

Conclusion

In 1961, at the age of twenty-eight, Maeyama Takashi, born in Hokkaido and raised in northeastern Honshu, left Japan for Brazil. During his studies for a bachelor's degree in philosophy, Maeyama had encountered *Tristes tropiques*, a memoir by the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss that documented his experiences and thoughts while conducting ethnographic studies of Indigenous tribes in Brazil. Deeply inspired, Maeyama decided to go to Brazil to study Indigenous cultures.¹ However, after he began studying at the University of São Paulo, he was invited by Saitō Hiroshi, then professor at the university, to join a collaborative research project led by the American Japanologists John B. Cornell and Robert Smith on the Japanese community in Brazil.² After completing his PhD in Latin American Studies at Cornell University and teaching for a couple of years at the University of São Paulo, Maeyama returned to Japan, where he went on to become one of the most influential and innovative scholars in the study of the Japanese Brazilian community.

Trained as a cultural anthropologist, Maeyama's academic career demonstrates the evolution of the ethnic studies framework in the study of the Japanese community in Brazil. Maeyama started studying Japanese immigrants in Brazil by joining Cornell and Smith's project, which was centered on the Japanese immigrants' assimilation into Brazilian society. Maeyama's participation in the project, however, led him to question the usefulness of the concept "assimilation" in terms of fully grasping the experience of Japanese settlers in Brazil.³ His first monograph, *Hisōzokusha no seishinshi* (*A Psychohistory of the People of No Inheritance Rights*), examines the history of Japanese immigrants in Brazil by focusing on the social status of the migrants in their homeland and its impact on their new life in Brazil.⁴ The impressive success of Japanese immigration to Brazil, he reasoned, was the result of

a unique mentality possessed by the first-generation Japanese immigrants. Most of them were second and third sons in the Japanese countryside and by law had no inheritance rights in their own households. Maeyama argued that it was their lack of access to familial wealth that made them especially eager to succeed in the new land as migrants. Thanks to this distinctively Japanese “hisōzokusha” (people of no inheritance rights) mentality, the immigrants were frugal and hardworking, which allowed them to achieve economic success despite facing racial discrimination and marginalization in Brazil.⁵

Maeyama’s next monograph, *Imin no Nihon kaiki undō* (The Immigrants’ Movement of Returning to Japan), went a step further to explore the changes and divides among Japanese immigrant elites regarding their ethnic identities in Brazil. In particular, Maeyama explained how the Japanese settler elites were caught between Tokyo’s nationalist propaganda and the tide of ethnic nationalism in the Estado Novo, a situation that eventually led to a long-lasting divide in the community that continued after World War II.⁶ His third major book, *Esunishitei to Burajiru Nikkeijin* (Ethnicity and Japanese Brazilians), explained the ways the Japanese immigrants’ identity took shape as a result of their in-betweenness, namely, as imperial subjects of the Japanese empire and as an ethnic minority in Brazil.⁷

Maeyama’s scholarship demonstrates both the achievement and limitation of the ethnic studies approach. Unlike the generation of Japanologists before him such as Izumi Seiichi, Saitō Hiroshi, as well as Smith and Cornell, Maeyama refused to take the concept of assimilation as a given and situated the identity formation of Japanese settlers in Japan’s and Brazil’s historical contexts. Different from specialists of modern Brazil whose scholarship on the topic has been exclusively based on Portuguese sources, Maeyama’s comprehensive use of primary sources in both Japanese and Portuguese allowed him to analyze the Japanese settlers’ minds and activities with increased sophistication. Nevertheless, his scholarship remains confined within the ethnic studies framework, which neglects the settler colonial nature of Japanese immigration. Maeyama’s failure to recognize the connections between the predicament of the Indigenous people and the achievements of Japanese immigrants is especially disappointing, as he had ventured into both fields during his dynamic academic career. He initially arrived in Brazil to study Indigenous cultures and only later turned to the study of the Japanese Brazilian community.

Explaining these connections is the starting point of this book, which places Japanese migration and community formation in Brazil in the context of settler colonialism in both Brazil and Japan. I have analyzed Japanese immigration as part of state-driven settler colonialism in Brazil in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and termed this process collaborative settler colonialism. Immigrants from Japan, together with those from Europe, served as the Brazilian state’s agents in the appropriation of Indigenous land. The Japanese immigrants themselves were also beneficiaries in this process: while most of them arrived in Brazil as plantation laborers, over half had managed to become landowning farmers by

the outbreak of the Pacific War, in large part thanks to the land policies of the Brazilian government.⁸ Although the Japanese were victims of racial discrimination at all levels of Brazilian society, as this book demonstrates, they were also instrumental for the Brazilian government, at the national and state levels, in carrying out its settler colonial policies.

Acknowledging Japanese immigrants as collaborators of Brazilian settler colonialism also allows us to confront the fact that the Japanese replicated the logic of white racism in Brazil and viewed other residents—especially the Indigenous, caboclos, and other peoples of color—with prejudice. Discussion of racist beliefs and practices by the Japanese immigrants themselves has been generally absent in the ethnic studies scholarship. Such racial discrimination was the product of the convergence of the racial ideologies of both Brazil and the Japanese empire. The immigrant elites used “dojin,” the same word that the Japanese used to label Indigenous people in the Japanese empire, to describe the Indigenous people and caboclos in Brazil.⁹ In their imagination, these dojin not only had a lower standard of morality, but were incapable of making good use of their own land. This supposed inferiority was derived from the primitivity of the Brazilian land itself, untamed nature waiting for salvation by modern civilization that the Japanese represented. For these reasons, the Japanese settler elites adopted a racist attitude toward the Brazilians in general. They embraced the popular theory of racial assimilation in Brazil that emerged in the early twentieth century and urged Japanese immigrants to uplift the Brazilian racial stock by mixing with the locals through intermarriage.¹⁰ Such racist attitudes continued after World War II and were reinforced by the rapid rise of Japan as an economic powerhouse.¹¹

Japanese community and identity making in Brazil was also part of Japan’s emigration-driven expansion. Brazil-bound migration shared ideological and material connections with Japan’s emigration to its colonial territories in Asia, including Hokkaido, Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, and the South Seas. By not taking the geographic boundaries of the Japanese empire as inherent limits, I have analyzed the role that Japanese settler elites in Brazil played in the making of Japan’s colonial empire and its postwar transition to a nation-state. Moreover, by acknowledging Japanese emigration to Brazil as part of the history of Japanese settler colonialism, I challenge the conventional periodization of the Japanese colonial empire and propose a new chronology of Japanese settler colonialism, one that begins in the early Meiji era and ends in 1978, the seventieth anniversary of Japanese immigration to Brazil. With a broader definition of settler colonialism, this new chronology transcends both the geographic and temporal boundaries of the Japanese empire. It highlights the impact of anti-Asian racism in the United States on Japanese expansion, on the one hand, and sheds light on the transwar continuity of Japanese emigration, on the other.

The history of Japanese migration and community building in Brazil also epitomizes the convergence of Japan’s and Brazil’s historical paths. Even before the

arrival of the Japanese empire's pioneers in Brazil, the historical trajectories of the two countries in the nineteenth century had already shown similarities in empire building. Elites in both Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro, inspired by the ongoing westward expansion of the United States, associated the concept of migration with colonial expansion. The voyage of the *Kasato Maru*, the ship that transported the first official group of Japanese immigrants to Brazil in the early twentieth century, was the culmination of several historical processes occurring simultaneously across the Pacific Ocean. These included the Japanese expansionists' advocacy of overseas emigration, the rise of anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States, and the rapid growth of Brazil's coffee economy, all of which were indispensable factors at the onset of this migration. The development and proliferation of Japanese farming villages in southeastern Brazil through the 1930s unfolded within three distinct yet interconnected settings: Brazil's railway expansion and new land distribution policies in the state of São Paulo; the evolution of Japanese colonialism in Korea and the South Seas; and the establishment of a new world order after World War I. Consequently, the collective identity of the Japanese immigrants in southeastern Brazil was shaped by both Japan's colonial expansion in Asia and the surge of Brazilian ethnic nationalism. Similarly, the Japanese migration to and investment in the Brazilian Amazon during the 1930s paralleled Japanese expansionism in the Asia-Pacific region and Brazil's settler colonialism in its tropical forests. After World War II, the Brazilian Amazon became a focal point for renewed Japanese migration, attributable to the persisting ideology and practice of settler colonialism in both Japan and Brazil throughout the Cold War. The story of Japanese migration to Brazil further reveals the historical convergence of the modernizing powers in East Asia and Latin America in general, which strove to join the race of modern empires for wealth and power in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

"Collaborative settler colonialism" describes the multidimensional connections that Japanese immigrants had with settler colonialism in both Japan and Brazil. This concept also invites a reexamination of the settler/native binary in the broader literature of settler colonialism. Patrick Wolfe asserted a strict binary structure within settler societies, claiming that every non-Indigenous individual is a settler. He even argued that slaves, who were forcibly transported to settler nations and colonies, should be considered settlers because the lack of voluntarism does not change their roles as settlers, as defined by the social structure itself.¹² From the perspective of Indigenous peoples, many scholars endorse Wolfe's position. In a recent edited volume exploring settler colonialism in Hawai'i, a cohort of scholars categorized immigrants from Asian countries, such as Japan, China, and the Philippines, as settlers on the islands. They contend that the immigrants' labor and political campaigns reinforced rather than challenged Hawai'i's existing settler colonial structure.¹³ In contrast, there are scholars who contend that immigrants, especially those of color, are neither settlers nor Indigenous. Lorenzo

Veracini, for instance, challenges Wolfe by redefining the structure of U.S. settler colonialism as a “trialogue” among settlers, natives, and Black people.¹⁴ Iyko Day supports this triadic framework by illustrating how the settler colonial structure in North America ultimately facilitated anti-Asian racism, which cast Asian laborers as aliens and legitimized their exclusion.¹⁵

Both the binary framework and the triadic approach examine immigrants in white settler societies primarily at a conceptual level. Scholars from either perspective have seldom investigated the immigrants’ own agency. In contrast, I have focused on the ideas, activities, and identities of Japanese immigrants in transnational contexts. Using the term “collaborative settler colonialism,” I have explained in detail how Japanese immigrants adopted the settler colonial ideologies of both Japan and Brazil and partnered with settler colonial regimes as agents of expansion. Consequently, this study proposes a new approach to understanding settler colonialism that places the experiences and agency of immigrants at the forefront of the inquiry.