United States not only became Brazil's most important trade partner but also supplied it with the biggest amount of investment. American merchants established monopolies in a

number of Brazilian industries, old and new, ranging from shipping, meatpacking, telegraph, and radio to popular entertainment.<sup>29</sup> This was also when Brazil strode forward in its process of industrialization and urbanization. Much of the capital and resources was made available by the continuing development of the coffee economy. São Paulo, the new center of Brazil's coffee economy, also became the fastest-growing industrial region in the country.<sup>30</sup>

The Brazil-U.S. intimacy, Brazil's rise as a regional power, and São Paulo's prosperity in the coffee economy and success in industrialization jointly turned the state into the cradle of a new form of settler colonialism, one that was centered on immigrant farmers. São Paulo became a frontrunner among Brazilian states in immigration-based land exploration and redistribution. One of the most immediate stimulations was the rapid construction of railroads in the state, which reached its climax in the 1910s. The Brazilian leaders' desire to expand railway lines to improve communication and reduce the cost of transportation dated to the early days of the empire. Because of the lack of capital, at the end of the imperial period, the majority of the railroads were still built—and owned—by foreign companies mainly funded by shareholders in London. Though the Imperial Railroad Law of 1873 permitted both central and local governments to use land grants to attract foreign capital, railway construction during the imperial period was generally slow and limited. At the end of the nineteenth century, railway lines remained concentrated in populated areas along the east coast, conveniently linking the big plantations and mines to nearby ports by the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>31</sup> The state of São Paulo, with its booming coffee plantations, was no exception. Since 1860, when a line to connect the Port of Santos with Jundiaí was constructed, the railway network in the state grew steadily. Yet during this period almost all railway tracks were located in the existing coffee zones in the Old West, including the Central, Mogiana, and Paulista regions.

This pattern of railway construction began to change at the turn of the twentieth century, when the First Republic began to buy back the foreign-owned railroads. By 1914, the central and state governments owned up to 61 percent of the railway lines in the country. In the meantime, they were also building their own railways, though still with the support of foreign capital. Unlike those built in the nineteenth century, these new railways were not located in the existing coffee zones. Instead, they penetrated the remote interior, linking it to the east coast. São Paulo exemplified this new pattern as the state where most of the new railway tracks in the nation were being laid.<sup>32</sup> One of the most representative railway lines of this period was the *Estada de Ferro do Noroeste*, or Northwest Railroad, whose construction began in 1905 with the express goal to tighten the Brazilian state's military control over its western borders. During the first phase of construction, Noroeste linked the city of Bauru with Araçatuba in 1908, where an inland city was established in the same year. When the entire line was completed in 1914, it reached the border of Bolivia.<sup>33</sup> This wave of railway construction came to an end in the last half of the 1910s, when the outbreak of World War I led to a sharp drop in foreign capital.<sup>34</sup>

The Noroeste line, like many others laid during this period, not only strengthened the republic's military presence along its borders but also substantially accelerated the state governments' appropriation of Indigenous land. The Kaingang people, known for their resilience and combat skills, had withstood the invasion of white settlers for generations. However, violent clashes began as soon as railroad construction started. The Kaingang retaliated against the railroad workers by killing some, which led to brutal reprisals from the workers. A 1908 newspaper even described the massacre of the Kaingang as if it were a sport for the workers. In a particularly heinous incident, a man named João Pedro led an attack on a Kaingang village at night, killing more than a hundred people. Despite their reputation as formidable warriors, the Kaingang were overpowered by the unexpected assault and the superior weaponry of the attackers.<sup>35</sup>

As railway networks now linked the interior with port cities, the output of the land—coffee as well as other crops—could be transported to industrial centers and the coast at low cost. As a result, more and more Indigenous forests in the interior became potential coffee fields. Once again, as the center of the coffee economy in the country, the state of São Paulo served as an example of this process. As late as 1907, when the state had already become the top coffee producer of Brazil, more than half of its land, mainly in the northern and western interior, remained unfarmed. Yet by the early 1920s, the Noroeste line, together with the Alta Sorocabana line and the extension of the Mogiana line, had pushed the coffee frontier to the state's western and northern borders.<sup>36</sup> These new coffee zones, including the New West and the Upper Mogiana, quickly became the main coffee suppliers of São Paulo within a decade; by the early 1930s, they made up more than 60 percent of the total coffee output in the state.<sup>37</sup>

This wave of railway-driven expansion of coffee farming developed in tandem with a fundamental change in the practice of property rights. The Land Law of 1850 empowered the central government to appropriate Indigenous land in the interior by defining it as publicly owned. However, because of a lack of political resources and limitations in transportation, the imperial regime was incapable of exerting *de facto* control over the interior. As a result, landlords and individual farmers alike continued to claim new land by squatting. The transition of Brazil into a republic and the promulgation of the 1891 Constitution shifted the authority to define and enforce property rights from the central government to individual states. However, this did little to strengthen the state's power to impose control and only led to a diversification of land policies throughout the country.

It was not until the wave of inland-bound railway construction that state governments could finally exercise a firm grip on what they defined as public land through a revolutionary mode of land distribution.<sup>38</sup> Known as *loteamento*, this model of land distribution aimed to create small owner-farmers. A typical practice was that the state government granted a portion of what it defined as public land in the interior to a land development or railway company. The latter would then divide the land into small units, usually over twenty hectares each, and sell them to

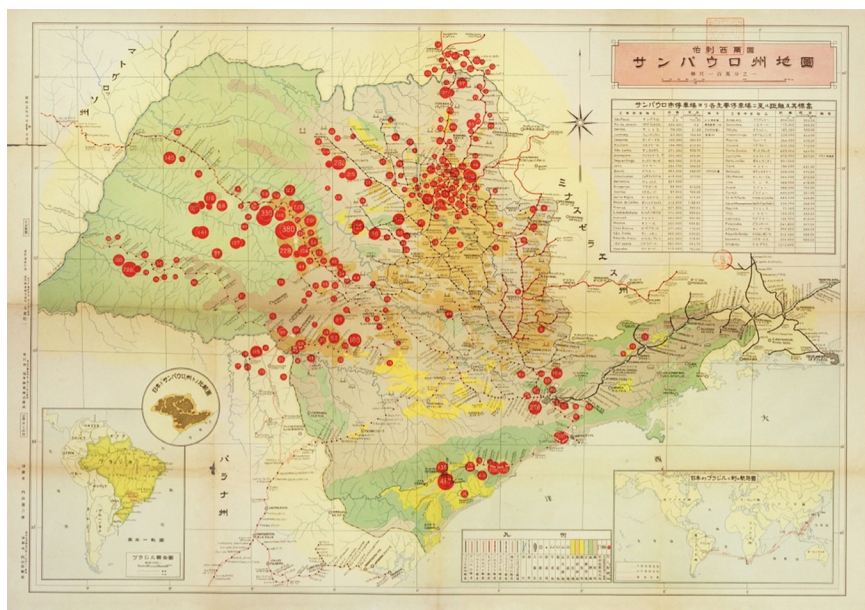
individual farmers. In order to make its land attractive, the company would lay roads and build cities and related facilities, turning the land into a community of small farmers.<sup>39</sup> Since the individual buyers shouldered the responsibility of turning forests into coffee fields, the land was sold at low prices. Soon the land of interior São Paulo became a magnet for individual farmers, who were the backbone of land exploration and coffee cultivation. As a result, a number of new coffee zones emerged in western and northern São Paulo that were fundamentally different from the traditional coffee zones in the Paraíba Valley: the former was mainly made up of small farms; the latter, of large plantations.

Loteamento made it easier for immigrants, both Europeans and Japanese, to become independent landowners.<sup>40</sup> A 1920 proclamation by Washington Luís, governor of São Paulo, emphasized the state government's commitment to facilitating immigrant-centered, small farm-driven land colonization. "Retain those [immigrants] who live here, welcome those who come, colonize, settle," he claimed, "that is our desideratum." He promised to promote further public land distribution under the loteamento system in a manner similar to what was done along the Noroeste and Sorocabana railway lines: conducting further land surveys, building new towns along the frontier-bound railways, and offering conducive policies in tax and finance.<sup>41</sup>

In this wave of immigrant-driven colonization made possible by the new railways and expansionist state policies, the Indigenous people were not the only ones affected. While previously the state governments had claimed the land without modern titles as publicly owned, they were often unable to assert actual control in the interior regions due to the lack of resources and transportation restrictions. As a result, both caboclo farmers and big plantations continued to claim new land on their own by squatting. Plantations usually gave sharecroppers usufruct rights to the land they farmed in return for their services.<sup>42</sup> Now, with government presence established, these independent squatters and sharecroppers had to purchase the title from the state in order to retain their land. Those who could not afford the title often abandoned their plot and moved inland, further encroaching on Indigenous land. They also fought back against the state through lawsuits as well as rebellions. The Contestado Rebellion in southern Brazil in 1912–16 was an example of how the new infringement on the existing residents' rights to their land during this period led to land disputes and armed conflicts.<sup>43</sup>

#### DIVERGENCE AND CONVERGENCE OF JAPANESE SETTLERS

São Paulo, the center of coffee production and railway expansion, was the forerunner in this new wave of settler colonialism in Brazil. It was not a coincidence that the state was also where the first dozens of Japanese Brazilian farming colonies emerged in the 1910s. Almost all of the Japanese colonies were located along railway lines beyond Paraíba Valley, home of the old coffee zones. Most of their



MAP 2. The locations of Japanese settler communities in the state of São Paulo in the early 1930s. The vast majority of the communities were located along the railway lines in the new coffee zones in the west and north. Source: Gaikō Shiryōkan, *Honpon imin toriatsukainin kankei zakken*, *Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushiki Gaisha*, vol. 10, J.1.2.0. J 3-1.

inhabitants were Japanese immigrants who arrived in Brazil initially as contract laborers on coffee plantations. According to how they were formed and financed, these settler colonies can be classified as two general types: top-down and bottom-up. The former were established directly by the joint forces of the imperial government, business elites, and migration promoters in Japan. The latter were organized by immigrants who were already in Brazil. Villages of these two types differed significantly but also shared many features.

The Iguape project, spearheaded by Aoyagi Ikutarō, represented the top-down type.<sup>44</sup> Both its founders and its financial resources came directly from Tokyo. In 1913, with the support of then prime minister Katsura Tarō, a group of political and entrepreneurial elites established the Brazil Colonization Company. This venture was led by the business tycoon Shibusawa Ei'ichi, who aimed to profit from the acquisition and development of Brazilian land by Japanese migrants. With an initial investment of one million yen, the Brazil Colonization Company took over the Brazilian government's land grant from the Tokyo Syndicate and carried out the project of settler community building under Aoyagi's leadership.<sup>45</sup>

The first portion of land, 1,400 hectares, that the Brazil Colonization Company obtained from the Iguape municipal council was on the left bank of the Ribeira River in the Gipuvura region. The company promised to settle thirty Japanese families within five years. Aoyagi and the first group of residents, including a few

agriculture and medicine specialists, arrived in October 1913 from Japan. In honor of Katsura Tarō, a key supporter of this project who died the same month, this settler village was named the Katsura Colony.<sup>46</sup> Soon the company obtained 9,300 hectares in Registro, up the Iguape River. There it established the second Japanese settler village in Iguape, known as the Registro Colony.<sup>47</sup>

In contrast, Japanese settler villages of the bottom-up type were established without direct financial and political support from Tokyo. Instead, they were founded by Japanese immigrants who were already in Brazil. Most Japanese settler villages that emerged along the Noroeste railway fell into this category. According to the ways the community leadership took shape, they can be further categorized into two subtypes. One was represented by the Birigui Colony, the leadership of which emerged gradually after the formation of the colony. The other, exemplified by the Hirano Colony and the Uetsuka Colony, already had well-defined leadership from its inception; indeed, that leadership was crucial to the formation of these colonies.

The Birigui Colony, one of the largest Japanese settler colonies, was located along the Noroeste line, southeast of Araçatuba station.<sup>48</sup> The forestland of the region was originally purchased by Cia de Terras, Medeiros & Colonização de São Paulo, a land developer funded by British and Brazilian capital. The company divided its 125,000 hectares into units of 25 hectares and started selling them to small farmers in 1913 via three-year loans. In order to attract farming settlers, it not only paved roads but also offered its residents free train tickets on the Noroeste line.<sup>49</sup> The red clay soil (*terra rosa*) in the area proved to be highly fertile. Within a few years, Birigui had already attracted a few thousand immigrant settlers, including Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese.<sup>50</sup>

The first thirteen Japanese families arrived in Birigui in 1915, and the number of Japanese settlers grew steadily after. Its community leadership began to take shape in 1916, when the company employed Miyazaki Hachirō as its agent in charge of recruiting Japanese settlers and managing their community.<sup>51</sup> Under Miyazaki's leadership, Japanese settlers began working together to build public facilities and provide services for themselves. In 1923, when the Japanese Association of Birigui was established with Miyazaki as its first president, the Japanese settlers in the region expanded to Araçatuba station and areas farther west.<sup>52</sup>

In 1915, the same year Japanese immigrants arrived in Birigui, Hirano Unpei established the Hirano Colony. A graduate of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Hirano came to Brazil as one of the five interpreters on the *Kasato Maru* and was assigned to the Guatapara plantation in Mogiana. Because of his leadership and language skills, he was soon promoted to assistant director of the plantation to manage affairs related to Japanese coffee laborers. With the goal of establishing a village of independent Japanese farmers, Hirano left his plantation job and purchased 3,920 hectares of forestland northeast of Cafelândia station (now Presidente Penna station), about 125 kilometers from Bauru station on the Noroeste



line. His influence among Japanese immigrants attracted eighty-two settler families to his colony during the first year.<sup>53</sup>

Three years later, another *Kasato Maru* migrant, Uetsuka Shūhei, purchased 3,388 hectares near Heitor Legru station (now Promissão station) along the Noroeste line, between the Birigui and Hirano Colonies. Uetsuka had initially worked as a migration agent of the Imperial Colonization Company and an assistant to Mizuno Ryū. Following Hirano's example, he took advantage of São Paulo's public land sale amid the wave of railway expansion and established the First Uetsuka Colony (also called the Promissão Colony). He founded the Second Uetsuka Colony in 1922.<sup>54</sup>

Though bearing significant differences in the ways they were established and managed, these two types of settler villages were similar to one another in no less important ways. Both types exemplified Japanese collaborative settler colonialism in Brazil. On the one hand, the formation of these settler villages marked a new and successful chapter in the history of Japanese migration-driven overseas expansion that was centered on agriculture, permanent settlement, and land acquisition. On the other hand, the emerging Japanese villages in southeastern Brazil, like many other farming villages established in the same region by European immigrants such as the Italians, Spaniards, and Portuguese, became the arms of the Brazilian state to claim and colonize the land in the country's interior.

First, the formation of Japanese settler villages of both types in São Paulo was the Japanese expansionists' response to anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States. They sought alternative destinations for Japanese migration and emphasized land acquisition and agricultural settlement in their destinations. Aoyagi Ikutaro's project, which saw the purchase of land in Iguape and the establishment of Japanese farming villages there, was closely linked to Tokyo-sponsored programs of farmer migration to Northeast Asia and the South Seas. This was not only because Katsura Tarō, then prime minister of Japan, played an important role in their conception. All three migration campaigns, though oriented in different directions, mirrored one another in their ideologies. Stimulated by intensified anti-Japanese sentiment in North America, these campaigns aimed to find alternatives to the United States as new destinations of Japanese migration. More importantly, the planners and leaders of all these campaigns deemed labor migration undesirable and instead saw farmer migration and the acquisition of land overseas as the most desirable means of expansion.

The settler villages of the bottom-up type in the state of São Paulo were not directly associated with the campaigns of farmer migration to Northeast Asia and the South Seas. However, their founders and leaders considered themselves Japan's empire builders in South America. The leaders of the most representative Japanese villages along the Noroeste line, such as Hirano Unpei, Uetsuka Shūhei, and Miyazaki Hachirō, all shared the goal of pursuing Japanese expansion through migration and settler colonialism with those who spearheaded Japanese

emigration campaigns on the other side of the Pacific.<sup>55</sup> For the same reason, villages of the bottom-up type often welcomed financial aid from Tokyo and were, therefore, subject to its political and cultural influence. From the very beginning, Hirano Unpei's endeavor to acquire land and create a Japanese settler village was inspired and guided by Matsumura Sadao, then Japanese consul general in São Paulo. Matsumura also swiftly provided aid to Hirano when some of the latter's employees fell ill with yellow fever.<sup>56</sup> A more direct example of this was Uetsuka Shūhei, who, like Hirano, was supported and guided by the Japanese consul in São Paulo in his efforts to establish two farming villages along the Noroeste line.<sup>57</sup> He also led Japanese farmers along the Noroeste line to collectively submit an appeal to Tokyo, which successfully obtained a ten-year low-interest loan from the Japanese government to Japanese coffee growers in São Paulo; this helped the latter survive a historic drought in the 1920s.<sup>58</sup>

Second and no less significant, Japanese settler villages of both types were agents and beneficiaries of Brazil's own settler colonialism. The dramatic proliferation of railway lines in the first two decades of the twentieth century substantially increased the state governments' capacity to assert control over the interior lands. The state governments sold them to land investment companies, which in turn distributed the land to individual farmers in small portions. With railways now connecting these once-remote areas to the eastern coast and urban centers, interior land became attractive to immigrants desiring land of their own. The *loteamento* mode of distribution and the multiyear installment financial scheme made it possible for individuals who had little wealth to afford the land. The economic boom and the rapid urbanization triggered by the outbreak of World War I further provided a growing demand for agricultural products, which ensured that the newly formed farmer-centered settler villages in the interior could stay afloat financially.

These individual settlers who became owner-farmers in the interior, in turn, served as the trailblazers of state-sponsored settler colonialism. In the state of São Paulo, the Japanese settlers, like those from Europe, were indispensable arms of the Paulista government in its land colonization. The Noroeste railway, which quickly became a hub of Japanese settler villages, was put into use while the state government was at war with the Indigenous peoples along the line. By defining Indigenous land and the land occupied by squatters as state owned, the government sold land wherever railways were constructed.<sup>59</sup> The establishment of the Birigui, Uetsuka, and Hirano Colonies and other Japanese colonies along the Noroeste line was an integral part of this process of land appropriation. Japanese settlers in Iguape, located in the Gipuvura region of the state's south coast, also served as agents of the Paulista government to claim its ownership of the local land.<sup>60</sup>

When Japanese settlers found their feet in southeastern Brazil, contract laborers from Japan continued to populate the coffee fazendas in the same region. Except during the first two years of World War I, when the numbers of Japanese

immigrants dropped sharply due to a downturn in the global coffee market, about 2,700 Japanese laborers entered Brazil's coffee plantations every year during the 1910s. This stable flow of Japanese labor immigrants to southeastern Brazil was crucial for the emergence and growth of Japanese settler villages in the interior, as the majority of the farming settlers were former contract laborers who had either completed or terminated their contracts.

Although the Brazil Colonization Company spared no efforts to recruit farmers from the Japanese archipelago to Iguape, few answered its call. The top-down type of Japanese settler villages in Brazil encountered difficulty recruiting farmers from Japan, a phenomenon that mirrored the domestic expansionists' failure to relocate sufficient numbers of farmers to Northeast Asia and the South Seas. As a result, the growth of Japanese villages in Iguape was primarily due to its ability to attract Japanese immigrants who initially arrived as contract laborers. Similarly, residents of the bottom-up type villages were almost exclusively immigrant laborers who had previously worked in coffee plantations.

Though most of the Japanese settler villages emerged in the state of São Paulo during this era, it was not the only state where Japanese settlers claimed land. Yamagata Yosaburō, a merchant from the Hizen domain (now Saga Prefecture), purchased 5,000 hectares in Rio de Janeiro and established a farm for rice and sugarcane cultivation.<sup>61</sup> Yamagata's life demonstrated the connection between Japanese settler community building in Brazil and Japan's colonial expansion in the Asia-Pacific region in the first two decades of the twentieth century. He started his career by moving to Hokkaido and investing in a local fishery and soon expanded his business into mining and livestock husbandry. He also made an unsuccessful attempt to expand his commercial network into southern Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War. In 1908, after his business in Japan ran into a crisis, Yamagata migrated to Rio de Janeiro in search of a fresh start.<sup>62</sup> Like many Japanese community leaders in São Paulo, Yamagata consciously associated his endeavor of migration and land acquisition with the goal of putting down the roots of the Japanese empire in South America.<sup>63</sup>

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The first two decades of the twentieth century marked an important period for the development of both Japanese and Brazilian colonialism. As the United States rose steadily as a global power and substantially expanded its political and economic influence, empire builders in Japan and Brazil continued to see the United States as the ideal model of settler colonialism. They sought to pursue their own expansion by accommodating and collaborating with the global rise of American power. By participating in World War I, both Japan and Brazil increased their global and regional influence at the beginning of the American century.

Through the Russo-Japanese War and World War I, Japan secured its grasp of swaths of Northeast Asia and Micronesia. While anti-Japanese sentiment in

the United States pushed Japanese expansionists to seek alternative migration destinations, it also convinced them that agricultural settlement and land acquisition was a more desirable migration model than that of contract labor. South America, especially southeastern Brazil, became one of the three destinations of state-sponsored Japanese expansion, together with Northeast Asia and the South Seas. Brazil's First Republic, on the other hand, had achieved stunning success in territorial expansion through diplomacy with support from the United States, which stimulated a new wave of railway construction in southeastern Brazil that linked the economic and population centers along the east coast to the interior. These railways decisively increased the state's power to appropriate Indigenous and communal land.

It was in these global and regional contexts that the first group of Japanese settler villages emerged in the state of São Paulo along its main railway lines. Jointly facilitated by the migration states of Japan and Brazil, these settler villages served as instruments of Japanese expansion in South America and of Brazil's settler colonialism in its own interior. They continued to grow and expand by attracting Japanese immigrant laborers from coffee plantations. The end of World War I led to new changes in the economy, social structure, and political ideologies in both the Japanese empire and the First Republic, and the next chapter examines how these changes on both sides of the Pacific led to the heyday of Japanese collaborative settler colonialism in Brazil.