

Reinventing Japan and Japanese Brazilians

The Japanese settler community in Brazil reached its nadir in the years immediately following World War II. When the Shōwa emperor Hirohito's announcement of Japan's unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945, reached Brazil via radio, most Japanese settlers received it with doubt and confusion. Few were willing to believe it. After Rio banned Japanese-language media in 1941, Japanese settlers relied on radio broadcasts from Tokyo as their sole source of news regarding Japan and the ongoing war. The propaganda from Tokyo led its listeners in Brazil to believe that the empire was well on track to victory. Consequently, a long-lasting and bitter split emerged among the settlers with regard to whether to acknowledge Japan's defeat.

The roots of this split had existed among the settlers decades earlier because of the social gap between the elites and the general population. Before the war, community leaders were mainly affiliated with Tokyo-sponsored big enterprises such as Kaikō, Tozan, and Burataku; they were also close to the Japanese embassy and had strong influence on mainstream Japanese newspapers in São Paulo. With their economic privileges and political power, community leaders kept their distance from average settlers and lived in an insulated circle.¹ After the Brazilian government suspended Japan's diplomatic apparatuses, confiscated Tokyo-owned enterprises, and banned Japanese-language media, the existing settler leadership collapsed. Given this power vacuum and the lack of reliable sources of information, some previously marginalized individuals seized the chance to rise as new leaders of the community. They presented themselves as representatives of the downtrodden and vowed to do away with the elitism of the previous leadership.²

The question of whether to recognize Japan's defeat continued to fester amid the battle over the new settler leadership. Those who accepted Japan's defeat were



FIGURE 25. Brazilian president Artur da Costa e Silva greeting Japan's Crown Prince Akihito with a welcome toast during his visit to Brasília. Source: *Paulista Gurafu, Kōtaishi gofusai Burajiru no tabi*, July 1967, 2–3.

known as the *makegumi* or the *ninshiki ha* (defeat or recognition faction), while those who refused to accept the defeat were known as the *kachigumi* (victory faction). Among the *kachigumi*, a militant group known as Shindō Renmei carried out terrorist attacks to retaliate against and threaten fellow settlers who accepted Japan's defeat. The organization soon caught the attention of the Brazilian police, which arrested and jailed all its core leaders in 1947.³ The extremism of Shindō Renmei stimulated a new anti-Japanese campaign among Brazilian politicians who sought to ban Japanese immigration permanently. Though this campaign failed to write the ban into Brazil's new constitution of 1946, the image of the Japanese settler community suffered tremendously. With few connections with war-torn Japan, the settlers were utterly isolated.

Yet in 1967, when Japan's then crown prince Akihito and his wife arrived in Brasília, Brazil's newly established capital, Brazilian society not only recognized the Japanese as one of the most successful ethnic groups but also celebrated them as vital agents of the two nations' cultural and economic exchange. Brazil's invitation to Akihito to come to Brasília, a milestone achievement of the nation's settler colonialism, symbolized the reintegration of Japanese settlers into Brazil's settler colonial history as partners. In São Paulo, the Japanese settlers themselves organized a magnificent welcoming ceremony for the Akihito couple and greeted them in Pacaembu Stadium with a crowd of eighty thousand.⁴ The couple also visited Japanese settler businesses and farms in both São Paulo and the Amazon and were showered with appreciation. Akihito's visit, therefore, also

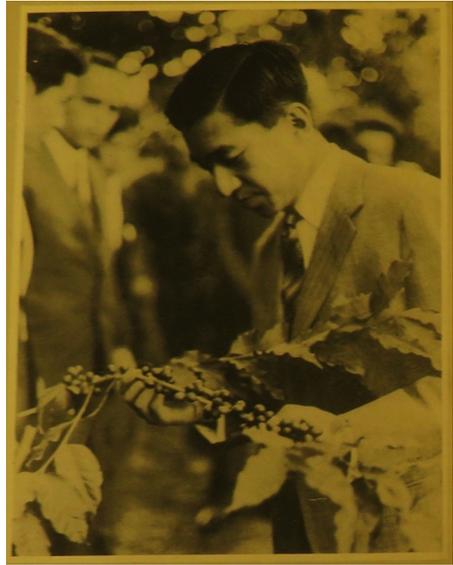


FIGURE 26. Crown Prince Akihito visiting a Japanese coffee farm during his visit to Brazil in 1967 in recognition of Japanese settlers' historical contribution to Brazilian society. Source: *Paulista Gurafu, Kōtaishi gofusai Burajiru no tabi*, July 1967, 1.



FIGURE 27. A crowd of 80,000 Japanese immigrants greeting Crown Prince Akihito and his wife in the Pacaembu Stadium in the city of São Paulo. Source: *Paulista Gurafu, Kōtaishi gofusai Burajiru no tabi*, July 1967, 12–13.

signified the successful reunion of the Japanese settler community after decades of division and turmoil. As the Japanese Brazilian magazine *Jornal Paulista* commented, it was during Akihito's seven-day visit that "the hearts of 600,000 Japanese settlers became one for the first time."⁵

This chapter discusses how Japanese Brazilian elites successfully reunified and rebranded their community in the postwar decades; it also explains how this process of self-reinvention was entwined with and made possible by Japan's own reinvention during the Cold War. The Japanese Brazilian settlers were able to rejuvenate their community through old and new connections with Japanese government and society. By the same process, Japanese Brazilian elites played a critical role in the formation of Japan's national identity after World War II by contributing to the rise of *Nihonjinron*, a discourse celebrating Japan's cultural uniqueness that continues to influence Japanese society today.

RACE TO CULTURE, EMPIRE TO NATION

Gerald Horne has forcefully argued that World War II was, in fact, a race war.⁶ At the same time, it was a war that denied racism. The totality of the war, as Takashi Fujitani observes, forced countries on both sides to alter racial ideologies. In order to mobilize all possible human resources, the states branded themselves as racially inclusive. The traditional and exclusive form of racism, which Fujitani calls "vulgar racism," was no longer publicly acceptable. The new norm that replaced it was a "polite" form of racism that denied the existence of racial discrimination but gave consent to the actual practice of racism in daily life.⁷ While the United States and Japan attacked each other as racist, during the total war both embraced this "polite racism." Just as the United States utilized the 442nd Infantry Regiment, which was composed almost entirely of Japanese American Nisei, to showcase its claimed commitment to racial equality, the imperial military of Japan enlisted Koreans and Taiwanese to present the empire's multiethnic profile. The discourse of "racial democracy" that the Vargas regime advocated in the 1930s and 1940s worked in a similar way. By idealizing the interracial harmony in Brazilian society, it justified the authoritarian nature of the government.⁸

In the postwar years, the denial of racial discrimination on the U.S. home front paved the way for the use of "culture" as a strategic term to replace race in public discussions related to racial minorities and foreign countries. Japan's "national culture," a term used in U.S. wartime enemy studies, was popularized among American Japanologists as a result of the rise of the Culture and Personality school in U.S. academia.⁹ Best illustrated by Ruth Benedict's 1946 classic, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, this national culture approach treated the Japanese experience as a holistic entity, ignoring its racial and regional diversity.¹⁰ This way of thinking served as an academic guide for policy makers during the U.S. occupation of Japan. It was also embraced with enthusiasm by Japanese intellectuals who,

following the lead of Yanagita Kunio, had already begun treating Japanese culture as an integrated entity during the war years.¹¹

The concept of national culture also became a political means for postwar Japan to rejoin the world with a new image. In January 1946, Minister of Culture Tanaka Kōtarō called for building postwar Japan as a cultured nation (*bunka kokka*). As he explained it, culture was not merely something to be enjoyed. Instead, it was rooted in justice and associated with universal values such as democracy, pacifism, individualism, and freedom of speech.¹² A few months later, the Ministry of Culture issued the *New Manual for Education*, in which it claimed that the ultimate goal of Japan's national education was to turn Japan into a cultured nation that was committed to democracy and peace. The government distributed 300,000 copies of the manual to schoolteachers throughout the archipelago.¹³

The idea of a cultured nation, with its commitment to pacifism and democracy, served as a cover-up for Japan's colonial past. It created a discursive context in which the traumatic history of expansion, racism, and war atrocities in the imperial era could easily be forgotten in Japan's public discussion. It was therefore no coincidence that the idea of the cultured nation was closely associated with the discourse of the monoethnic nation (*tan'itsu minzoku kokka*), which quickly became popular in postwar Japan. Nambara Shigeru, a leading political thinker who served as president of the University of Tokyo right after the war, was a prominent advocate of both. He celebrated the removal from the archipelago of Japan's former colonial subjects whom he called "racially others from the outside" (*gaichi ishuzoku*). In his mind, their departure and Japan's loss of the former colonies created an opportunity for Japan to return to its supposed former self—that is, a racially pure nation united under the emperor.¹⁴ This invention of Japanese racial purity allowed Nambara, who quickly became one of the most influential opinion leaders of the day, to conveniently remove the history of imperialism and its devastating consequences from public discussion. On the other hand, Nambara's call for creating a new national culture and turning Japan into a cultured nation aimed to enable Japan to rejoin the world as a member of the Western camp in the Cold War. For him, Japan's previous failure was due to its lack of historical experience equivalent to the Renaissance and the Reformation in Europe. The making of Japan's new national culture was to remedy this flaw by allowing the Japanese to catch up with white Europeans and Americans through a similar historical development.¹⁵

A group of Japanese settler elites in São Paulo, who had accepted Japan's defeat, was closely monitoring these new developments in Japanese and world politics. In 1946, they established an organization called the Saturday Club (Doyō Kai), the founding members of which were associated with the *Horizon* (*Chiheisen*), a Japanese Brazilian literary journal founded by Andō Zenpāti. The club's key members included individuals like Yamamoto Kiyoshi, who managed Casa Tozan; attorney and graduate of the University of São Paulo, Suzuki Tei'ichi; writer and artist,

Handa Yukio; and Nisei anthropologist, Saitō Hiroshi. Most of them were well-educated urban elites and had close connections with the settler leadership before the war. The club members embraced the idea of Japanese national culture with enthusiasm and sought to solve the internal and external problems that the settler community was facing by reviving their connections with Japan. Just as postwar Japan required a new national culture, they believed, the Japanese settlers in Brazil needed a cultural movement (*bunka undō*) in order to save themselves.¹⁶

The Saturday Club's passion for the concept of culture was a result of the comparability of Brazil's and Japan's racial ideologies during the transitional period from World War II to the Cold War. Unlike the discourse of the monoethnic nation that dominated postwar Japan, Brazilian politicians and intellectuals continued to celebrate the idea of racial democracy and praised the nation as a melting pot of all races.¹⁷ Yet, much like how the discourse of a monoethnic Japan in practice tended to emphasize the whiteness of the Japanese and portrayed Japan as a quasi-white nation, Brazil's racial democracy in fact served as a cover for racial whitening, a century-long belief that persisted in the minds of Brazilian elites. They too used "culture" as a code word for race. An example was the 1943 book by Fernando de Azevedo, a professor of sociology and an influential thinker in the Vargas era. Translated into English in 1950 with the title *Brazilian Culture*, the book was widely recognized as a seminal exposition of Brazilian culture. It predicted that as Europe was suffering from the devastating effects of war, Brazil would become the new center of European culture, a torch bearer of Western civilization, thanks to its historically successful process of racial whitening.¹⁸

More specifically, the concept of culture worked for the Saturday Club members in three ways. First, they believed that if Japanese settlers could lay claim to an advanced culture, it would improve their situation in Brazilian society. The hostilities that the Japanese settlers were facing on a daily basis in Brazil, they concluded, stemmed from cultural differences rather than racism. As Yamamoto Kiyoshi reasoned, "Although we can conquer the primitive forests, if we cannot defeat culture-based discrimination, we will still be subject to exclusion."¹⁹ Building an advanced culture in the community, therefore, was critical to fighting discrimination from the outside. This call for an advanced culture appeared in tandem with the Saturday Club's denial of the existence of racism against the Japanese in Brazil. Similar to the mind-set of the elites in Japan, race remained the foundation of the club members' reasoning. They advocated for building an advanced culture in order to prove the whiteness of the Japanese while discriminating against the nonwhite and Indigenous peoples in Brazil. This was revealed in a discussion meeting of the Saturday Club regarding restarting Japanese migration to Brazil after World War II. At the meeting, aiming to dissuade Japanese from migrating to the Amazon, Andō Zenpati went so far as to claim that the Japanese settlers there would only head down the path of racial degradation due to the local environment and their offspring would become monkeys.²⁰

Second, culture was regarded as a medium through which the Japanese Brazilians could contribute to the creation of a new Japanese nation and culture. The settler elites supported Japan's policy makers' and intellectuals' vision of postwar Japan as a cultured nation. To achieve this goal, the settler elites maintained that Japan's national culture should not be isolated. Instead, it must be able to expand overseas and influence others. In their minds, as a young nation rooted in European culture, Brazil was an ideal country where Japan's national culture could exert its influences. Accordingly, Japanese settlers in Brazil would contribute to the formation of Brazil's own culture as agents of Japan, which in turn would attest to the global significance of Japan's new national culture.²¹

The Saturday Club took the lead in this cultural movement. They regularly held meetings to discuss key issues in both postwar Japan and Brazil such as democratism, Japan's rural economy, the situation of the Japanese Brazilian Nisei, and the development of the Japanese language in Brazil. In 1947, the club members started the journal the *Era* to disseminate these discussions. The articles in the *Era* showed how closely the members connected themselves with the discourse of national culture and the invention of a new national identity in Japan. The first article of the inaugural issue was a discussion of the very concept of the nation-state.²² In another article, Handa Yukio provided an outline on how to establish a new culture in the Japanese Brazilian community.²³ In the third issue, Andō Zenpati published an article explaining the definition of culture and his thoughts on how to construct a cultured nation.²⁴ In the same and the next issues, Saitō Hiroshi wrote review essays and introduced to his readers the two books crucial to the post-World War II invention of Brazilian and Japanese national cultures, respectively. They were Gilberto Freyre's *Interpretação do Brasil*, which celebrated Brazil's national identity centered on the ideas and practice of racial mixing; and Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, which promoted an isolated and ahistorical Japanese national character.²⁵ Both Freyre and Benedict had studied at Columbia University under the anthropologist Franz Boas, who developed the theory of cultural relativism that was critical to the rise of the Culture and Personality school in U.S. academia.

In addition to spearheading the cultural movement, the Saturday Club members launched two successful social campaigns in the last half of the 1940s. One was to appeal to the Brazilian government for the return of properties confiscated during the war; the other was to raise funds in the settler community to be donated to Japan for war relief. The former aimed at changing the image of Japan in Brazil from an enemy during World War II to an ally in the Cold War. Meanwhile, the goal of the latter was to unify the Japanese settler community itself, which was bitterly split on the recognition of the empire's defeat. Most settlers, whether or not they believed Japan was defeated, were willing to make donations. Thus, this campaign created an occasion for the two opposing camps to join hands and work for a common cause.²⁶

Third, the concept of culture gave the Saturday Club members a new language to reinterpret the community's past and present it as a saga of immigration and cultural progress. A central issue of the reunification of the Japanese settler community was how to explain and deal with the *kachigumi* extremists represented by Shindō Renmei. Though Shindō Renmei's violence claimed the lives of at least twenty-three people, among whom was a Saturday Club member, the majority of the club members remained sympathetic to its cause and to the *kachigumi* in general. Suzuki Tei'ichi, for example, described Shindō Renmei's activities as part of the Japanese settlers' cultural resistance to the tyranny of Brazilian ethnic nationalism. Saitō Hiroshi went so far as to claim that the rise of Shindō Renmei belonged to the collective efforts of the Japanese settlers to defend their own culture.²⁷

Perhaps a more revealing example of how the club members interpreted the story of Shindō Renmei was the 1949 book, *The Forty Years of History of Immigration (Imin yonjūnen shi)*, written by Kōyama Rokurō with support from the Saturday Club members. The book was a collective effort of the *makegumi* settler elites to rewrite the history of the Japanese community in Brazil in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the sailing of the *Kasato Maru*. It described the history of the Japanese settler community as an epic story revolving around how Japanese migrants contributed to Brazilian society and how they succeeded in preserving their own culture by overcoming various challenges. It mentioned the split of the community only in the appendix and interpreted Shindō Renmei's extremist violence as an unpleasant but forgivable episode in the laudable saga of Japanese immigration.²⁸

The sympathy that the Saturday Club members had for this ultranationalist association revealed the shared commitment of the *kachigumi* and *makegumi* groups to Japanese ethnic nationalism and their resentment toward the exclusionary policies and anti-Japanese sentiments in Brazil. For the settler elites, the concept of culture served as a convenient way to reunite the community and cover up the division, violence, and close ties with Japanese imperial expansion in the recent past. This mirrored a similar strategy adopted by Japan's political and cultural leaders right after World War II. On the one hand, they embraced the concept of culture to advance the new image of Japan as a democratic, pacifist, and modernizing nation and to cut off its historical connections with the militant and expansionist Japanese empire in the past. On the other hand, they continued to revere the Shōwa Emperor as the central symbol of the national culture and denied his responsibility and role in the war and its atrocities.²⁹

It was, therefore, unsurprising that the elites in both Japan and the Japanese Brazilian settler community eventually joined hands to reinterpret the *kachi/make* split by separating it from the overall positive image of Japanese culture. In 1952, the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) appointed the Japanese cultural anthropologist Izumi Sei'ichi to investigate the issue of the *kachigumi* group. After arriving in São Paulo, Izumi met with Saitō

Hiroshi, who introduced him to other Saturday Club members and brought him to club meetings. Izumi hired Saitō as his assistant and translator when he conducted interviews with individual Japanese settlers as he traveled around rural São Paulo. Though terrified by some *kachigumi* diehards who perceived his arrival as proof of Japan's World War II victory and feeling personally endangered during the investigation, Izumi concluded in his report that the settlers' support for Shindō Renmei was an understandable reaction to their dashed hopes of returning to Japan. He and Saitō tried their best to argue that the extremist behaviors of Shindō Renmei members and their supporters was the sole result of the Japanese settlers' anxiety about the Brazilian government's oppressive wartime policies. In this way, they categorically denied the link between Shindō Renmei and Japanese culture, which they presented as inherently democratic and pacifist.³⁰

FRONTIERSMEN AND PEACEMAKERS: DISCOVERING AUTHENTIC JAPANESENESS IN BRAZIL

The concept of culture served as a medium for the Japanese settler elites in Brazil to reconnect with Japan in the late 1940s. In the next two decades, against the backdrop of the Cold War, the Japanese in Brazil participated further in Japan's process of redefining its national identity and culture. In this role they were aided by the restarting of Japanese migration to Brazil in 1952, which led to a rapid increase in economic and cultural exchange between the two nations.

The temporary end of Vargas's presidency right after the war did not stop the close alliance between Brazil and the United States, which was substantially strengthened during World War II. Though having profound differences, Brazil and Japan were similar in terms of their positions as Cold War allies of the United States and recipients of U.S. financial aid. Therefore, both countries embraced the discourse of democracy and capitalist modernization at the same time. During the Cold War, as the settler colonial history of American frontier expansion became a story of the global triumph of democracy, freedom, and development, Japanese and Brazilian elites alike sought to incorporate similar themes into their new national narratives.³¹

One event that exemplified this endeavor on Japan's side occurred in 1948, when a bust of William S. Clark, which was melted down during the war, was recast and unveiled on Hokkaido University's campus. This event was illustrative of how the educated Japanese celebrated the history of Japan's colonization of Hokkaido as a shared experience of frontier expansion of the Japanese and the Americans, with an emphasis on the role played by the American experts in the process.³² The reinvention of Japanese identity in the logic of settler colonialism took place hand in hand with the reemergence of Japan's migration state. Immediately after the conclusion of the U.S. Occupation, Tokyo started programs to relocate Japanese subjects to Latin American countries by reviving migration networks and organizations that

existed before World War II.³³ As the Latin American country that received the largest number of Japanese immigrants before the war, Brazil naturally became the first Latin American destination of Japanese emigration after the war. In 1953, two groups of Japanese migrants reached the Brazilian shores. Known as the Tsuji migrants and the Matsubara migrants, they settled in the Amazon Basin and the state of Mato Grosso, respectively. They were followed by Tokyo-sponsored programs of emigration to southeastern Brazil and other Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, and the Dominican Republic.

Around the same time, Brazilian intellectuals continued to eulogize the *bandeirantes* (also known as Paulistas and Mamelucos) as brave frontiersmen who relentlessly expanded the country's borders, describing their tireless spirit as the national character of every Brazilian.³⁴ A commercial in 1954 praised "those men who came from other lands to mix their sweat and their blood to forge a race of daring people. Paulistas from every state of Brazil and from all the nations of the world here have fused together in the heat of a shared ideal of hard work."³⁵ The celebration of frontier history in Brazil was coupled with the nation's renewed efforts to attract immigrants after World War II.³⁶ The renewed state-sponsored immigration in Brazil after the war worked in tandem with the continuation of its internal settler colonialism. A landmark event was the establishment of Brasília as the new national capital in 1960 under the presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek, who embraced the Cold War ideology of modernization to legitimize Brazil's settler colonial past and present. Located in the state of Goiás, six hundred miles from the east coast and designed according to modern and futuristic concepts, Brasília symbolized the government's commitment to colonizing the interior, legitimized by the ideas of progress, national unification, and urbanization.³⁷

Brazil's quadricentennial celebration of the founding of São Paulo in 1954 became an occasion where the Japanese and Brazilian narratives of frontier expansion converged. The Saturday Club members seized this opportunity to improve the Japanese settlers' image in Brazilian society at large. They pointed to the parallels between Japanese and Brazilian settler colonial narratives and positioned the Japanese immigrants in Brazil as agents of modernization. By doing so, they were able to present Japanese immigration as an important chapter in the glorious story of São Paulo-driven national progress, describing Japanese immigrants as indispensable contributors to the modernization of Brazil.

As the first step of this campaign, the Saturday Club members reached out to Ishigurō Shirō, Japanese consul general in São Paulo, as early as 1952. They emphasized the importance of Japanese settlers' active involvement in the occasion and sought financial aid from Tokyo. Yamamoto Kiyoshi, director of the Tozan Farm who led the Japanese settlers' committee for the quadricentennial celebration, traveled to Japan to raise awareness—and funds—from both the Japanese government and the general public for the forthcoming ceremony. Through migration networks established before World War II, Yamamoto was able to connect

with a host of Japanese political and business leaders. He distributed pamphlets to them that explained the current situation of the Japanese community in Brazil, the significance of participating in the ceremony, and the request for financial aid. Yamamoto's seven-month stay in Japan proved to be successful: he obtained Tokyo's commitment of 190 million yen for building a Japanese pavilion for the ceremony.³⁸ More importantly, acting as an advocate for the Japanese Brazilian settlers, he was able to convince Japanese leaders that the Japanese settlers in Brazil were both important to and useful for Japan. In 1958, Yamamoto returned to Japan, this time seeking financial and political support to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Japanese migration to Brazil. He scored an even bigger victory: in addition to Tokyo's commitment of financial support, Prince Mikasa came to São Paulo to participate in the ceremony as an official representative of the Japanese royal family.³⁹

At around the same time, Izumi Sei'ichi and Saitō Hiroshi jointly published a book explaining the past and present of the Japanese settlers in the Amazon region. The book was the result of a two-month field trip that the two had conducted in Tomé Açu (Pará) and Maués (Amazonas) during Izumi Sei'ichi's first visit to Brazil. Titled *The Amazon: Its Climate, Land, and the Japanese*, the book argued that Japanese settlers had proved themselves to be agents of progress in the region. By highlighting the settlers' success in transplanting jute and spice pepper from Asia to the Amazon and turning them into cash crops in Brazil, the book emphasized not only the dedication of the Japanese to the local community but also their superiority vis-à-vis the white settlers in adapting to the tropical climate. It also contained an ethnographic study of local women who married Japanese settlers, presenting them as happy wives. By doing so, the authors portrayed the Japanese settlers in the region as both open and well adapted to interracial marriage. This new narrative aimed to challenge the commonly assumed Japanese preference for endogamy due to their adherence to racial purity and refusal to assimilate.⁴⁰

A few years later, Izumi Sei'ichi, who had already become a central figure in the field of Japanese cultural anthropology in the postwar era, arrived in São Paulo again with a team of researchers. His goal this time was to conduct a comprehensive study of the social conditions of Japanese settlers across Brazil. The final report, published as a book in 1957, made two interlocked claims. First, Izumi believed that the experience of migration provided a critical lens to examine the Japanese national character. Accordingly, he saw Brazil as a useful site to study the nature of Japaneseness. Second, having been well trained in the recent theories of assimilation in the United States, Izumi presented the Japanese settlers as champions of assimilation. He argued that with an advanced culture and a spirit for assimilation, the Japanese had successfully molded themselves into indispensable members of Brazilian society.⁴¹

As Izumi was heavily involved in Tokyo-sponsored research on colonial subjects during the imperial era, it was not a surprise that he uncritically embraced

the concept of assimilation. Assimilation was viewed as the equivalent of the Japanese term *dōka*, an idea that the imperial government adopted to legitimize its cultural suppression of colonial subjects in Taiwan and Korea.⁴² Through the experience of Japanese settlers' assimilation into Brazilian society, Izumi claimed, assimilation in human history was a natural and inevitable process. Accordingly, he made the crimes of Japanese colonialism in the recent past both forgivable and forgettable. Moreover, faithfully following the principles of the Culture and Personality school in the United States, Izumi assumed there was a Japanese culture and character that remained unchanged across space and time. As such, he saw the Japanese Brazilian experience as an extension of that of the Japanese. By describing Japanese assimilation into Brazilian society as contributing to modernization and development, Izumi redefined Japan's national character as both cosmopolitan and Western.⁴³

To emphasize the shared character of the Japanese in Japan and the Japanese settlers in Brazil, Izumi termed the latter *imin*, the Japanese who migrated, and *Burajiru ni okeru Nihonjin*, the Japanese in Brazil. He also used these terms interchangeably with *koronia*, a term that the Japanese settler elites embraced after World War II as well.⁴⁴ The Portuguese word *colônia* had already been commonly used to refer to immigrant communities in Brazil. By naming their community Nikkei koronia (Colônia Japonesa), the Japanese settler elites sought to present themselves as part of the process of Brazilian nation making that combined settler colonialism with immigration. On the other hand, *colônia* could also be translated as "colonist" (*shokumin*) or "colony" (*shokuminchi*), which connected the stories of Japanese settlers in Brazil with the history of Japan's emigration-driven expansion. In this way, the settlers were presented as both fully integrated and contributing members of Brazilian society and subjects of the Japanese nation and empire. In the context of renewed emigration to Brazil, the term "Nikkei koronia" reflected how the settler elites positioned themselves as model Japanese subjects; they described themselves as a bridge between two countries and pioneers in Japan's mission to contribute to the world's modernization and development via peaceful emigration.

Izumi was not alone in his quest to reexamine the idea of Japaneseness in Brazil. Gamō Masao, a student of Izumi and a participant in his research in Brazil, adopted Izumi's approach in his own research. He later served as president of the Japanese Society for Cultural Anthropology, and in 1960 he published a book that considered the Japanese settler villages in Tomé Açu an important site for examining what he called the multisystemic nature (*takeisei*) of the structure of Japanese daily life (*Nihonjin no seikatsu kōzō*). Arguing against the prevailing claim of the closeness and homogeneity of Japanese culture advanced by scholars like Ruth Benedict, Gamō presented Japanese culture as heterogeneous and even self-contradictory. For him, Japan's great success in its ready embrace of Western democracy and modernization was precisely because of the open and multisystemic nature of Japanese

culture and social experience.⁴⁵ The settler village in Tomé Açu, with what Gamō described as vibrant interactions with local residents and their smooth assimilation to Brazilian society, served as proof of this theory.⁴⁶

The prominent journalist and writer Ōya Sōichi echoed this academic discourse. When he visited Brazil in 1954, he claimed that he saw a Japanese settler village that had preserved the spirit of Meiji- and Taishō-era Japan.⁴⁷ His observation was in line with the postwar narrative that extolled Meiji and Taishō as Japan's golden eras of Westernization while designating early Shōwa as a dark but abnormal period of militarism and destruction. For Ōya, the spirit of Meiji and Taishō was the true spirit of Japaneseness, which was marked by Westernization, democracy, and progress. To him, the Japanese settlers in Brazil were free of the taint of early Shōwa; therefore, they were the true representatives of Japaneseness, and their economic and cultural success in Brazil was proof of their cultural purity. "To see the Meiji and Taishō eras," he claimed, "you'd better go to Brazil."⁴⁸

Mishima Yukio, one of the most widely read and controversial Japanese writers, also used the Japanese experience in Brazil as a lens to examine postwar Japanese society and lament the loss of its traditional spirit. Inspired by a trip to Brazil in 1951, he wrote an acclaimed play titled *A Termite Nest* (*Shiroari no su*), the main characters of which were two Japanese couples, one of them owners of a coffee farm in São Paulo and the other their driver and his wife. The owner, a seemingly generous and cultured man, was called a "democratic farm owner" (*minshu teki na enshu*): not only did he treat the farm employees with respect and was he willing to dine at the same table with them, but he also forgave his wife and the driver for their affair. However, he was eventually referred to as "a walking dead" who had lost his human vitality. On the other hand, though the driver's wife resented her husband's prior dalliance, she was eager to marry the owner and dreamed about herself becoming the new termite queen in the house. Termites, which constantly increase their colonies through reproduction and territorial expansion, served as an effective metaphor for Japanese settler colonialism in Brazil. For Mishima, the story of this coffee farm epitomized the society of postwar Japan, which embraced the Western language of democracy only to become culturally corrupted and lose its spiritual self.

In fact, the influence of the Japanese community in Brazil on the process of making and remaking Japaneseness is far from surprising; after all, the Cold War-era school of Japanese studies had originated from U.S. intellectuals' ethnographic research on Japanese Americans during World War II. For the same reason, Japanese Brazilians were not the only Japanese overseas who had shaped the debate surrounding Japaneseness. Japanese Americans too were crucial in the evolution of this knowledge production. However, the Japanese community in the United States served as a source of the past more than the future. Although Japanese

migration to the United States resumed in 1952 with the McCarran-Walter Act, the number of migrants was restricted to 185 per year. As a major destination of Japanese immigration both before and after World War II, Brazil was a point of historical convergence where the Japanese community was positioned as a representation of both the past and the future of Japaneseness.

An example of this phenomenon was the nationwide population survey of Japanese settlers led by Suzuki Teiichi, a central leader of the Saturday Club. Stimulated by Izumi Seiichi's investigation, the settler elites launched the survey as the community's own project to record their history and achievements. Spanning six years, this project collected detailed information on Japanese settlers across Brazil that covered almost every aspect of their lives: age, occupation, location, economic status, marriage, education, family members, religion, language, and political participation. The survey arrived at the conclusion that the settlers achieved remarkable growth in population and brought economic prosperity to their host country. The settler elites employed the discourse of Malthusian expansionism, which Japan's empire builders had used to legitimize its migration-driven expansion before 1945, and blamed overpopulation as the primary reason for Japan's militarism.⁴⁹ By showcasing the settlers' great achievements in numbers, the survey presented Japanese migration to Brazil as a solution to the problem of overpopulation in Japan and the Japanese settlers as peacemakers of the world.⁵⁰ This claim fit impeccably with postwar Japanese elites' efforts to rebrand Japan as a pacifist country and the Japanese as a peace-loving people. In short, the survey provided much-needed evidence for elites in Japan to legitimize overseas emigration as an altruistic effort contributing to global peace and prosperity.

The survey was also an illustration of how the community building efforts of Japanese settlers in Brazil entwined with the reinvention of postwar Japan. To maximize the scope and depth of the investigation and overcome budgetary limitations, the Saturday Club members traveled to train local volunteers who would conduct the survey at the village level. Common settlers welcomed their efforts enthusiastically. The project itself, in effect, became a community building event that evolved into what Brazilian mainstream media claimed was the biggest population survey ever completed by a nongovernmental group.⁵¹ By widely interacting with common settlers at the individual level, the survey also served as a critical occasion for the Saturday Club members to diffuse their elite-centered settler identity and further unite the community.

Fully aware of the potential value of the survey for Japan, the settler elites successfully lobbied Tokyo for both financial and technical assistance. Suzuki penned an article in the *Asahi shinbun*, arguing that the survey was important for the international image of the Japanese in general.⁵² He brought the entire data set to Japan and completed the final analysis with researchers at Tohoku University and the University of Tokyo. The final results of the survey were published by

the University of Tokyo Press in English under the title, *The Japanese Immigrant in Brazil* (*Burajiru no Nihon imin*), in 1964.⁵³

THE DIVERGENCE BETWEEN JAPANESE AND JAPANESE BRAZILIANS

The year 1964 saw the peak of the collaborative efforts between the elites in Japan and the Japanese Brazilian community in the invention of the new Japanese national identity. In addition to publishing *The Japanese Immigrant in Brazil*, the Japanese Cultural Center opened in São Paulo that year. The building would become the home of a number of social and cultural associations for the Japanese settlers. Its centerpiece, Centro de Estudos Brasileiros (Sanpauro Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo, or Jinmonken), would take shape the next year. Initially staffed and headed by the Saturday Club members, Jinmonken has served as the headquarters for the study of Japanese culture and the Japanese Brazilian community in Brazil ever since. It has functioned as a hub for collaboration between scholars in Japan and Brazil in Japanese studies and is the primary sponsor of most Brazil-based research on the Japanese Brazilian community. The opening of the Cultural Center also saw the unveiling of the bust of Yamamoto Kiyoshi, who had died a year earlier. The bust was placed inside the Cultural Center as a tribute to Yamamoto's leadership and contribution to postwar reconstruction of the settler community.⁵⁴

The death of Yamamoto signified the end of an era in which elites on both sides of the Pacific Ocean collaborated closely to reinvent the national identity of postwar Japan. They had worked together to prove that the Japanese settlers in Brazil embodied and exemplified the ideal version of Japaneseness. In the late 1960s, however, the two sides' paths began to diverge. While Japanese mass media and intellectuals continued to view Japanese settlers in Brazil as representatives of Japaneseness who showcased the superiority of Japanese culture, the number of immigrants who saw themselves primarily as Japanese subjects declined quickly.

The Tokyo Olympics in 1964 heralded Japan's successful return to the global stage, this time as a modernizing, peace-loving, and democratic nation. By then, Japan had secured its position as a pivotal ally of the United States in East Asia. The Japanese economy had also started its decades-long high-speed growth that would turn the country into one of the largest economies in the world. These changes transformed studies of Japaneseness in the archipelago. Such studies in the 1950s primarily interpreted Japan's cultural uniqueness as evidence of Japan's ability to replicate the Euro-American process of modernization in the recent past. In the late 1960s, however, scholars and popular writers in Japan began to emphasize the differences between Japan's culture and that of the West. By doing so, they sought to prove the superiority of the former over the latter. The publication and popularity of Nakane Chie's *Japanese Society* in 1970 ushered in the golden age of Nihonjinron. In the following years, many Nihonjinron books were published

that highlighted the family (*ie*) as the structural core of Japan's group-oriented society, in contrast to individual-centered Western societies.⁵⁵ It was this cultural difference, Nakane and her followers argued, that accounted for Japan's uniquely successful economic growth.

The conclusion of the Nihonjinron school spearheaded by Nakane Chie differed from that of the Culture and Personality school represented by Izumi Sei'ichi in terms of Japan's cultural location vis-à-vis that of the West. However, the impact of the discourse on national culture promoted by Izumi and his Japanese Brazilian collaborators in earlier decades on the rise of Nihonjinron was evident in the academic career of Nakane herself: she studied with Izumi Sei'ichi at the University of Tokyo and then joined him as a colleague at the same institution. The two had been academic collaborators since the 1950s.⁵⁶ They had coedited two volumes titled *Ningen no shakai* (Human Societies) in 1960 and 1961, which examined various societies across the globe by treating each as an isolated cultural system.⁵⁷

Japan's growing economy also generated increasing domestic demand for labor. Emigration, as a result, was no longer a priority for Tokyo. Brazil—and Latin America in general—soon became a target of Japanese investment and economic exportation instead of a migration destination. Nevertheless, cultural elites in Japan continued to refer to Japanese settlers in Brazil and other Latin American countries as exemplifiers of Japanese excellence, though now for a very different reason. While they had previously focused on praising the Japanese ability to assimilate into their host society, now they were no longer interested in assimilation if not outright opposed to it. Instead, they emphasized the supposedly unique capacity of the Japanese to modernize the local society.

The Japanese government endorsed these efforts and sponsored some of these writers' trips to Brazil.⁵⁸ One of the Tokyo-backed writers was Tsunoda Fusako, a prolific and award-winning nationalist author who penned several books in the 1960s and 1970s, including two about the Amazon that celebrated the Japanese sacrifice and achievement in civilizing Brazil's primitive land.⁵⁹ Around the same period, Tsunoda published two books that described the Japanese settlers in Manchuria as victims of war and colonialism.⁶⁰ According to Tsunoda, the experiences of Japanese migrants to the opposite sides of the Pacific ended very differently: those in Brazil successfully carried out their mission, whereas those in Manchuria were met with tragedy due to the collapse of the Japanese empire. However, in Tsunoda's description, both groups of Japanese settlers were innocent and sacrificial agents of modernization.

Some Western scholars supported this new approach. For example, the British scholar Philip Staniford used the case study of Tomé Açú to argue that the unique social and cultural norms of the Japanese allowed them to become successful farmers and modernizers in the Amazon region.⁶¹ Yet others, like the Japanologists John B. Cornell at the University of Texas at Austin and Robert Smith at Cornell University, remained committed to the framework of assimilation. Cornell

and Smith came to Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s and conducted a study titled "Texas, Cornell, and São Paulo Research Project." It examined Japanese immigrants' assimilation process in southeastern Brazil.⁶² Maeyama Takashi, who emerged during this period as one of the most cited scholars in Japan in the study of the Japanese Brazilian experience, worked closely with Cornell and Smith on this project. Yet Maeyama, like other mainstream scholars in Japan during this period, had his doubts about the assimilation approach. He later criticized Cornell and Smith's research as West-centered in the sense that it saw Western civilization as the standard for human progress and judged non-Western societies based on how well they were able to replicate or adapt to the Western model.⁶³

While the assimilation approach lost popularity in Japan during this period, elites in the Japanese Brazilian community continued to hold it as their central value. In addition to economic and political changes in East Asia, this divergence between Japan and the Japanese community in Brazil reflected the generational shift and change in social status of Japanese Brazilians. The Issei, the generation of Japanese settlers in Brazil who had the strongest ties with Japan, were passing into history. Saturday Club members like Saitō Hiroshi and Suzuki Tei'ichi continued to be active in the 1970s, but even they had shifted their focus to ensuring the next generation could become mainstream Brazilians. This generational shift proceeded hand in hand with a "middle-class" transformation of the settler community's economic and social status between the 1930s and 1950s, taking place in the context of the state of São Paulo's rapid industrialization and urbanization.

Taking advantage of the transwar economic boom in São Paulo and the wealth accumulated thanks to the price increase of agricultural goods during World War II, many Japanese farming settlers moved to the cities and started family businesses like fruit shops and cleaning services. These business-owning families were joined by a fast-growing Nisei population that moved to cities like São Paulo to pursue higher education and entered white-collar occupations on graduation.⁶⁴ While 92 percent of Japanese settlers in the state of São Paulo resided in the countryside in 1934, nearly half of the settler population had moved to urban areas by 1958.⁶⁵ This number climbed to 90 percent in 1988.⁶⁶

The change in socioeconomic status took place in tandem with Japanese settlers' increased domestic political participation in Brazil. Beginning with Tamura Yukishige, who became the first municipal (1948), state (1950), and then federal (1954) lawmaker of Japanese ancestry in Brazil, more and more Nisei became elected policy makers. This number reached 28 in 1968 and grew to 137 in 1972. In 1969, Fabio Yasuda became the first minister of Japanese ancestry in the federal government.⁶⁷ For the Nisei and their descendants, Japanese ethnicity continued to be an important identity that marked them as what Gaku Tsuda called a "positive" minority in Brazil.⁶⁸ Yet, at the same time, interracial marriage between Japanese Brazilians and other ethnic groups skyrocketed: in 1958, 13 percent of Japanese settlers were in interracial marriages; by 1988, the number had increased

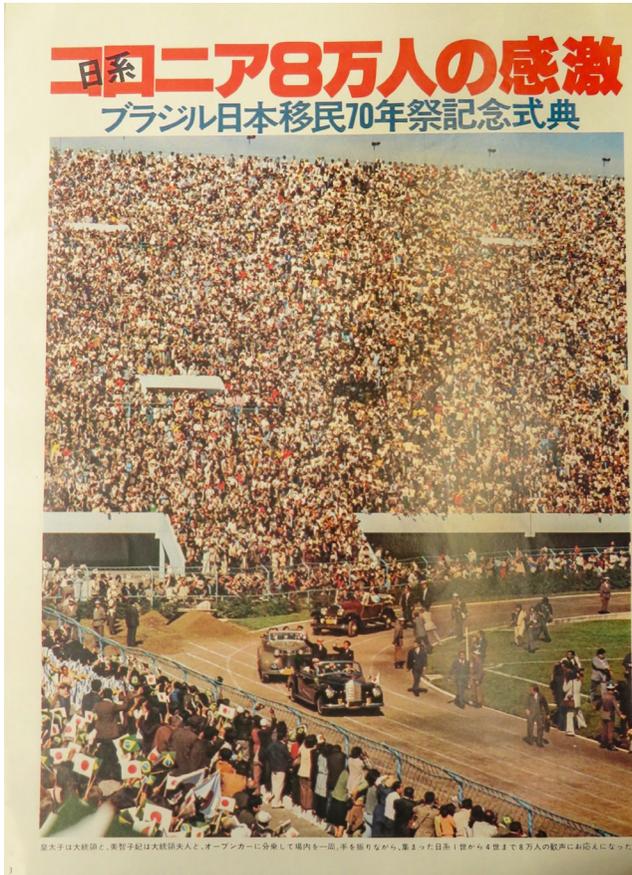


FIGURE 28. A photo of the Japanese crown prince Akihito and the Brazilian president Ernesto Geisel greeting a crowd of 80,000 Japanese immigrants in São Paulo during the ceremony for the seventieth anniversary of Japanese migration to Brazil. Source: *Shūkan Sankei: Tokubetsu Gurafu*, no. 81 (1978): 3.

to 58 percent.⁶⁹ Accordingly, while only 6 percent of the Nisei Japanese Brazilians were interracial, among the *sansei* (third generation) and *yonsei* (fourth generation), the interracial rate climbed to 42 percent and 62 percent, respectively.⁷⁰

In 1978, the *Mainichi shinbun* sponsored an international symposium titled, “Nippaku shinjidai to kokusai kōryū” (The New Era of Japan and Brazil and International Exchange). The event brought to light a clear separation between the elites in Japan and the Japanese Brazilian community in terms of their understanding of Japanese Brazilian identity. Though the symposium had aimed to find a common ground, it ultimately revealed an unbridgeable gap. Umehao Tadao, director-general of Japan’s National Museum of Ethnology, was the symposium’s

keynote speaker. He argued that history had proved that racial assimilation was an unsuccessful and outdated approach to nation making and predicted that Brazil would become a new model of the multicultural nation. Each of the ethnic groups in the nation should be able to maintain their own cultural identities. The Japanese in Brazil, he argued, would make a critical contribution in this regard. Suzuki Tei'ichi, then director of Jinmonken in São Paulo, was also invited to speak at the symposium. Contrary to Umesao, Suzuki asserted that the Japanese immigrants in Brazil were destined to become fully assimilated Brazilians. He also happily proclaimed that complete assimilation was only a matter of time thanks to the superb assimilating power of the Japanese race, which, he argued, was attested by both history since ancient times and the present demographic change of the Japanese community in Brazil.⁷¹

The year 1978 also saw the ceremony for the seventieth anniversary of Japanese Brazilian migration in São Paulo. Known as the last anniversary ceremony hosted by the Issei, the event symbolized the end of Issei leadership in the community. Japan's then crown prince, Akihito, arrived in São Paulo again and attended the ceremony with Brazilian president Ernesto Geisel. The ceremony presented Japanese Brazilians as a unified, prosperous, and patriotic ethnic group in Brazil. As part of the celebration, the Historical Museum of Japanese Immigration in Brazil (Museu Histórico da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil) opened to the public in São Paulo. The primary designer of the museum, Saitō Hiroshi, modeled it after the Historical Museum of Hokkaido (Hokkaido Kaitaku Kinenkan) in Sapporo. Much like how the latter presented the history of Japanese colonization of Hokkaido as a triumph of human civilization, the Historical Museum of Japanese Immigration in Brazil described the history of Japanese collaborative settler colonialism in Brazil as a consistent story of modernization and development.⁷² The opening of the museum, however, also marked the end of the Issei-centered narrative, which itself had become the history on display in the museum.

In the same year, the Nisei intellectual Saitō Hiroshi published a book in Japan titled, *The Japanese Who Have Become Foreigners (Gaikokujin ni natta Nihonjin)*. It synthesized a collection of essays that Saitō had published in Japan and Brazil in past decades and presented assimilation as a natural and inevitable path for the Japanese in Brazil, one that began with the sailing of the *Kasato Maru* and ended with interracial marriages. Saitō described this process as a linear history and divided it into three stages. He defined the Japanese migrants at each of the stages as Nihonjin (Japanese), Nikkeijin (Japanese Brazilians, or Japanese overseas), and Burajirujin (Brazilians). The happy ending of this process, accordingly, was when Japanese migrants became fully assimilated Brazilians.⁷³

The migration states of Japan and Brazil, as examined in this study, eventually came to an end. Following rapid economic growth and an increasing demand for labor in Japan, Tokyo ceased sponsoring emigration abroad in the 1970s, and

Japan has become an immigrant-receiving country. Conversely, Brazil was struck by an economic recession and reversed its migration policy, transforming from a recipient to a sender of migrants. These transformations in Japan and Brazil jointly led to the onset of labor migration of Brazilians of Japanese ancestry to Japan.

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This chapter explains how Japanese Brazilian Issei elites reunited their community by reviving their connections with Japan immediately after World War II. Rebuilding their cultural ties with Japan allowed them to rebrand the image of Japanese settlers in Brazil. At the same time, they also participated in the reinvention of Japan's postwar national and cultural identity. The interactions between Japanese elites and intellectuals in the Japanese Brazilian community consolidated and popularized the idea of a unique and progressive Japanese national character among Japanese intellectuals and public media in the 1950s and 1960s. It eventually fostered the rise of *Nihonjinron*, a popular school of thought that holds sway in Japan even today.

The rise of Japan as an economic powerhouse took place simultaneously with generational and social status changes within the Japanese Brazilian community. These two factors together led to the demise of the once-close ideological alliance between Japanese Brazilian elites and their counterparts in Japan. The former maintained that the only future path for the Japanese community was their full assimilation into Brazilian society. Accordingly, they saw the success of this assimilation as evidence of Japanese racial superiority. The latter, on the other hand, had discarded the concept of assimilation. Instead, they highlighted the uniqueness of the Japanese cultural and social experience and saw it as the primary reason for postwar Japan's unparalleled success in economic development and modernization.

The intellectual divergence between Japanese and Japanese Brazilian elites led to the end of the Japanese Brazilians' participation in the ongoing process of Japanese identity making. However, Saitō's theory of the three-stage development of the Japanese Brazilian community failed to materialize. The full assimilation model proved unpragmatic, as Brazilians of Japanese ancestry continued to benefit from their Japaneseness. On the one hand, they enjoyed the ethnic and social privileges associated with being the "positive minority" in Brazil.⁷⁴ On the other hand, given the increasingly wide economic gap between Japan and Brazil, descendants of Japanese immigrants in Brazil began to migrate to Japan as foreign workers. Referred to as the *dekasegi*, they often filled a demand for cheap labor. However, they were paid more than they would have been paid in Brazil and enjoyed a special visa status as *Nikkeijin* that gave them the legal right to a long-term stay in Japan. In this way, they continued to be part of the process of Japanese identity making. However, whereas their predecessors in the 1950s and 1960s were held

up as exemplifiers of the authentic Japan, the dekasegi Nikkeijin would serve as a foil to genuine Japaneseness because of their Latin American cultural and racial background. In this sense, they joined other marginalized ethnic groups in Japan such as the Koreans, Okinawans, and the Ainu as the living legacies of Japan's colonial empire.